





Literary Studies (LTST) 637

Black Atlantic Literature and Culture (Revision 2)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode:

Individualized study 

Credits:

3

Area of study:

Arts

Prerequisites:

MAIS 601 or a senior-level English course.

Precluded:

None

Faculty:

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Notes:

Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

Overview

Literary Studies 637 introduces students to the conceptual spaces and cultural productions of “the black Atlantic”: the migrations, occupations, and representations undertaken by Africans and their descendants in and after the trans-Atlantic slave trade, from early modernity to the present day.

As theorized by Paul Gilroy, this diasporic geography mobilizes black identities and cultural formations around the Atlantic: the western and southern African nations, Europe, and the Americas. This course concentrates on English-language literary, media, and performance texts from the West Indies, Canada, the USA, and the U.K. that articulate “the black Atlantic” as a theoretical concept and a lived experience at the intersection of slavery, empire, colonialism, and racism, in the linked modalities of race, class, and gender. Our navigation of the black Atlantic’s cultural routes is steered by representative texts from Anglophone writers and artists that speak to significant moments and movements in the black diaspora, from eighteenth-century abolition to twenty-first-century Afro-futurism.

To this end, we will read major black diasporic literary, critical, and multimedia texts to introduce students both to Gilroy’s theory of the black Atlantic—“a counter-culture of modernity”—and to critiques of this theory. The assigned texts thus outline and question the conceptual limits of the black Atlantic as a critical and creative instrument for imagining the dialectics of displacement and alienation, subjectivity and racialization, authenticity and artifice, imperialism and subalterity, and history and counter-memory.

Objectives


On completion of LTST 637, the student will:

- become familiar with key texts and contexts in black diasporic culture
- achieve critical understanding of the paradigm of the black Atlantic and its limitations
- gain historical knowledge of trans-Atlantic slave trade and its ongoing cultural impacts
- appreciate how black Atlantic texts circulate and construct audiences in

different national and regional formations and appropriations around the world

- recognize how race, class, and gender issues intersect in black Atlantic cultural production
- develop a working vocabulary of critical keywords in black Atlantic and African diasporic studies, e.g.: Afrocentrism, Afro-Futurism, anti-racism, decolonization, diaspora, double consciousness, nation language, postcoloniality, racialization, signifying, syncretism

Evaluation

To receive credit for this course, students must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60 per cent. Students should be familiar with the Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies [grading system](#) . Please note that it is students' responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of "F" in one course, or a grade of "C" in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.

The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them.


| Activity | Weight |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Online Participation | 30% |
| Annotated Bibliography | 30% |
| Essay Proposal | 10% |
| Essay | 30% |
| Total | 100% |


Materials

Brand, Dionne. *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. Toronto: Vintage, 2000.

 (Print)


Gates Jr., Henry Louis, ed. *The Classic Slave Narratives*. New York: Signet, 2002.  (Print)

Gilroy. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.  (Print)





Sears, Djanet. *Harlem Duet*. Shillingford, 1993.  (Print)

Athabasca University Online Materials

Course Home Page: You will find Course Information (including the Assignment File and other pertinent information) at the top of the course home page. You will also find your Study Guide presented unit by unit online. You will find your assignments and links to submit your work to your professor on the course home page.

Athabasca University Library: Students are encouraged to browse the Library's Web site to review the Library collection of journal databases, electronic journals, and digital reference tools: <http://library.athabascau.ca> .

Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Updated May 22, 2024

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