African American and American Cultural Studies Program

Course Title
Decolonizing Africana Americana Diaspora
(Work in Progress)
(Interdisciplinary Studies: Methods and Modes of Inquiry)

Fall 2016
Location: TBA
Meeting Times: W-F 3:05 – 4:20 PM

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Office: TBA
Office Hours: TBA + By Appointment

https://moarquech.wordpress.com/decolonialafricandiaspora
Course Description

This course is designed for undergraduate and graduate students who have experience and are interested in understanding the routes, way of knowing, cultural expressions and territories interweaving the Africana Americana Diaspora¹: the Caribbean, Latin America, Canada, and the United States. The course must be understood as a complex historical and conceptual creative process organized in relation to colonality/modernity/decoloniality critical option of inquiry in the interconnected territories inhabited by African descendants.

Decolonization is a struggle prompted and provoked by the management of colonality, the Anglo-euro patriarchal colonial matrix of domination, which still in place in locations, institutions, and bodies inhabiting the territories of the Africana Americana Diaspora. Why it is so important for Africanxs Americanxs² descendants to understand how, through the European colonization, these “natural universal western principles” today are still dictating the lives and creative process of these territories? Why it is so important to understand how cognitive racism dismisses the knowledge and wisdom of our African ancestors and forces many of us to sense, think and express in Anglo-Europeans terms?

Inspired by Edouard Glissant’s Poetic of Relations,³ Audre Lorde’s Sister Outsider, Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin White Mask, Jacqui Alexander’s Pedagogies of Crossing, Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, and bell hooks’ Writing beyond race: living theory and practice, this interdisciplinary course will embark into the process of de-learning these “western principles” and to de-territorialize the colonial fears repressing our radical transformation so needed in a time when Anglo-Eurocentrism episteme claims of “global universalism” and the English language are imposing their hegemonic standards. Addressing issues of migration, citizenship, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, class, among others as manifested in cultural expressions, the course will re-imagine geographical locations of Africana Americana Diaspora to link our experience to the Atlantic Slave Trade and to some of the cultural and ethnic manifestations of West Africa as they inform the present experiences of many African descendants in the western side of the Atlantic.

Focusing on literary, artistic, cinematic, critical productions, and socio-political expression by Africanxs Americanxs from diverse historical times, the class examines the ideological, economic, social, and creative ruptures produced by artists, critical thinkers, community organizers, and writers, as well as a series of historical moments such as the Haitian Revolution and the Black Panther movement. Employing generative and task based learning, the course will provide an in-depth process of conscientization where the

¹ I used the name Africana Americana Diaspora to encompass in this imagined territory the experience of Afro
² After understanding the absence of gender in First Nations and West African stories of creation, many Afro Latino/as employ the x as a way to deconstruct the colonial gender binary condition imposed in the Spanish Language. I bring this use into English to continue the decolonization of modern European languages and knowledge.
³ This radical experimental interdisciplinary pedagogical process follows a variable and multilayered rhythmic model to articulate the various ways in which African aesthetics, variable geometry, queerness, and memory are present today in Africana Americana creative practices.
participants (facilitator and students) will arrive to an understanding of how colonality still in place, not only at the nation state, educational institutions, religious organizations, the prison system, and the social fabric, but also within many of the emotional, psychological, and critical corporal knowledge responses we, Africanxs Americanxs subjects, produce today.

**Course Aims and Outcomes**

The purposes of this course are geared toward collective generative processes of critical thinking, creative production and social expressions where the participants would recognize that at the present, Africanxs Americanxs are living in an era where debates about racism, heteronormativity, gender and sexual oppression, illegal immigration, global multinationals, neo slavery, prison industrial complex, and the ongoing Imperial military expansions are central to our survival. Examining the cultural and social expressions produce by the Africana Americana Diaspora communities, at the end of the semester, the students will:

- Have more extensive knowledge of the Africana American Diaspora related to cultural expressions, critical production, spiritualties, and socio-political positions;
- Be able to identify, discuss and analyze key migration, forced migration, and displacement issues affecting Africanxs Americanxs, as well as their cultural and political differences active in the larger context of African descendants communities;
- Have extensive knowledge of the multiple ways in which the European Christian colonality/modernity/rationality project has organized epistemological structures which today are perceived as the “universal truths” and has imposed cognitive racism in a geography of domination locating its colonial discourse in a temporal progression of development where non-European epistemologies such as the Africana Americana Diaspora, are displaced to the exteriority of modernity classifying African and Indigenous gnosis as “primitive,” “backward,” and “outdate;”
- Be able to comprehend and develop a vocabulary and terminology about the cultural, social, and political motivations for Africana Americana writers, thinkers, and artists to delink the Euro-Christian patriarchal colonial matrix;
- Will identify key geographical areas in the Americas from where the Africana Americana communities enunciate their creative, cultural, and literary productions, as well as the socio-political expressions;
- Have reinforced and improved accuracy and fluency of written and spoken decolonial terminology around the Africana Americana experiences as it relate to the the Caribbean, Latin American, Canada, and the United States histories;
- Develop research skills and critical reflection about issues facing Africana Americana communities at large;
- Be able to apply critical thinking skills in their verbal and written communication and integrate academic knowledge and experience about
issues of class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, ideology interweave with the production of cultural, creative and literary artifacts from the Africana Americana communities in the Americas;

- Develop intercultural knowledge and competence; be aware of diversity and engage in critical dialogues with a wide range of critical theories, historical positions, artistic practices, literary texts, and research produced since colonial times within and about the vast cultural territory of Africanxs Americanxs conforming an intrinsic part of the Caribbean, Latin America, Canada, and the United States.

**Course Rationale**

Understanding the needs of having a decolonial interdisciplinary approach to critical thinking, creative and information production, and organization skills in the 21st Century, each week has been designed as a combination of physical meetings, learning media and internet technologies workshops, and the implementation of mechanisms for creative collaborations. During the course, it will be emphasized how the remaining structural foundation of the colonial matrix is a geographical Anglo-Eurocentric spatial projection, which claims the universal truth of the construction of geography and spatial relations.

Here we are placed in an imagined territory where we began to think about ourselves from the perspective of our own locations: the Africana Americana Diaspora and its ancestral legacy. The course will render a transformative space where migration, movement, transculturalization, multilingualism, knowledge exchange, and the body create a multiscalar spatial and temporal matrix closer to our subjectivities, that of the decolonizing subjects. Connecting the experience of slavery in African descendants communities, this course will follow Glissant’s notion of evoking the poetic imagination of our enslaved ancestors to generate a critical process where the participants will place the nature of our imagined spaces in an unknown and uncertain terrifying location: the slave ship. This uncertainty affected the sensorial responses of our ancestors even before they entered the slave ship, at the petrifying moment, to use Glissant’s words, of their capture.

Therefore, recognizing how racism, sexism, homophobia, heteronormativity, and the control of the state affect and terrorize our subjective experiences would provide a generative healing process guided toward the understanding of how ancestral knowledge inform the decolonial strategies employ to elicit corporal knowledge. The course focuses on the many decolonial strategies employed today in the larger Africana Americana Diaspora in order to delink from the coloniality of Western epistemology: re-membering, re-existential, ancestral memory, the respect to the legacy of the elders, cimarronaje, and collaborative practices, among others. These decolonial strategies are intrinsically linked to those uncertain moments of terrifying and unknown sensorial experiences lived, felt.

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and sensed by our African ancestors, which through time and via oral histories, have arrived to us, as systems of knowledge, wisdom, and gnosis allowing for the continuation of the decolonial process.

**Evaluation and Grading**

**Weekly postings**  
Every week, the participants will post on the seminar website their experiences within the laboratory and their interpretation of the readings, the conferences, and of the collaborative projects in any of the creative approach each participant chooses (poetry, fiction, essay, screenwriting, digital maps, photography, drawings, performative gestures etc.).  
10%

**Weekly reading presentations**  
Every week, the participants will chose one of the readings assigned to lead the discussion in the seminar.  
10%

**Class Participation**  
The participants are encouraged to develop dialogues during the seminar, to discuss the artworks and literary texts, and to engage in collaborative exercises.  
10%

**Collaborative Weekly Projects**  
Every week, the seminar will be divided in to groups to develop collaborative projects. Based on the themes for that week, the group will chose the format, the media(s), the outcomes and the presentation of the collaborative project.  
20%

**Community Engagement**  
During the 14 weeks of the class, the participants will develop, individually or in groups, an ongoing project with a community organization, a neighborhood, a group of people or with a public space.  
20%

**Final Project** (Individual or Collaborative)  
The participants choose the creative approach (poetry, fiction, essay, screenwriting, digital maps, photography, performance, audio, drawing, installation, video, blog, etc.)  
20%

**Total**  
100%
Thematic Organization and Weekly Readings

Week 1: Sensing, Thinking, Doing, and Expressing the Africana Americana Diaspora: The Integration of Africans and African Descendants in the World Cultures System: Interethnic Africana American Subjectivity and Alliance Building.

Readings

Week 2: The colonial matrix and its dimensions: The rhetoric of the ideology of visualization, the global society of spectacle and information, and the colonization of the social, individual and collective imaginariness.

Readings


Readings
**Week 3:** Corpo/Bio Politics: Racism, Slavery, Subpersonhood, and the colonization of corporal and ancestral knowledge.

**Readings**

Cugoano, Ottobah. “Appendix,” *Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa; Published by Himself in the Year 1787.* London: Printed for the Author and Sold by Hatchard and Co., 1825, pp. 120-127.


**Week 4:** Decolonial Variable Geometries. The Ori: I/We within the subject. The Body as Container of Information: Ancestral Memory, Sensorial Knowledge, and Doing.

**Readings**


**Week 5:** Delink from Subpersonhood: Decoloniality of Structural Though.

**Readings**


**Week 6:** Decolonial Spiritual Practices: The wisdom of our Ancestrality. Cosmic Nature as a Way of Living in the Africana Americana Imagined Diaspora.

**Readings**


**Week 7:** Thinking from our territories: The Africana Americana variable location as epistemological sites.

**Readings**


**Week 8:** Africana Americana Diaspora Sensing Cosmic Time and Movement: The Sacred, Spirituality, Ancestral Memory, and Liberation.

**Readings**


**Week 9:** Decolonizing the Erotic: Africana Americana Androgynous Stories of Creation as Systems of Knowledge.

**Readings**


**Week 10:** Transformative Gestures: Vèvè Drawings and Writing and its Relation to an Ancient System of World Cultures.

**Readings**


**Week 11:** Decolonial Aesthesis: Cosmic Sensing, Living and Expressing.

**Readings**


**Week 12:** Cimarronaje: Delinking and The Geography of Knowledge, Re-Existentialia and Re-remembering. Trans Mobility: Imagining Multiple Directions, Movements, and Temporalities.
**Readings**

**Week 13:** Decolonial Pedagogy Deprogramming Coloniality: Collective ritual and Performance the I/We.

**Readings**

**Week 14:** Decolonial Narration: Creating Our Stories.

**Readings**

**Week 15:** Final Presentation
Suggested Additional Bibliography


Fusco, Coco. The bodies that were no ours and other writings, Londres-Nueva York: Routledge y INIVA, 2001.


