

NYU ACCRA

CORE –UA 9534

History: Cultures and Contexts: Ghana’s Black Atlantic

Instructor Information

- Dr. Kofi Baku
- NYU Study Centre, Accra
- Office hours: By appointment

Course Information

- Course Code: CORE-UA 9534
- Course Title: History: Cultures and Civilization, Ghana’s Black Atlantic
- Meeting: Tuesdays, 02:00pm - 05:00pm, Accra Academic Centre, Room 1

Course Description

This course introduces students to “The Black Atlantic” as a concept and pragmatic force in the world through careful discussion of the texts and ideas through which it is constituted. In doing so, we will use Ghana as an entry point into the Black Atlantic.

Topics to be discussed include the slavery in the Gold Coast (Ghana)/West Africa, Atlantic slave trade, slavery in the Americas, colonialism, capitalism, freedom, and justice. This course will explore these themes through sustained engagement with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its aftermath. This course will explore these developments through the lens of historical events that include the experience of capture and transport, the work of slave labor, the fights for Emancipation in both the Gold Coast (Ghana)/West Africa and the Americas, 19th and 20th century colonialism, Jim Crow, and Freedom Movements, and finally the contemporary struggles over what this history has meant and how to remember it.

This course explores the Black Atlantic in history and as a socio-cultural and economic space from the fifteenth-century capture of and arrival of Africans in the ‘New World,’ through the rise

of slavery in the Americas, continuing on to slave emancipation and decolonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and concluding with black struggle for liberation, equality and pan-Africanism. While it is organized historically, it is not a comprehensive history of the Black Atlantic. Rather, the intention here is to introduce students to important moments in the history of the Black Atlantic and to engage, through interdisciplinary writings, with questions of meaning-making. During this class we will trace the origins and importance of the concept of the Black Atlantic in the context of European imperial expansion, paying special attention to the social relations that shaped community formation among people of slave ancestry in Ghana/West Africa and of African descent in the Americas and laid the foundations for their political and economic institutions.

Three of the classes, i.e., those on 10th September, 17th September and 5th November would be held jointly via video with your colleagues talking the course at NYU Washington Square. You would also undertake joint exercises that would be announced in class.

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

1. You should leave this course with an introduction to the overlapping phenomena that comprise the history of the African Diaspora—modern economies, race, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and the mobilizing of power to both construct and oppose racial and economic hierarchies.
2. You should also leave here with a clear understanding of what it means to write and read both critically and analytically in an historical mode.

Course Requirements

Field trips:

There will be three field trips:

1. the first one will be a tour of Cape Coast/Elmina Castles on the 7th and 8th of September 2019;
2. the second one will be a tour of Christiansborg, Osu, Accra, on the 24th of September 2019 for the legacies of the Danish slave trade on the Gold Coast; and
3. the third one will be on the 1st of October 2019 to an old Danish slave plantation in Sesemi to explore the development of a slave plantation in the Gold Coast after the abolition of the slave trade.

You will write a 5-page typed written reflection paper on each field trip. Each paper will be graded over 10 accounting for 30% of the total grade

Movies:

There will be one documentary/movie:

1. The second movie: “Traces of the trade” will be on the **26th of November 2019**

You will write a 5-page typed written reflection paper on each movie. Each paper will be graded over 10 accounting for 30% of the total grade.

Class Participation

1. The course will be by lectures and class discussions. You will be expected to read the assigned reading materials before class and be ready to actively participate in class discussions.
2. You will earn 10% of the total grade for class attendance and participation in class discussions.

Assignment 1

A 5-page reflection page on the tour of Cape Coast and Elmina Castles. It will be due on the **17th day of September 2019** and it will be graded out of 10.

Assignment 2

Write a 5-page reaction paper to Walter Rodney, “Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast”, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, vol X, 1969: 13 – 28 and Per Hernaes, “‘A sombre Affair’: The Story of Slave Ship Mutiny and the Destiny of the Mutineers upon their Return to Africa”, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series No 10, 2006 2007: 215 – 222.

Your paper should highlight the key arguments of the authors, how the papers speak to each other and what new things you learnt. The paper will be graded over 10 making 10% of the total grade and it will be due on **24th September 2019**.

Assignment 2

A 5-page reflection paper on the field tour to Christiansborg, Osu, Accra. It will be graded out of 10 and it will be due on the **1st of October 2019**

Assignment 3

A 5-page reflection paper on the field tour to the Danish plantation in Sesemi, Abokobi, in Accra. It will be grade out of 10 and it will be due on the **8th of October 2019**.

Assignment 4

A 5-page reflection paper on “Traces of the Trade”. It will be graded out of 10 and it be due on the **3rd day of December 2019**

Assignment 5

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Class attendance and participation	10%
Take away assignment	10%
3 Field tours	30%
1 documentary/movie	10%
Mid semester exam	20%
Final exam	20%

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points	Percent
A	4.00	94%-100%
A-	3.67	90%-93%
B+	3.33	87%-89%
B	3.00	84%-86%
B-	2.67	80%-83%
C+	2.33	77%-79%
C	2.00	74%-76%

C-	2.00	70%-73%
D	1.00	65% -69%
F	.00	Below 65 %

View Grades

All assignments will be graded and handed over in class. You should, therefore, be able to tabulate your grades as we progress. However, midterm grades and final grades will be uploaded unto NYU Classes.

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1: <u>27 August 2019</u>	Getting started, course requirements, expectations, etc	Course syllabus	
Week 2: <u>3 September 2019</u>	Defining the Atlantic World	Toyin Falola & Kevin D Roberts, <i>The Atlantic World, 1450 – 2000</i> , Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2008: 3-66	
Week 3: <u>10 September 2019</u>	History and the start of the Black Atlantic: Making Human Commodities	David Wheat, <i>Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean</i> (UNC 2016) Chap 1-2, “Rivers of Guinea” and “Kingdoms of Angola”, Atlantic Africans, 20-103	
Week 4: <u>17 September 2019</u>	History and the start of the Black Atlantic: Making Meaning	Stephanie Smallwood, <i>Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American</i>	Assignment 1

		<p><i>Diaspora</i> (Harvard, 2007): 33-64 and Olaudah Equiano, <i>The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself</i> (Chapters 1 & 2). [online version available through Bobst, Proquest Literature Online]</p> <p>Alexander X. Byrd, “Eboe Country, Nation, and Gustavus Vassa’s Interesting Narrative”, <i>The William and Mary Quarterly</i> (January 2006) [J-Stor]</p> <p>G.I. Jones, “Olaudah Equiano of the Niger Ibo,” in P. Curtin, ed., <i>Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade</i>, (Madison, 1967): 60-98</p>	
<p>Week 5: <u>24 September 2019</u></p>	<p>Field tour to Osu Christiansborg for legacies of Danish & Dano-African slaving activities in the Gold Coast</p>	<p>H. Nii-Adziri <i>Wellington, Stones Tell Stories at Osu</i>, Beaumont, Amerly Treb Books, 2017</p>	<p>Assignment 2</p>
<p>Week 6: <u>1 October 2019</u></p>	<p>Field tour to the Danish Slave Plantation at Sesemi</p>	<p>Yaw Bredwa-Mensah, Ole Justesen & Anne Mette Jorgensen, <i>Frederiksgave Plantation and Common Heritage Site</i>, 2009</p> <p>Yaw Bredwa-Mensah, “Landscapes of Slavery: The Plantation Complex</p>	<p>Assignment 3</p>

		<p>in the Akwapem Mountatins, Southeastern Gold Coast (Ghana),” in <i>The Transatlantic Slave Trade: Landmarks, Legacies and Expectations</i>, Eds. J.K. Anquandah, N.J. Opoku-Agyemang, & M.R. Doortmont, 2007, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, pp. 148 – 163.</p>	
<p>Week 7: <u>8 October 2019</u></p>	<p>Mid Semester Exam</p>	<p>Reflection paper on William St Clair, <i>The Door of No Return, The History of Cape Coast Castle and the Atlantic Slave Trade</i>, New York, BlueBridge, 2006</p>	<p>Assignments 4</p>
<p>Week 8: <u>15 October 2019</u></p>	<p>Mid Semester Break</p>		
<p>Week 9: <u>22 October 2019</u></p>	<p>Slavery in Ghana and West Africa: Forms and nature debate</p>	<p>Suzanne Miers & Igor Kopytoff, <i>Slavery in Africa Historical and Anthropological Perspectives</i> (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977) 3-81</p> <p>Claude Meillassoux, <i>The Anthropology of Slavery, The Womb of Iron and Gold</i> (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991): 23-40, Chap 2,</p> <p>Walter Rodney + Fage</p>	

<p>Week 10: <u>29 October 2019</u></p>	<p>Slavery in Ghana</p>	<p>Akosua A. Perbi, <i>A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century</i>, (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004): 3-151</p>	
<p>Week 11: <u>5 November 2019</u></p>	<p>Black Modernities/ Africa as Catalyst: Disposable populations and genocidal experiments</p>	<p>Madley, "From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe," <i>European History Quarterly</i>, 35 (2005): 429-464 [J-Stor]</p>	
<p>Week 12: <u>12 November 2019</u></p>	<p>Black Modernities/ Africa as Catalyst: Pan Africanism and American Freedom Movements</p>	<p>Michelle Ann Stephens, <i>Black Transnationalism and the Politics of National Identity: West Indian Intellectuals in Harlem in the age of War and Reconstruction</i>," <i>American Quarterly</i>, 50 (September 1998): 592-608 & Ali Mazrui, "On the Concept of "We are All Africans"" <i>The American Political Science Review</i>, 57 (1963): 88-97</p>	
<p>Week 13: <u>19 November 2019</u></p>	<p>Tracing the routes of and grappling with slave trade and slavery</p>	<p>Bayo Hosley, <i>Routes of Remembrance</i>, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008</p>	

Week 14: <u>26 November 2019</u>	Grappling with the slave trade and slavery: Movie: Traces of the Trade		
Week 15: <u>3 December 2019</u>	Reparations and Redress: The argument for Reparations	Ta-Nehisi Coates, <i>The Case for Reparations</i>	Assignment 5
Week 16: <u>10 December 2019</u>	End of semester exams	Saidiya Hartman, <i>Lose Your Mother</i> , New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007	

Course Materials

Required Textbooks & Materials

Available at the NYU Study Centre, Accra

- Toyin Falola & Kevin D Roberts, *The Atlantic World, 1450 – 2000*, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008)
- H. Nii-Adziri *Wellington, Stones Tell Stories at Osu*, (Beaumont: Amerly Treb Books, 2017)
- Y. Bredwa Mensah, Ole Justesen & Anne Mette Jorgensen, *Frederiksgave Plantation and Common Heritage Site*, (Copenhagen, 2009)
- Yaw Bredwa-Mensah, “Landscapes of Slavery: The Plantation Complex in the Akwapem Mountatins, Southeastern Gold Coast (Ghana),” in *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: Landmarks, Legacies and Expectations*, Eds. J.K. Anquandah, N.J. Opoku-Agyemang, & M.R. Doortmont, 2007, (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers).
- Suzanne Miers & Igor Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977)
- Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery, The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)
- Akosua A. Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004)
- Walter Rodney, “Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast”, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, vol X, 1969: 13 – 28 (also available on J-Stor)
- Per Hernaes, “‘A sombre Affair’: The Story of Slave Ship Mutiny and the Destiny of the Mutineers upon their Return to Africa”, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series No 10, 2006 2007: 215 – 222 (also available on J-Stor).
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Case for Reparations*

Students should buy:

- William St Clair, *The Door of No Return, The History of Cape Coast Castle and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, (New York: BlueBridge, 2006)
- Bayo Hosley, *Routes of Remembrance*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007)

Students should get relevant pages from NYU Library in New York:

- David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2016): Chap 1-2, “Rivers of Guinea” and “Kingdoms of Angola”, *Atlantic Africans*, 20-103
- Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard, 2007), Chap 2, “Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities,” pp. 33-64.
- Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* (Chapters 1 & 2). [online version available through Bobst, Proquest Literature Online]
- G.I. Jones, “Olaudah Equiano of the Niger Ibo,” in P. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, (Madison, 1967): 60-98
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Case for Reparations*

Resources

- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

1. Students will be required to attend **all** lectures and participate in all field trips. Attendance at lectures is **NOT** optional and the roll will be taken at random and excuses will not be accepted for absence from lectures unless prior permission has been sought. Students who frequently absent themselves from lectures will not be eligible to take the end of semester examinations.
2. To ensure that students attend lectures, snap (not previously announced or programmed) tests would be conducted and answer sheets would be evidence of attendance in class.
3. There will be no **make-up** for an unexcused absence.

Note: If for any reason you are unable to attend class, you are FIRST required to contact and inform the NYU Accra Manager of Student Services directly at the Academic Centre or email mao9@nyu.edu

Late Assignment

1. Unexcused late submission of work of 1 week or less will be graded over 50% of the total score for the work.
2. Unexcused late submission of work of more than 1 week will not be graded.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism & Annotation

You have a series of written assignments due over the course of the semester. These assignments are designed to support our work in the classroom and must be handed in on time. It goes without saying that all written work must be original, any plagiarism will result in an “F” in the course.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Please read [NYU’s statement on Academic integrity](#)

Both your response papers and exams must be written using the [Standard Chicago Manual Style \(Turabian\) citation](#). This form uses footnotes for references, not parenthesis. Citation format is quite specific—even if you believe that you know how to construct your citations, for this class, the turabian style is compulsory.

Note: Aspects of this syllabus could change in the course of the semester
