Texts and Ideas: Topics – On Liberation

CORE-UA 9400

Instruction Mode: In-person

Spring 2023

If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Go Local/Study Away student for NYU Paris please make sure that you’ve completed the online academic orientation via Brightspace so you are aware of site specific support structure, policies and procedures. Please contact NYU Paris if you have trouble accessing the Brightspace site.

Syllabus last updated on: 25-07-2022

Lecturer Contact Information
TBD

Prerequisites
None

Units earned
4

Course Details
- Time TBD
- All times are in Paris Time Zone. (Daylight Saving Time ends [Date]).
- Location: Rooms will be posted in Albert before your first class.
- Remote Participants: Your instructor will provide you with the Zoom link via NYU Classes.
- COVID-related details: In the interest of protecting the NYU Paris community, we are closely following CDC guidance around COVID-19 and adjusting our recommendations and policies accordingly. Your health and well-being is our top priority.
  - If you are attending in person, you will be assigned a seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol. Please note that you are expected to attend every class meeting in-person; however, this may change during the drop/add period if in-person student registration increases significantly or at any point during the semester if local COVID-19 regulations require additional physical distancing.
Course Description
What is liberation? How have the concepts of freedom, slavery and oppression been articulated by thinkers from Plato to the Combahee River Collective? This course examines these enduring questions through a wide historical and cultural lens, ranging from a founding text of Greek philosophy and the Bible to Shakespeare, Marx, and Gandhi. In this course, we aim to understand and map out competing ideas around the conditions for freedom—and unfreedom. We will read seminal works theorizing the relationship between the individual and the collective, ideas on sovereignty, slavery, the ideal state and the revolutionary nation, women’s liberation, arguments for violence and non-violence. While the course provides a grounding in European thought on the topic, we will also pay attention to the struggles and theorizations of the non-West (the Haitian Revolution, the Algerian and Indian independence struggles) that have shaped our inquiry into the nature and promise of liberation. How can understanding the struggles of the past help us make better futures out of our own moment?

Course Objective

● to introduce you to major concepts in the history of thought regarding slavery, bondage, liberation and political organization

● to develop your skills in reading a wide variety of genres and literatures, analyzing various modes of argumentation, and writing clearly and effectively

● to develop a socially and historically informed understanding of the concept of liberation, that is, to see its development between and across historical moments, societies, cultures and power structures.

Assessment Components
You are expected to attend class in person or remote synchronously. Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

Assessment
Detailed assignment instructions will be made available on NYU Classes and discussed in recitation. If you are away the day it is discussed, please access it online. You are encouraged to read the assignment closely and ask for clarification early. Assignments are due on the days indicated on the syllabus (double-spaced, 12-pt font, Times New Roman or Cambria) via NYU Classes. Please note that submitting assignments late prevents your instructors from giving your work timely attention and feedback; please be respectful of our work schedules and hand them in on time. Late assignments may be penalized 5% per day. Although we are happy to discuss your work with you, it is our firm policy not to change grades after they are determined.

1. Participation, Attendance: 15% Being prepared for lectures, reading the materials in advance, and actively participating in recitations are essential to being successful in this
course. Many of the texts we are dealing with are difficult to read on one’s own: make the most of the (zoom) classroom as a space for respectful, cheerful, collective engagement with them. You will be expected to do one 5-minute class presentation during the semester; your brief Google form responses during lecture also count toward this grade. Additionally, there will be short writing assignments and group work incorporated into recitations.

2. Weekly discussion responses 10% Each week, you will thoughtfully reflect on the readings and engage with your peers using the forums site on NYUClasses, posting 200-250 words by midnight on Wednesday, and responding with a 100-word post to at least one other classmate by midnight on Thursday. You are expected to post 10 times over the semester, meaning you can skip three weekly posts. Your responses will also be used by the recitation instructors to initiate discussion in weekly recitations. More information on weekly posts will be distributed during recitation.

3. 3 x short papers: 40% (10% + 15% + 15%) One of the major skills in conceptual learning is the ability to read a text closely for argument, mode, logic, style, and figurative language. These short papers increase in length, starting at 2-3 pages, then 3 pages, then 4 pages (double-spaced). They are your opportunity to demonstrate that you can identify and evaluate ideas, and the mode they are presented in, within a context of other ideas. Since we are working with some very dense and difficult writers, these papers will help you develop clear reading, reflecting, and writing skills; the third paper will be more creative in scope. More information will be provided in recitation. No secondary sources are needed, and none should be consulted.

4. Midterm exam: 20% Exams are a useful and efficient way of assessing how you are absorbing and digesting the course material. In general, we are looking for your ability to synthesize textual material, reproduce the main arguments, respond to and analyze a set of ideas in a clear and relevant way. You may be examined on any material from the assigned readings, as well as on content from lectures and recitation. The exam will be a take-home exam and consist of short essays.

5. Final paper/project (6pp or equivalent): 20% The final paper or project will demonstrate your ability to synthesize and evaluate ideas at a more complex and sustained level. You may choose from a variety of formats or creative genres (analytical essay; non-fiction essay; song; video; zine; podcast etc.) More information will be distributed in class.

Required Text(s)
Electronic Resources (via Brightspace / NYU Library Course Reserves)

- Plato, Republic. (Hackett)
- Olaudah Equiano. The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings. (Penguin)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Discourse on Inequality. (Penguin)
- C.L.R. James. Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History. (Duke)

**other readings on NYU Classes

COURSE SCHEDULE
Trigger Warnings
By necessity, many texts we read in this class contain traumatic events – enslavement, death, and violence. Instructors will not be able to flag every instance in advance; please talk to us if you have concerns.

**Note: All readings except for Plato, Equiano, Rousseau, CLR James can be found on NYUClasses under the Resources tab.**

**The reading listed for each date is to be completed before coming to lecture.**

UNIT 1: Classical thought on freedom and liberation
“The best and most just is . . . the one who rules like a king over himself”
--we examine early texts on freedom; ask how the ideal political community and the relationship between state, individual and ruler have been articulated (Plato); and why the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt remains a powerful example of liberation (Old Testament)

Session 1 –
Introduction

Session 2—
• Read: Plato. The Republic. “Synopsis” (pp. xxx-xxxiii) and Book 2 (pp. 36-65).
• Watch lecture materials (posted on Media Gallery on NYUClasses
• Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight Session 3

Session 3 –
• Read: Plato. The Republic. Book 4 (pp. 103-135) and section on The Cave in Book 7 (pp. 208-213).
• Read: Plato. The Republic. Books 8 and 9 (pp. 238-296)
• Watch lecture materials
• *Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

UNIT 2: New World Encounters and Slavery
“For I am all the subjects that you have, Which first was mine own king” --we address essential questions and debates arising in relation to the New World enslavement of Native Americans and Africans; examine early modern ideas of slavery, bondage and racial difference (Shakespeare); and look in depth at a seminal autobiographical narrative of slavery and freedom (Equiano)

Session 4 –
• Read: Old Testament. Exodus.
• Read: Extract from Bartolomé de Las Casas. A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies.
• Read: William Shakespeare. The Tempest. Acts I and II
• Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

• **Submit 2-3-page close reading paper by Fri Sept 25, midnight (texts: either Plato or Exodus)**

Session 5 –
Read: Olaudah Equiano. *The Interesting Narrative*. Chs. 1, 2, 3, 5 (Ch. 4 optional).
Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

**Session 6**
- Read: Olaudah Equiano. *The Interesting Narrative*. Chs. 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 (Chs. 8, 10 optional).
- Read: Angela Davis. “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves.”

**UNIT 3. Liberty and society**

“All ran toward their chains believing that they were securing their liberty.”

--we engage with major 18th and 19th century thought on freedom, sovereignty and the individual-society relationship, and ask: what are “natural” freedoms? (Rousseau); how is the issue of women’s liberation figured? (Wollstonecraft); how does Marx theorize freedom in terms of alienated labor and class oppression? (Rousseau); how is the issue of women’s liberation figured? (Wollstonecraft); how does Marx theorize freedom in terms of alienated labor and class oppression?

**Session 7**
- Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight
  **Guest interview** with Professor Cristina Beltrán
  * Read: “American will struggle after Coronavirus. These charts show why.”
- Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

**Session 8**
- Read: Mary Wollstonecraft. Extract from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.
  **Submit: 3-page close reading paper by Mon Oct 19, midnight (texts: either Shakespeare, Equiano or Davis)**

**UNIT 4. Colonialism, revolution and national liberation**

“The last shall be the first.”

--we will gain an understanding of non-Western struggles of liberation in the context of the anti-colonial movements: in particular, the role of Haiti as the first successful slave revolution (James); the thought of Fanon and Gandhi in relation to anti-imperialism.
Session 9 –
- David Graeber, "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs." (optional)
- Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

Session 10 -
**Take-home exam**
- Read: C.L.R. James. *Toussaint Louverture.* Acts II & III (pp. 80-133). *Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

Session 11 –
- Read: Frantz Fanon. “Concerning Violence.” *The Wretched of the Earth.* pp 70-106.
- Watch clips of Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* *before* lecture: https://nyu.kanopy.com/playlist/10766406
- **Guest interview** with Professor Robert Young during lecture • Read: Nikole Hannah-Jones. *What is Owed.*
- Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

Session 12 –
- Read: Gandhi. *Hind Swaraj.* pp. 70-72; 77-117.
- **Guest interview** by Global Distinguished Professor Rajeswari Sunder Rajan
- Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

**Submit: 4-page play script paper**

UNIT 5: Contemporary issues and freedom

“If Black women were free, it would mean everyone else would have to be free.”

--finally, we touch on three issues central to liberation today: women of color feminism in the U.S.; race, criminal justice and BLM; and the challenge of climate change

Session 13 –
- Read: The Combahee River Collective Statement
- Read: Anzaldúa, *La conciencia de La mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness.*

Session 14 –
- Read: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. “From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation.”
- Watch: *13th*, by Ava DuVernay (NO LECTURE) available on Youtube: **Complete Google response form on film**
- Post response on NYUClasses by Wed midnight

** 1-paragraph description of final project due in recitation for peer-review workshop**

Session 15–
*Read: Amitav Ghosh. “Politics,” in The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable.**

**Submit final assignment**

Classroom Etiquette
To optimize the experience in a blended learning environment, please consider the following:
- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.
- Please do not eat during class and minimize any other distracting noises (e.g. rustling of papers and leaving the classroom before the break, unless absolutely necessary).
- If you are not using your cell phone to follow the lesson, cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during class time.
- Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (ie COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.
- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class.

Academic Policies

Grade Conversion
Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A = 94-100 or 4.0  
A- = 90-93 or 3.7  
B+ = 87-89 or 3.3  
B = 84-86 or 3.0  
B- = 80-83 or 2.7  
C+ = 77-79 or 2.3  
C = 74-76 or 2.0  
C- = 70-73 or 1.7  
D+ = 67-69 or 1.3  
D = 65-66 or 1.0  
F = below 65 or 0
Attendance Policy

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers, or online through NYU Brightspaces if the course is remote synchronous/blended, is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to write to NYU Paris to see if you can take your remote class at the Academic Center.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor and/or the Academics team by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance or emergencies. Your professor or site staff may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from an NYU Staff member as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances that you wish to be treated confidentially must be presented to staff. Doctor's notes must be submitted in person or by e-mail to the Academics team, who will inform your professors.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed, and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequently joining the class late.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to site staff; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

Final exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

Late Submission of Work

(1) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (including weekends and public holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU SITE Staff), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.

(2) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (including weekends and public holidays) following the submission date receives an F.
Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days late (including weekends and public holidays) without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Site Director.

Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

As the University's policy on "Academic Integrity for Students at NYU" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offences against academic integrity.

The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

- NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines
- NYU Library Guides

**Inclusivity Policies and Priorities**

NYU’s Office of Global Programs and NYU’s global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

**Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays**
Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU Paris's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays.

Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, NYU Classes, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website.

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the Personalizing Zoom Display Names website.

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Paris.

Bias Response

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:
● Online using the Web Form (link)
● Email: bias.response@nyu.edu
● Phone: 212-998-2277