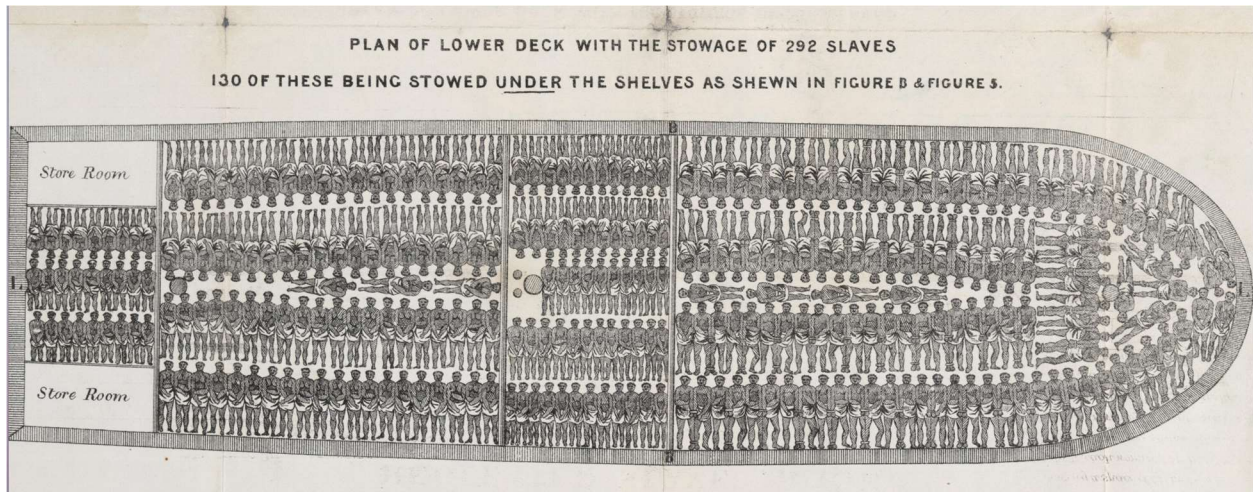


ENG 645
Winter 2021
F 12:15 – 3:15 p.m.
Remote

Prof. Liz Bohls
ebohls@uoregon.edu
Hrs. W 12-3

THE BLACK ATLANTIC: LITERATURE, THEORY, HISTORY



Paul Gilroy's 1993 book launched a critical conversation about the Black Atlantic, the areas of Africa, Europe, and the Americas historically connected by the Atlantic slave trade and the African diaspora. We are still living the legacy of slavery in the 21st century, as recent events make distressingly clear. In this course we will study primary materials from the Black Atlantic archive of the long eighteenth century (1660-1838), including slave narratives, ships' logs, planter histories and political tracts, as well as novels and visual representations. Guiding our discussions will be Black feminist theory by Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe and others, along with innovative archival histories developing methods for unearthing the lives of those without access to literacy or print. In addition, we'll work on antiracist pedagogy, asking how best to teach the history of slavery in a place, Oregon, with its own often-neglected racist history. The course is grounded in the claim that Black Atlantic history and literature provide vital tools for antiracist work in the present day.

REQUIRED TEXTS: These have been ordered through the Duck Store, which will ship them to you free of charge. **Please get the specified editions** so that we can all be literally on the same page for discussion (used copies should be available for most books).

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. V. Carretta (Penguin)
Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, ed. S. Salih (Penguin)
Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, ed. Kupperman (Hackett)
William Earle, *Obi, or the History of Three-Fingered Jack*, ed. S. Aravamudan (Broadview)
Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts* (ECCO/HarperCollins)

Additional readings posted on Canvas. See Bibliography (posted under Files) for full citations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Participation = 15%
 Weekly discussion board posts = 15%
 Report = 10%
 Lesson plan = 10%
 Paper proposal = 5%
 Annotated bibliography (10 items) = 10%
 Final paper (10-12 pages) = 35%

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Read primary and secondary texts carefully and critically
2. Pose productive questions in an academic setting
3. Write original and persuasive critical arguments
4. Devise anti-racist pedagogical strategies for teaching the history of slavery and racial discourse
5. Research and write a persuasive conference-length paper using primary and secondary sources

READINGS: Books on the schedule below have been ordered at the UO Bookstore. All items except the required texts listed above are posted on Canvas under Files. **Please have the assigned readings at hand during class**, in hard copy or on a screen. Recommended readings are intended for those interested in developing a paper topic and are listed on the course bibliography. For participation in class discussion and weekly writing on the discussion board, you just need to do the required readings. These include short videos supplying historical context and useful for pedagogy.

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE: This course requires regular and vigorous participation in discussion. You are expected to have read the assigned texts carefully before class. Bring your insights, questions, connections and lines of inquiry to share. Missing class more than once will result in reduction of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence beyond the one permitted. If circumstances arise that impede your attending class and/or getting your work done, or you find you need additional support, please contact me immediately. I know this is an unusually stressful time; I'll work to balance flexibility with academic rigor as we navigate it together.

ZOOM: I assume by now you're somewhat used to remote learning via Zoom. It's best to mute your microphone when not speaking to avoid creating feedback and echoes. You can help make the discussion more comfortable for all of us by leaving your camera on when possible. I know there may be times when you need to turn off the video feed, but it helps to establish trust and engagement when we can see each other's faces. I encourage you to use the chat function on Zoom to contribute to the discussions. We may find some chat practices more useful than others; we can re-assess after the first couple of sessions.

LANGUAGE, RESPECT, DIFFICULT CONTENT: A course dealing with slavery and race must confront content and issues that are difficult, distressing, and traumatic, even if they happened hundreds of years ago. Please work with me to create a safe and respectful space for discussion. We don't all need to agree on everything. Disagreement can be productive, but it's never an excuse for intolerance or personal attacks. Don't hesitate to expose your ignorance by asking questions. If you have a question, chances are several other class members are wondering the same thing. Genuine ignorance is no one's fault and can be an occasion for personal and communal growth. Finally, please take some time to read the document curated by Dr. Gabrielle Foreman on the Canvas site

entitled "Writing About Slavery." We'll discuss it in class; I encourage you to adopt its practices wherever possible.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION-BOARD POSTS: Each week you will post on our class discussion board a 500-word response to the week's readings. These are due by 8:00 the morning of class; late work will not be accepted, since these posts are a necessary element of class discussion. You may choose to focus on one reading, or make connections among the week's readings. Raising relevant questions for the class to take up is an especially helpful thing to do in these posts. Each week I'll ask several of you to summarize your posts for the class to start off discussion.

REPORTS: These are of two types. The first type presents a scholarly book (or special issue of a journal) relevant to the course and to the week's topic. The second type reviews the critical history of a canonical Black Atlantic figure (Olaudah Equiano or Mary Prince). Both types can spark ideas for your final paper. You will sign up for a report at the start of the term. For the first type, **you're responsible for procuring a copy of the book** from the UO library, Summit or ILL: this means getting started well in advance, since Summit loans may take time.

LESSON PLAN: One of our course objectives, as present or future teachers, is to come up with ways of teaching about slavery and race in the particular setting in which we find ourselves: in a state, Oregon, with its own little-known history of racial exclusion and oppression, and at a university with an overwhelmingly white student population. Each of you will devise and present a lesson plan to teach one of our course texts in an undergraduate class. Feel free to use videos on syllabus.

FINAL PAPER: you will research and write a conference-length paper (10-12 double-spaced pages, or 2500-3000 words, not including endnotes and Works Cited) that engages with the materials and concepts of our course. A proposal is due in Week 9, but you should get started thinking about and researching your topic much earlier than that, in consultation with me. An annotated bibliography is due in Week 10, documenting your research and moving you toward your own critical argument. Your paper should have the potential for expansion to article length (4000 to 7000 words), with the possibility of revising and expanding it in the required ENG 608 paper-to-article course for doctoral students.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please meet with me soon. Please request that the Accessible Education Center (<http://aec.uoregon.edu/>) send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The UO Student Conduct Code defines plagiarism as "using the ideas or writings of another as one's own." Plagiarism is not only detrimental to your own development as a scholar and a writer; it is also a serious violation of UO policy. Any plagiarized assignment will result in a failing course grade and academic sanctions as determined by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Please contact me with any questions about how to avoid plagiarism.

HARASSMENT, ASSAULT, DISCRIMINATION: Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at safe.uoregon.edu. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential, third-party reporting site that is not a part of the university. As UO policy has different reporting requirements based on the nature of the reported harassment or

discrimination, more information about reporting requirements for discrimination or harassment is available at <http://aaeo.uoregon.edu/content/discrimination-harassment>. For details about confidentiality of information and reporting obligations of employees go to: titleix.uoregon.edu. As a Student Directed Employee, I will direct students who disclose sexual harassment or violence to resources that can help and will only report the information shared to the university administration if the student requests that the information be reported (unless someone is in imminent risk of serious harm or is a minor). I am required to report all other forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment to the administration.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1/Jan. 8

THE ATLANTIC SYSTEM AND SLAVERY

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, Ch. 1, 2

Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, Preface & Introduction

Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery"

Watch: Crash Course World History #24, Atlantic Slave Trade (11:07)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnV_MTFEGIY

Recommended: Evans, Chaplin, Thornton, McNeill, O'Reilly

Week 2/Jan. 15

THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

Guest: Professor Kerry Sinanan, University of Texas, San Antonio

John Newton, *Journal of a Slave Trader* (1750-54), selections

Kerry Sinanan, "John Newton and Protean Selfhood"

Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake*, Chapters 1 & 2

Watch: History Channel on the Middle Passage (2:35)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IJrhQE6DZk>

Recommended: Smallwood; Rediker; Byrd, Ch. 2, "Igbo Society in the African Diaspora"

Reports:

1. Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*
2. Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*

Week 3/Jan. 22

THE ZONG: ATROCITY AND RESPONSE

Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997)

Watch: History Pod (2:38)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lad092IoHwQ>

Recommended: Baucom; Philip; Walvin

Reports:

1. Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History*
2. M. Nourbese Phillip, *Zong!*

Week 4/Jan. 29**THE SLAVE NARRATIVE**

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta

Watch: Equiano reading/images (7:31)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X485lrzty-E>

"London, Sugar, and Slavery" (4:05)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39VSVHsvcPQ>

Recommended: Wakefield; Gould; Sinanan; Youngquist; Lovejoy; Byrd, "Eboe"; Boulukos 2007; Andrews; Carretta & Gould, ed.; Bohls 2014, Ch. 4

Reports:

1. Equiano criticism
2. George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave*

Week 5/Feb. 5**SLAVERY AND GENDER**

GUEST: Professor Nicole Aljoe, Northeastern University

Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, ed. Sarah Salih, including Supplement & Appendix

Nicole Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies*, Introduction & Ch. 2

Early Caribbean Digital Archive (ECDA) <https://ecda.northeastern.edu>

Watch: Mary Prince reading/images (11:36 min.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gofLBjibX2k&has_verified=1

Recommended: Jenny Sharpe; Bush; Beckles; Bohls 2014, Ch. 6

Reports:

1. Mary Prince criticism
2. Ramesh Mallipeddi, *Spectacular Suffering*

Week 6/Feb. 12**RECOVERY WORK**

Guest: Professor Michelle McKinley, UO Law

Michelle A. McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms*, Ch. 5 and Conclusion

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts"

Brian Connolly and Marisa Fuentes, "Introduction: From Archives of Slavery to Liberated Futures?"

Jerome S. Handler, "Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in Barbados"

Kathleen Donegan, "Rose"

Recommended: Gikandi, "Rethinking"; Fuentes; Helton *et al*

Reports:

1. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*
2. *History of the Present* special issue on recovery (Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 2016)

Lesson plan due Feb. 17

Week 7/Feb. 19**"RACE" AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT / PEDAGOGY**

Watch: Oregon Black History by Walidah Imarisha (19:20)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fo2RVOunsZ8>

Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, selections

Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, "Introduction: The Empire of Climate"

Recommended: Weheliye; Hall; Herzog; Parrish; Brathwaite; Shepherd & Richards; Goudie; NY

Times 1619 Project <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>

Reports:

1. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*
2. Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*

Week 8/Feb. 26**THE PLANTATION**

Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, Ch. 2, "Production"

Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery*, Ch. 2, & Thistlewood transcript files (2)

Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of Barbados*

Rebekah Mitsein, "Humanism and the Ingenious Machine"

Watch: Whitney Plantation, Louisiana video (9:15)

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4641055/sugar-cane-plantation-living-slave>

Recommended: Allewaert; Iannini; Burnard

Reports:

1. Christopher P. Iannini, *Fatal Revolutions*
2. Monique Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*

Paper proposal due March 1**Week 9/Mar. 5****SLAVE REVOLTS AND OBEAH**

Chronology of Resistance (Canvas)

William Earle, *Obi, or the History of Three-Fingered Jack*, ed. S. Aravamudan (incl. Appendices A & B)

Vincent Brown "Slave Revolt in Jamaica, 1760-1761" <http://revolt.axismaps.com>

Recommended: Paton, "Afterlives" and *Cultural Politics*; Salih; Szwydky; Botkin; Rzepka, *Romantic Circles Praxis* online volume, *Obi* (2002); Parrish, *American Curiosity*, Ch. 7; Craton; Linebaugh & Rediker, Ch. 7

Reports:

1. Diana Paton, *The Cultural Politics of Obeah*
2. Emily Senior, *The Caribbean and the Medical Imagination, 1764-1834*

Annotated bibliography due March 11**Week 10/Mar. 12****VISUAL CULTURE**

Kay Dian Kriz, "Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies in Hans Sloane's *Voyage . . . to Jamaica*"

Hans Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica*, selections

"The Sable Venus, an Ode," in Bryan Edwards, *History of the West Indies*

Brathwaite portrait archive <http://peterbrathwaitebaritone.com/rediscoveringblackportraiture>

Reports:

1. Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory*
2. Kay Dian Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement*

Final paper due Thursday, March 18, 10:15 a.m.