

[revised 1/12/13]

Black Queer Diaspora Aesthetics
AFR 317E (30605) / ANT 310L (31570) / WGS 301 (47880)
Fall 2013
Monday / Wednesday / Friday 11am-12pm
Parlin Hall (PAR) #304

Professor Lyndon K. Gill

Description

This multi-disciplinary course covers over two decades of work produced by and about black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people both within and beyond the borders of the United States. While providing an introduction to various artists and intellectuals of the black queer diaspora, this seminar explores what it might mean to think of artistry (film, fiction, photography, painting, poetry) as a form of theorizing. We will investigate the concept of “aesthetics” through spending time with black queer subjects in the Americas, Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. Our aim is to use artistry to highlight the dynamic relationship between Black Diaspora Studies and Queer Studies.

**Please Note:*

- 1) *This course carries flags for Cultural Diversity in the United States and Global Cultures.*
- 2) *This course deals with aspects of gender and sexuality in a candid and explicit manner at times. Students who do not feel comfortable with this approach should not take the course. If you choose to take this course, you have agreed to respect our classroom as a safe space. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or xenophobia of any sort will not be tolerated.*

Requirements & Assignments

1. Attendance: Each student is required to attend *every* class session. Unexcused absences are unacceptable. More than one unexcused absence during the term will result in a reduction of the overall course grade for each session missed (A→A-, B+→B, etc.).

**Note: Laptops, mobile phones and any other portable electronic devices are NOT permitted in the classroom*

2. Informed participation: Each student will complete the assigned readings and bring hardcopies of these readings to class. Students will come to class on time and prepared with questions and comments on each reading.

3. Film excerpts: As part of the course, I will screen the occasional film excerpt during our class sessions. Time may not permit us to see these films in their entirety, but students are encouraged to view the films in full. They are on reserve in the Fine Arts Library.

4. Reading responses: Each week, students will post *a one-page reading response on Blackboard by Sunday at midnight*. These posts are intended to provoke conversation. The week's assigned readings must be addressed directly, but no need to summarize. Critique, compare, and pose questions for discussion or clarification. Each post must comment on at least one other person's reading response. *The first reading response is due on Sunday 2/2 at midnight*. These responses will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Students will receive *no credit* for late posts.

5. Discussion facilitation: Each student will be assigned two class sessions to lead as a facilitator (groups of two or more students may be necessary). Facilitators are required to meet with the instructor during office hours prior to each facilitation. Facilitators are expected to draft questions for discussion based on the assigned readings and are required to read all conversation pages posted for that week. The inclusion of course-relevant audio/visual material as a way to encourage conversation is highly encouraged. Students will receive a grade for these facilitations. **Discussion facilitators are NOT required to write reading responses for the week of their facilitation.**

6. Final project proposal: Students will form groups and each group will write a **2-3-page proposal** (12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced) for a final project. This proposal will explain the form of the final project and the texts the group will be using. These texts must include course related readings/films, but may also include outside resources. This proposal will be *accompanied by a briefly annotated bibliography* (the bibliography does NOT count toward the minimum page limit). Each group member will receive the same grade.

7. Final project: Each group will complete a *final project to be accompanied by a 5 page explanatory essay* (12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced). The project will be due on the first day of Final Exams). Each group members will receive the same grade.

- For the **Final Project** students will produce a creative work in the medium of their choice (performance, film, painting, sculpture, photography, literary text, web, etc. or using multiple media). This work **MUST** engage directly with texts/films assigned for the course and themes raised by the course. Outside sources are encouraged but not required.

Please note for all assignments:

* *Late proposals and projects will be penalized for every day they are late* (i.e. A → A- if one day late, A → B+ if two days late, etc.). Students are required to **proofread** their

material prior to submission (ideally, someone else will also read the material for grammatical/spelling/flow errors your eyes might miss). Materials that show evidence of not having been proofread will be returned and marked late. Extensions may be considered only under extenuating circumstances and in emergency situations. When possible, advance notice is encouraged and documentation will be required.

* For assistance with cultivating your ideas, outlining your written work and tips on proofreading/editing your polished writing, please make an appointment at the ***Undergraduate Writing Center***: www.uwc.utexas.edu

* Students are expected to comply with the University of Texas at Austin's **Honor Code** and its standards of academic integrity:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

It is each student's responsibility to become familiar with this code and these university-wide standards; ignorance will be unacceptable as an excuse for violations. All written assignments may be scanned for plagiarism.

* Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the University. To determine if you qualify, please contact the coordinating office at 471-6259 (voice), 232-2937 (video phone) or www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd.

Course Grade Percentages

Reading responses	10%
Class participation/ Discussion facilitation	20%
Final paper/project proposal (due 3/5)	30%
Final paper/project (due 5/7)	40%

Required Texts

Glave, Thomas

2008 Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from The Antilles.
Durham: Duke University Press

Johnson, E. Patrick and Mae G. Henderson

2005 Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology. Durham: Duke University Press.

Murray, Stephen O. and Will Roscoe

1998 Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities.
New York : St. Martin's Press.

The above texts are available for purchase at the Co-Op and have been put on reserve at the Perry-Castañeda Library. Additional required readings (book chapters, articles, etc.) are also available as pdf documents on Blackboard.

Films

Brooks, Phillip and Laurent Bocahut

1998 Woubi Chéri: San Francisco: California Newsreel.

Camara, Mohamed

1997 Dakan [Destiny]. San Francisco: California Newsreel.

(Available online through UT Libraries web portal)

Frilot, Shari

1995 Black Nations/Queer Nations: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities in the African Diaspora. New York: Third World Newsreel

Hajim, G.B.

2012 Strange Frame: Love & Sax. Onomea: Screaming Wink Productions.

(Available on Netflix)

Lescot, Anne and Laurence Magloire

2002 Of Men and Gods [Des Hommes et des Dieux]. Watertown: Documentary Educational Resources.

Maccarone, Angelina and Fatimah El-Tayeb

1997 Alles Wird Gut [Everything Will Be Fine].

(Available online through YouTube beginning with "awg_1")

The above films are available on reserve at the Fine Arts Library.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

**Please Note: It may be necessary to make slight changes to this schedule as the course progresses. You will always receive prior notice of any changes.*

Part I: The Americas

Week #1: Introductions

1/13

An introduction to the course and each other

1/15

Introductions continued

1/17

Introductions continued

Week #2: Introducing a Conceptual Landscape (I)

1/20

MLK Holiday – No Class

1/22

No Class

1/24

[15 pgs.]

Review Black LGBTQI History Timeline

Look up the Oxford English Dictionary definition of “aesthetic”

Allen “Black/Queer/Diaspora” (in GLQ Vol. 18, No. 2-3 2012: p. 211-218)

GB Hajim interview on exploresciencefictionmovies.com

[<http://www.explore-science-fiction-movies.com/interview-with-gb-hajim-director-of-the-sf-movie-strange-frame-love-sax.html#axzz2qCxoml94>]

Shelly Doty interview in Curve Magazine

[<http://www.curvemag.com/Curve-Magazine/Web-Articles-2013/Love-and-Sax>]

Watch Film: Hajim *Strange Frame: Love & Sax* (Available on Netflix)

Week #3: Introducing a Conceptual Landscape (II)

1/27

[12 pgs.]

Allen “Black/Queer/Diaspora” (in GLQ Vol. 18, No. 2-3 2012: p. 219-230)

1/29 [13 pgs.]

Allen "Black/Queer/Diaspora" (in GLQ Vol. 18, No. 2-3 2012: p. 231-238),
Holland "Foreword" (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. ix-xiii)

Read UT Libraries' Black Queer Studies Collection explanation and
browse the collection: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/subject/gender/bqsc.html>

1/31

Review & preparation workshop

Week #4: A Politics of Desire

[1st Reading Responses due on 2/2 at midnight]

2/3 [16 pgs.]

Johnson & Henderson "Introduction" (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. 1-16),

Review Crenshaw "Black LGBTQ Films"

2/5 [19 pgs.]

Cohen "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens" (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. 21-37),
Hemphill "In the Life" (in Aaab-Richards et al. 1987: p.53),
Lorde "On a Night of the Full Moon" (in Lorde 1997: p.172)

2/7

Review & preparation workshop

Week #5: Queering the South

2/10 [12 pgs.]

Johnson *Sweet Tea* p.1-12

2/12 [11pgs.]

Johnson *Sweet Tea* p.13-23

2/14

Review & preparation workshop

Week #6: Give This Body Over: Transcendence & Desire

2/17 [5 pgs.]

View Mickalene Thomas' Gallery: <http://mickalenethomas.com/gallery.html>

Kino “A Confidence Highlighted in Rhinestones”
Smith “Loud, Proud & Painted”

Watch: *Soul Kitchen: Mickalene Thomas* <http://lifeandtimes.com/soul-kitchen>

2/19 [10 pgs.]

Walcott “Fragments of Toronto” (in *Our Caribbean*: p. 360-367)

DuPuis “Rhubarb Star” <http://dailyxtra.com/toronto/arts-and-entertainment/rhubarb-star-dbi-young-inspired-rihanna>

Watch: d’bi.young Kosmopolis interview: <http://vimeo.com/50538517>

“Gendah Bendah”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0RWbVN1ZjE#t=46>

2/21

Review & preparation workshop

Part II: Europe

Week #7: Crossing the Pond: Black Queer Britain

2/24 [16 pgs.]

Browse Fani-Kayodé’s photography: www.autograph-abp.co.uk [search site by his name]

Mercer “Mortal Coil” (in Squires 1999: p.183-192),

Fani-Kayodé “Traces of Ecstasy” (in Fani-Kayodé et al. p.5-10),

2/26 [18 pgs.]

Mercer “Mortal Coil” (in Squires 1999: p.193-210)

2/28

Review & preparation workshop

Week #8: Adventures in Afropea: Black Queer Europe

3/3 [9 pgs.]

Read Campbell X interview:

www.queerious.com/2011/01/11/interview-with-campbell-ex-fierce-queer-black-filmmaker-from-uk

Browse website: www.ajamu-fineartphotography.co.uk

Bailey “Bodyscapes” & Mercer “The Camera as Kinky Machine”

Watch: Campbell X’s film *Stud Life* (Available on Netflix)

3/5 [13 pgs.]

Kosta & El-Tayeb “Everything” (in *Women in German Yearbook* Vol.18 2002: p.31-44)

Watch: Maccarone & El-Tayeb *Alles Wird Gut*
(Available on YouTube starting with “awg_1”)

[Final project proposals due at the beginning of the class session]

[Midterm course evaluations completed at the end of the class session]

3/7

Review & preparation workshop

Week #9: Spring Break

3/10

No Class

3/12

No Class

3/14

No Class

Part III: Africa

Week #10: Queer Africa?: Contesting the Heterosexuality of a Continent (Part I)

3/17

[15 pgs.]

Murray/Roscoe “Preface” (in *Boy-Wives*: p. xi-xxi),
Nyeck “Impossible Africans” (in Nyeck & Azuah 2008: p. 5-7)

3/19

[18 pgs.]

Murray/Roscoe “Introduction” (in *Boy-Wives*: p. 1-18)

3/21

Review & preparation workshop

Week #11: Queering Africa: Contesting the Heterosexuality of a Continent (Part II)

3/24

[12 pgs.]

Migraine-George “Beyond the ‘Internalist’ vs. ‘Externalist’ Debate”

3/26

[11 pgs.]

Massaquoi “The Continent as a Closet” (in Nyeck & Azuah 2008: p.50-60)

Watch: Camara *Dakan*

3/28

Review & preparation workshop

Week #12: Beyond Boundaries: Gender Transgression and Defiant Desire

3/31

No Class

4/2

No Class

4/4

[11 pgs.]

Murray & Roscoe "Diversity and Identity" (in *Boy-Wives*: p. 267-278)

Watch: Brooks & Bocahut *Woubi Chéri*

Week #13: Longing Glances: Black Lesbian Visibility & The Work of Zanele Muholi

4/7

[10 pgs]

Muholi "Mapping Our Histories" (p.4-13)

View Muholi's "Being" series online:

<http://www.stevenson.info/exhibitions/muholi/being.htm>

Watch: Zanele Muholi, *Visual Activist*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aiufq04dp0#t=63>

4/9

[17 pgs.]

Muholi "Mapping Our Histories" (p.14-30)

View Muholi's "Faces and Phases" series (in 3 different phases) online:

<http://www.stevenson.info/artists/muholi.html>

4/11

Review & preparation workshop

Part IV: The Caribbean

Week #14: The Queer Caribbean: Expect the Unexpected

4/14 [11 pgs.]
Glave "Introduction" (in *Our Caribbean*: p.1-11)

4/16 [27 pgs.]
Hopkinson "Fisherman" (in Hopkinson 2001: p.119-145)

4/18
Review & preparation workshop

Week #15: An Archipelago of Desire

4/21 [9pgs.]
Tinsley "Songs for Ezili" p.417-425

Watch: Lescot & Magloire *Of Men and Gods (Des Hommes et Dieux)*

4/23 [17 pgs.]
Tinsley "Songs for Ezili" p.426-436
Brand "Elizete, Beckoned" (in *Our Caribbean*: p.70-77)

4/25
Review & preparation workshop

Week #16

4/28
Concluding assessment & evaluations

4/30
Concluding assessment & evaluations

5/7 (*First day of Final Exams*)
Final projects due

Other Required Reading Text Citations

Part I: The Americas

Aaab-Richards, Dirg et al.
1987 *Tongues Untied*. London: Gay Men's Press.

Johnson, E. Patrick
2008 *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Lorde, Audre
1984 *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg: Crossing Press.
1997 *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*. New York: Norton.

Part II: Europe

Squiers, Carol
1999 *Over Exposed: Essays on Contemporary Photography*. New York: New Press.

Part III: Africa

Migraine-George, Thérèse
2003 "Beyond the 'Internalist' vs. 'Externalist' Debate." In the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol.16, No.1: p. 45-56).

Muholi, Zanele
2010 *Faces and Phases*. Munich: Prestel.

Nyeck, S.N. and Unoma Azuah
2008 *Outliers*, Vol.1 No.1. New York: International Resource Network - The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, City University of New York.

Grading Schema

(informed by "Grading Standards II" by Maxine Rodburg of the Harvard Writing Center)

The following are the standards I adhere to when I grade essays. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference, as do split grades (e.g. B-/C+). I assign grades on the evidence of the essay submitted, not on effort or time spent.

A: An excellent piece of writing (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive essay that grapples with interesting, complex ideas, responds discerningly to counter-arguments, and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. The discussion enhances— rather than underscores— the reader’s and writer’s knowledge (it doesn’t simply repeat what has been discussed in class). There is a context for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the essay. Its beginning opens up— rather than flatly announces— its thesis. Its end is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, often elegant. As a reader I feel surprised, delighted, changed. There’s something new here for me, something only the essay’s writer could have written and explored in this particular way. The writer’s stake in the material is obvious.

B: This is a piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts do not quite fit together well. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little. The context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me.

OR This is a piece of writing that does not reach as high than an ‘A’ essay, but thoroughly achieves its aims. This is a solid essay whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine— in this case the limitation is conceptual.

C: This is a piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: 1) conception (there is at least one main idea but it is obscure and hard to get to); 2) structure (the logic behind the ordering of the text is far from clear); 3) use of evidence (there is no evidence presented or that which is provided is weak and/or the connections among the ideas are unclear or without context; the text is plagued by generalizations and absent substantial proof); 4) language (the writing is awkward and generally stands in the way of comprehension). Overall, the essay may be repetitive, poorly organized, and/or superficial in its treatment of the subject matter. In addition, punctuation, spelling, grammar, citations, and transitions may be problems as well.

OR This is an essay that largely summarizes any given text or other work (of art or analysis), but is written without too many major problems.

- OR** This is an essay that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. This is perhaps well written, but there is scant engagement with course content or other scholarly material; it is mostly opinion.
- D:** This is an essay that demonstrates very little effort to grapple seriously with the ideas it hopes to explore.
- OR** This is a piece of writing that is extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: conception, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.
- OR** This is writing that does not come close to meeting the expectations of the assignment.
- F:** This is a piece of writing that should most definitely be re-conceptualized and revised drastically so that it can be re-submitted if that option is available.

Grading Scale

A+	100
A	99 – 95
A-	94 – 90
B+	89 – 85
B	84 – 80
B-	79 – 75
C+	74 – 70
C	69 – 65
C-	64 – 60
D+	59 – 55
D	54 – 50
D-	49 – 45
F	44 or less