

AFH 3931: AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS, 1500-1800

Dr. Philip Janzen
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Course Schedule:
 Tues period 7
 Thurs periods 7/8
 0121 Keene-Flint Hall

Course Overview

Between 1492 and 1808, Africans represented the largest immigrant stream to the Americas, outnumbering Europeans by a ratio of more than 3:1. This course explores the history of the African presence in the Americas until 1808, when the English outlawed the Atlantic slave trade. Instead of emphasizing the economy and demography of the slave trade, this course concentrates on the many ideas, institutions, and cultures that shaped and defined Africans across the Atlantic world. We will examine the continuities and transformations of African languages, religions, and kinship structures from the perspectives of Africans themselves.

Learning Objectives

Over the course of the semester, students will have opportunities to develop one of the central skills of historical thinking—the ability to imagine the world from the perspective of someone in circumstances different than one’s own. Through lectures, readings, and assignments, students will learn to read and write critically about the history of the African presence in the Americas. Ultimately, students will leave the course with a grounding in *how* to think about the African diaspora as well as an understanding of *why* this is important.

Required Course Texts

Lisa A. Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities: The Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Pearson, 2008)

James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (UNC, 2011)

Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (UNC, 1998)

All three books are on reserve at Library West. The books by Gomez and Sweet are also available online through the UF library. Links to all other readings can be found on the Canvas course website.

Evaluation

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|------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| • Map Quiz | (5%) | 9/3 |
| • Assignment #1: Article Précis | (20%) | 9/24 |
| • Midterm Exam | (25%) | 10/17 |
| • Assignment #2: Historical Marker | (20%) | 11/21 |
| • Final Exam | (30%) | 12/11 |

Procedure

The course will consist of lectures and informal class discussions. Students are expected to attend each session and participate actively in discussions. Exam questions will come directly out of lectures and readings. Not everything in the readings will be discussed in class, however, so it is essential that students complete all assigned readings. Instructions for the two assignments are on page 7 of this syllabus.

Need Help?

If you have questions about the course or assignments, please first consult this syllabus. You may also contact me by email or come to my office hours. If you do contact me by email, use your @ufl.edu email address and adhere to professional email etiquette. I will do my best to respond within one business day.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introduction to the Course

8/20-8/22 **Lectures:** Review Syllabus; Defining the African Diaspora

Reading: Colin A. Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora" (1998) <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-1998/defining-and-studying-the-modern-african-diaspora>

Week 2 Slavery and Economy in Africa

8/27-8/29 **Lectures:** African slavery and economies before European arrivals; Regions and ports

Reading: Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities*, Chapter 2; John K. Thornton, "Slavery and African Social Structure," in *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (1998): 72-97.

Week 3 The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas: Why Africans?

9/3-9/5 **Lectures:** European background to the Atlantic slave trade; Fifteenth-century European slavery

Reading: Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities*, Chapter 1; James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly* LIV (1997): 1-24.

Video: "The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross. Episode 1: The Black Atlantic (1500-1800)"

MAP QUIZ IN CLASS ON TUESDAY 9/3

Week 4 Enslavement and the Middle Passage

9/10-9/12 **Lectures:** Overview of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade; Social death; Explanation of Assignment #1

Reading: Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities*, Chapter 3; Stephanie Smallwood, "Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities," in *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (2007): 33-64.

Week 5 Primary Sources and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

9/17-9/19 **Lectures:** Primary sources and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade; Story of Olaudah Equiano

Reading: Olaudah Equiano, "Chapter 2," in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano at:*

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/equiano1/equiano1.html#p45>

Vincent Carretta, "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity," *Slavery and Abolition*, 20, 3 (1999): 96-105; Paul Lovejoy, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African," *Slavery and Abolition* 27 (2006): 317-347.

Video: Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Wonders of the African World: The Slave Kingdoms" (1999).

Week 6 Africans in the Markets of the Atlantic

9/24-9/26 **Lectures:** Worlds of work; Urban and rural; Case studies in Jamaica, South Carolina, Brazil

Reading: Stuart Schwartz, "Sugar Plantation Labor and Slave Life," in *Slaves, Rebels, and Peasants* (1992): 39-63; William Dusinger, "Mothers and Children," in *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps* (2000): 235-247; Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1231-1249.

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE ON TUESDAY 9/24

Week 7 Gender and Sexuality in Africa and the Diaspora

10/1-10/3 **Lectures:** Gender and Sexuality in Africa and the Diaspora; Male and Female roles, importance of women, various gender expressions; motherhood

Reading: Hilary McD Beckles, "Female Enslavement and Gender Ideologies in the Caribbean," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (2000): 163-182; Sasha Turner, "'The Best Ones Who Are Fit to Breed': The Quest for Biological Reproduction," in *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (2017): 44-67.

Week 8 Kinship, Lineage, and Family

10/8-10/10 **Lectures:** Kinship and Lineage in Africa and the Americas; Kinship webs, ship mates, runaway communities; warrior societies

Reading: James H. Sweet, "Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70 (2013): 251-272; Walter Hawthorne, "'Being now, as it were, one family': Shipmate bonding on the slave vessel Emilia, in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the Atlantic world," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45 (2008): 53-77.

Week 9 Review and Midterm Exam

10/15 Review for Midterm Exam in class

10/17 MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS

Week 10 Spirituality, Religion, and Healing in Africa

10/22-10/24 **Lectures:** What is religion? How does one distinguish religion from “spirituality”? Pre-European examples: Senegambia (Islam), Bight of Benin (vodun), Central Africa (nature, ancestors)

Reading: James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares*, Chapters 2-5

Video: “A Reasonable Man” (1999)

Week 11 African Healing in the Diaspora

10/29-10/31 **Lectures:** Transformations in African Healing in Brazil, St. Domingue, and New York: Calundu, Calenda, Lundu, Batuque, Candomble, Ring Shout

Reading: Sweet, *Domingos Álvares*, Chapters 6-10

Week 12 African Contributions to Runaway Communities, Rebellions, and Revolution: Haiti

11/5-11/7 **Lectures:** Runaways, Maroons, and Rebels; Yanga, Benkos Bioho Palmares; The Haitian Revolution

Reading: John Thornton, “‘I am the Subject of the King of Congo’: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of World History* 4 (1993): 181-214; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event,” in Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (1995): 70-107.

Week 13 Language, Names, Oral Traditions, Islam

11/12-11/14 **Lectures:** Language diffusion, name shifting, and oral traditions; African language vocabularies and dictionaries; Islam in the African Diaspora

Reading: Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 59-87 and 154-185; Olabiyi Yai, “Texts of Enslavement: Fon and Yoruba Vocabularies

from Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Brazil," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed. *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (2000): 102-112.

Week 14 Social Hierarchies: Africans and African Americans

11/19-11/21 **Lectures:** Differential Treatments of Africans and African Americans; Work, Manumission, Marriages; The Church, and Manumission

Reading: Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 186-243

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE THURSDAY 11/21

Week 15 Africans Become African Americans: The Processes of Creolization

11/26 **Lecture:** African, Ladino, or Creole?: Slavery in the Atlantic World; The End of the Slave Trade: Its Impact and Importance

11/28 Thanksgiving, no class

Reading: Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 244-292; Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Beacon, 1992), 1-37; Thornton, "African Cultural Groups in the Atlantic World," in Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, 183-205.

Week 16 Review for Final Exam

12/3 Review for Final Exam in class

Final Exam December 11, 2019: 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

ASSIGNMENTS

These descriptions are only overviews. In the coming weeks I will provide more detailed descriptions and grading rubrics. They will be posted on the Canvas course website.

Assignment I: Article Précis

Choose one of the following two articles and write a detailed précis. You should summarize the author's thesis, methodology, evidence/examples, and conclusion. As much as possible, you should use your own words. Your précis should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced.

James H. Sweet, "Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (2009): 279–306.

Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5, (2009): 1231–1249.

Assignment II: Historical Marker

Your supervisor at a historical society has asked you to create a historical marker about any person, place, or event related to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. You must first write out the text of the historical marker (1-2 pages double-spaced), and then write an accompanying essay (3-4 pages double-spaced). This essay should explain the following:

- Why did you choose this person/place/event?
- Where will the historical marker be located? Why?
- What information/historical context did you choose to emphasize?
- What information/historical context did you choose to exclude?

Finally, the essay should place the topic in its proper historical/historiographical context. That is, you should explain how and why this person/place/event should be understood relative to other historical figures, trends, and events. As much as possible, you should also describe how the marker fits into ongoing debates about the study of African diaspora history. You should be able to glean this information from lectures and readings.

OTHER NOTES

Attendance

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	63-66
B+	87-89	C	73-76	D-	60-62
B	83-86	C-	70-72	E	Below 60

For information regarding current UF policies for assigning grade points, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Course Evaluations

Students in this class are participating in the pilot evaluation of the new course evaluation system called GatorEvals. The new evaluation system is designed to be more informative to instructors so that teaching effectiveness is enhanced and to be more seamlessly linked to UF's CANVAS learning management system. Students can complete their evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via

https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_ufl.bluera.com_ufl_&d=DwIGaQ&c=sJ6xIWYx-zLMB3EPkvcnVg&r=1qtWVKU2uNohMAWR5pYYVu0F_ty9jxk4wI-DcSEfmKub76k8eaDIYyGQkZMpCOZ6&m=KCOMaruvDccGkQ95LBWWejChKpHpd3olzGps63zo0Ao&s=2ry1lk1Sd2MT9xMTXgaRslOLmzE7-Mky8W2E_HUO3wQ&e= .

Please note your other classes this semester may be evaluated in the current GatorRater online evaluation system at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Thank you for serving as a partner in this important effort.