AFH 3931: AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS, 1500-1800

Dr. Philip Janzen
Office: 494 Grinter Hall
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 11:00-12:30
Email: pjanzen@ufl.edu

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)


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

- 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


Week 2 Slavery and Economy in Africa

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

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.


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


**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


**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


**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


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

**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


**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

Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” American

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

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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_tyjxk4wI-DcSEfmKub76k8eaDIYyGQkZMpCQZ6&m=KCQMaruvDccGkQ95LBWWejChKpHpd3olzGps63zo0Ao&s=2ry1lk1Sd2MT9xMTXgaRslOLmzE7-Mky8W2EUHO3wQ&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.