

AH 465 | Spring 2021 | T 3:30-6:00 | CRN 44152 & 44165

# Arts of the Black Atlantic



Zoom: [class meetings](#) | Prof: [Blake Stimson](#) | Sign up: [office hours](#)

## INTRODUCTION

This seminar will begin with an overview of the slave trade and its artistic ramifications for Africans and the African diaspora from the 15th century to WWII before turning to our primary focus on the postwar period of African decolonization. Our guiding question will be whether the category we now call “global contemporary art” can be said both to have given rise to and be born of the contradictions of the anticolonial revolutions in the same way that “European modern art” is said to have triggered and expressed the contradictions introduced by the French revolution.

## EVALUATION

Your grade will be based in equal parts on: 1) attendance (no credit for late arrival to our zoom meetings or for [participation with camera off](#)); 2) timely and compelling completion of the assignments (no credit for late work); and 3) your level of commitment to developing your thinking and writing skills evident in your completed work.

## ON SEMINARS

Etymologically, the term “seminar” is derived from Latin word *seminarium*, meaning “seed plot” or “seedbed.” The idea is that the readings, screenings and artworks, as well as the themes introduced by seminar leaders, are all meant to be the seeds that sprout, grow and blossom in the space of our meetings. What arises for us, thus, will be partly determined by the seeds but also by environmental conditions---the give and take of social nourishment that we as a group bring to the discussion. To that end, we might take [this 1920 statement](#) by W.E.B. Du Bois to be our working epistemology:

The vast and wonderful knowledge of this marvelous universe is locked in the bosoms of its individual souls. To tap this mighty reservoir of experience, knowledge, beauty, love, and deed we must appeal not to the few, not to some souls, but to all. The narrower the appeal, the poorer the culture; the wider the appeal the more magnificent are the possibilities. Infinite is human nature. We make it finite by choking back the mass of men, by attempting to speak for others, to interpret and act for them, and we end by acting for ourselves and using the world as our private property. ... The real argument for democracy is, then, that in the people we have the source of that endless life and unbounded wisdom which the rulers of men must have.

The only viable tool for activating this distinctively human infinitude, Du Bois [insisted in 1947](#), was the ideal of objectivity:

Democracy is not merely a distribution of power among a vast number of individuals. It is not merely majority rule based on the fact that the majority has the physical force to prevail. It is something far more fundamental than this: it rests upon the fact that when we have proven knowledge, interpreted through the experience of a large number of individuals, it is possible through this pooled knowledge and experience to come to decisions much more fundamental and much more far reaching that can be had in any other way.

If we allow this to be the epistemological rule for our seminar discussions, our greater question will be how, exactly, such a model of enlightenment can be transferred to real life.

## ON AESTHETIC AND POLITICAL JUDGEMENTS

It will be our policy to encourage aesthetic and political evaluation, debate and judgements in this seminar but not to assume or provide any sort of global rule about what constitutes good or bad art or politics. Rather than judging a work or position by the *idealist* standard of “right” we

will rely on a *realist* standard and ask whether it “works.” Something “works” if it can be convincingly argued that it achieves (or promises to achieve) the goal that the critic herself sets for it. As such, any judgment should be argued for together with a clearly defined *aim* of the critic’s choosing. Realism takes “judgment to be less a theoretical science,” as Karuna Mantena puts it, “and more akin to a skill or art.” Here is [one critical assessment of mine](#).

## ON THE CHANGING MEANING OF ART

Let’s use this provisional periodization to frame our discussion about decolonization and art:

	Meaning of art	Turning point	Who believes	Economic context	Political context	Geopolitical context
<b>ARCHAIC (past)</b>	Aesthetic (art > culture)	French revolution	Greenberg etc (born < 1940)	Downward redistribution of wealth	Democratic > socialist > antistalinist	Colonialism (in the name of enlightenment)
<b>CONVENTIONAL (present)</b>	Anti-aesthetic (art ≤ culture)	Decolonization	Us (born > 1940)	Upward redistribution of wealth	Antistalinist > liberal > neoliberal	Neocolonialism (in the name of recognition)
<b>NEW (future)</b>	?	Trumpism?	?	?	?	?

## READINGS AND SCREENINGS

Unless otherwise noted, all of the reading and screening material for this class will be on Perusall, a social reading and screening platform that can be accessed through Blackboard. Please make a minimum of three comments on each assignment. Perusall grades comments according to [these criteria](#). I will take its evaluation into consideration when determining your final grade. Please complete the reading and commenting by noon on the due date so that we all have a chance to review the comments.

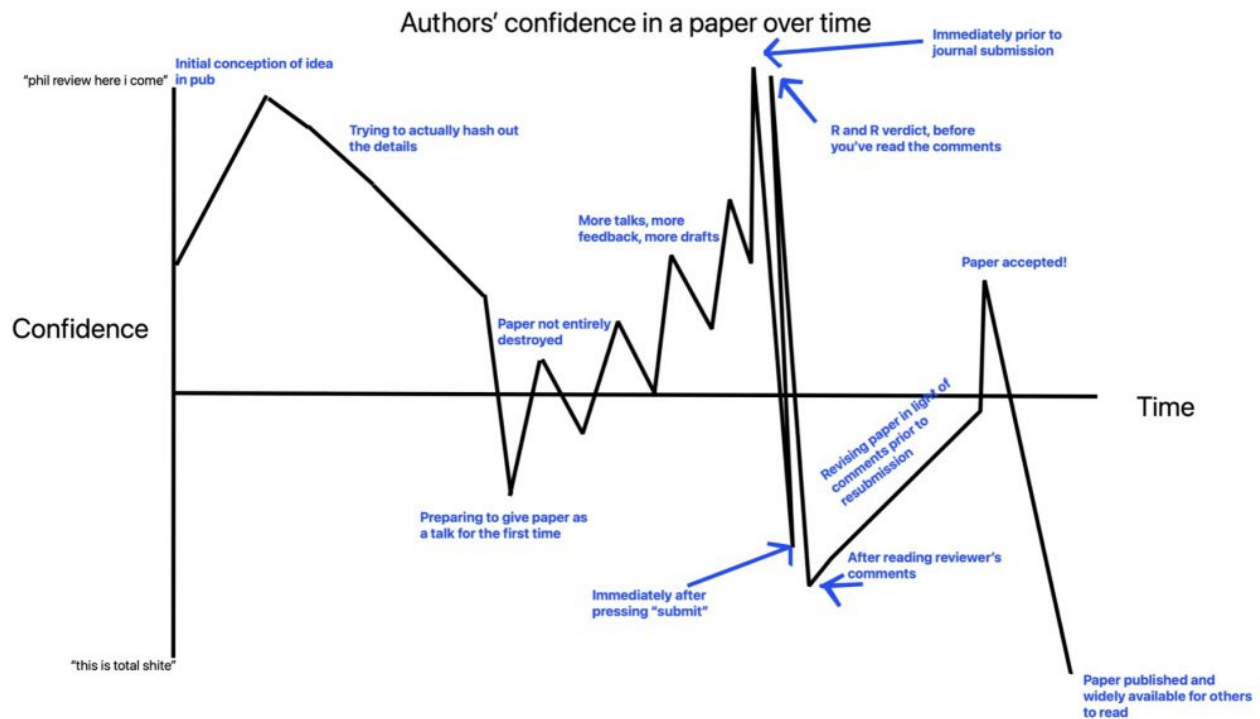
## CLASS PRESENTATIONS

There will be three kinds of student class presentations. Please plan on one of each.

- **Reading presentations:** [Sign up](#) to present any assigned reading of your choosing. Only one presenter per class meeting please.
- **Artist presentations:** [Sign up](#) to present the work of a single artist that bears in some way on the history and consequences of decolonization. This artist may or may not be the subject of your final paper. Only one presenter per class meeting please.
- **Final paper presentations:** [Sign up](#) to present your final paper on either of our last two classes. No more than half of the class for either date please.

## PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Pick a single [artist](#) and write a 12-15 pp (undergrads) or 15-20 pp (grads) paper considering the relationship of the artist’s work to decolonization. Be sure to draw on at least two of the four kinds of art historical analysis listed below. Due Friday, April 30th at 5:00 PM.



## ART HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

There are many approaches to art historical understanding but for our purposes we will focus on four:

- **Formal analysis** (color, shape, texture, scale, line, shadow, space, composition and other physical properties of the work itself)
- **Iconographic analysis** (story, theme or subject presented by the work including any symbolism or veiled meanings that would be legible to people part of the artist's culture)
- **Sociohistorical analysis** (social, political, economic and cultural context in which the work is produced)
- **Aesthetic analysis** (sensuous, psychological and social-psychological impact that the work has on you and others)

## CLASS SLIDESHOW

Let's use [this slideshow](#) as a place to share images and notes during and outside of class. Please use it for all presentations.

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

DATES	UNDERGRAD/GRAD READING/SCREENING	ADD'L GRAD READING/ SCREENING (OPTIONAL FOR UNDERGRADS)	DISCUSSION STARTER ARTISTS

Pre-term (for those who would like more context)		<p>RECOMMENDED: Adam Hochschild, <i>King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa</i></p> <p>RECOMMENDED: Mahmood Mamdani, <i>Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism</i></p> <p>RECOMMENDED: Michael Denning, <i>Culture in the Age of Three Worlds</i></p> <p>RECOMMENDED: Nivedita Majumdar, <i>The World in a Grain of Sand: Postcolonial Literature and Radical Universalism</i></p>		<p><a href="#">The Rhodes Colossus Striding from Cape Town to Cairo, Punch</a>, December 10, 1892</p>
1/12	2021	<p>Lewis R. Gordon, "Decolonizing black aesthetics" (feel free to skip the intro and Q&amp;A.)</p> <p>Olúfemi O. Táíwò, "Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference"</p>	<p>OPTIONAL: Albrecht Koschorke, "Facts Shifting to the Left: From Postmodernism to the Postfactual Age"</p>	<p>Wangechi Mutu</p> <p>Arthur Jafa</p> <p>Theaster Gates</p>
1/19	1966	<p>NOT ON PERUSALL: <a href="#">The First World Festival of Negro Arts by William Greaves, 1968, 40 minutes</a> (\$3.99)</p> <p>Leopold Sedar Senghor, "The Hidden Force of Black African Art," <i>Vogue</i> (Dec 1, 1966)</p>	<p>Roxanna Curto, "Senghor and Heidegger: Negritude's Appropriation of German Phenomenology"</p>	<p>Papa Ibra Tall</p> <p>Iba Ndiaye</p> <p>Frank Bowling</p>
1/26	1965	<p>Nkrumah, "Introduction" and "The Mechanisms of Neo-Colonialism" in <i>Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism</i></p> <p>VIncent Kofi, <i>Sculpture in Ghana</i></p>	<p>Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," 1965</p>	<p>Melvin Edwards (Elise Archias presentation)</p> <p>Paul Strand</p> <p>VIncent Kofi</p>
	1964	<p>Robert Penn Warren <a href="#">interviews</a> with Robert Moses, Bayard Rustin, Septima Clark (1964)</p>	<p>OPTIONAL: <a href="#">Brazil: The Troubled Land</a> (1964)</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Stephanie Ross, "The Strategic Implications of Anti-</p>	

		<p>PBS, <a href="#">Freedom Summer</a> (2014)</p> <p>Richard Woodley, "It Will Be a Hot Summer in Mississippi" (1964)</p>	<p>Statism in the Global Justice Movement"</p>	
2/2	1962	<p>James Baldwin, "Letter from a Region in My Mind" (NOTE: I am not assigning this in full because of its length but take a look and read the paragraph that begins with the phrase "White Americans find it as difficult ...")</p> <p>Hannah Arendt letter to James Baldwin</p> <p>John F. Kennedy, "<a href="#">Remarks at Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, October 26, 1963</a>"</p> <p>John F. Kennedy, "<a href="#">Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at a Conference of the American Society of African Culture, New York City, June 28, 1959</a>"</p>	<p>Philip E. Muehlenbeck, "John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalism"</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, "Ghana," in <i>All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s</i></p> <p>OPTIONAL: Karuna Mantena, introduction, <i>Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism</i></p> <p>OPTIONAL: Adom Getachew, ch 1, <i>Worldmaking after Empire</i></p>	<p>Beuford Delaney</p> <p>Romare Bearden</p> <p>Norman Lewis</p>
2/9	1961	<p>Frantz Fanon, "Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity" and "Conclusion," <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i></p> <p>Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i></p>	<p>Frantz Fanon, "On Violence," <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i></p>	<p>Robert Lapoujade</p> <p>Gillo Pontecorvo, <a href="#">The Battle of Algiers</a></p> <p>Emory Douglas</p>
2/16	1956	<p>Présence Africaine, "Modern culture and our destiny," Fanon, "Racism and Culture," and Aimé Césaire, "Culture and colonisation," in <i>The 1st International Conference</i></p>	<p>Aimé Césaire, "Letter to Maurice Thorez"</p> <p>Tom Mboya, "Our Revolutionary Tradition: An African View"</p>	<p>Saloua Raouda Choucair</p> <p>Ibrahim El-Salahi</p> <p>Uche Okeke</p>

		<i>of Negro Writers and Artists</i>	OPTIONAL: <a href="#">Lumières Noires</a>	
2/23	1955	Speech by President Soekarno at the Opening of the Asian-African Conference, April 18, 1955  Jawaharlal Nehru: "World Peace and Cooperation" (1955)  Addresses by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, August Heckscher, Dag Hammarskjöld at the Opening Ceremonies of The 25th Anniversary of The Museum Of Modern Art, October 19, 1954	Roland Burke, "Real Problems to Discuss": The Congress for Cultural Freedom's Asian and African Expeditions, 1951–1959	<a href="#">The Family of Man</a> (1955-65)  Life of our nation-- Ons volk, ons land exhibition / South Africa: the land, the people. Suid-Afrika: die land, die mense (1960)
3/2	1953	NOT ON PERUSALL: Alain Resnais & Chris Marker, <a href="#">Les Statues Meurent Aussi (Statues Also Die)</a> 1953 (NOTE: turn on the autotranslate to English function)  Michael Denning, Introduction, <i>Culture in the Age of Three Worlds</i>	André Leroi-Gourhan, "The Body as the Source of Values and Rhythms," <i>Gesture and Speech</i>  OPTIONAL: Pierre- Philippe Fraiture, " <i>Les Statues meurent aussi: The death and after-death of African art</i> "	
3/9	1952	Fanon, "Chapter Five: The Lived Experience of the Black Man," <i>Black Skins, White Masks</i>  Alfred Sauvy, "Trois mondes, une planète" (if needed, please use <a href="#">Google</a> or other service to translate, particularly the last paragraph)	Fanon, "Chapter Seven: The Black Man and Recognition," and "By Way of Conclusion," <i>Black Skins, White Masks</i>  OPTIONAL: Claude Lévi- Strauss, "1. Race and culture" and "3. The ethnographic attitude" in <i>Race and History</i>	Bhanu Athaiya/ Bombay Progressive Artist Group
3/16	1948	Jean-Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus"  James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel" (1949)	V.Y. Mudimbe, "The Panacea of Otherness: J.- P Sartre as an African Philosopher," in <i>The Invention of Africa</i>	

		SCREEN: <i>Black Orpheus</i> , 1959	OPTIONAL: Florence Weber, "Vichy France and the End of Scientific Folklore (1937–1954)"  OPTIONAL: Jennifer Bajorek, "Beyond the 'NGO Aesthetic'"	
3/23		SPRING BREAK		
3/30	1945 1943	Suzanne Césaire, "Surrealism and Us"  Achille Mbembe, "Afropolitanism"  Blake Stimson, "Art and Social Death"	REVIEW: Placide Tempels, <i>Bantu Philosophy</i> , chs I, III, VII.  OPTIONAL: Suzanne Césaire, "The Great Camouflage"  OPTIONAL: Bayard Rustin, " <a href="#">The Negro and Nonviolence</a> ," 1942	<a href="#">Surrealism in Egypt: Art et Liberté 1938 – 1948</a>  <a href="#">Afro-Surrealism</a>  Kara Walker  Childish Gambino, <a href="#">This Is America</a>
4/6	1935	Aimé Césaire, "Conscience raciale et révolution sociale," translated and quoted in Christopher L. Miller, "The (Revised) Birth of Negritude: Communist Revolution and 'the Immanent Negro' in 1935."  "Political Position of Surrealism," 1935	George Padmore, "Fascism in the Colonies," 1938  REVIEW: James Johnson Sweeney, <i>African Negro Art</i> , Museum of Modern Art, 1935  OPTIONAL: <a href="#">In and Out of Africa</a> (film 60 min)	Amy Nimr
4/13	1909	Mohandes Gandhi, "A Word of Explanation," "06. Civilization," "07. Why was India Lost?," "13 What is True Civilization?" "17. Passive Resistance," "18. Education," "19. Machinery," "Conclusion," <i>Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule</i>  Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, "Introduction," <i>African Art and the Colonial</i>	Karuna Mantena, "On Gandhi's Critique of the State: Sources, Contexts, Conjunctures"  OPTIONAL: Suraj Yengde, " <a href="#">Castes of Mind: On the intersection of race and caste</a> "  OPTIONAL: Charisse Burden-Stelly, "Cold War Culturalism and African Diaspora Theory: Some Theoretical Sketches"	Picasso



		<i>Encounter: Inventing a Global Commodity</i>		
4/20	<a href="#">Sign up</a>	PRESENTATIONS		
4/27	<a href="#">Sign up</a>	PRESENTATIONS		

## UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE GUIDELINES

### COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND POLICIES AT UIC

**Face Masks:** Masks must be worn at all times by all students, faculty, and staff while on campus, whether in or out of class, in all offices, on all pathways, and inside and outside of all buildings, in accordance with [University policies](#). If you do not wear a mask, you will be asked to leave the classroom and will not be allowed back in class unless or until you wear a mask. Eating and drinking is not allowed in classrooms.

**Social Distancing:** We all must maintain appropriate social distancing at all times, whether in or out of class, in all offices, on all pathways, and inside and outside of all buildings. On-campus classes are being held in classrooms that are large enough to maintain a minimum physical distance of 6 feet (or two arm's length) between people; we will implement assigned seating to ensure social distancing is observed and also to make contact tracing easier if there is an incident of COVID-19 infection in our class.

**Hand Washing/ Sanitizing:** Everyone is expected to wash or sanitize their hands before class, either by using personal sanitizer or by using one of the sanitizer dispensers located on campus. Please remember to wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds or more. If using hand sanitizer, please remember it should be at least 60% alcohol and you should rub your hands together until dry.

### Privacy Notification and Policy for Video Recording of Synchronous Class Sessions

It is also important to maintain a learning environment where everyone feels comfortable participating. To protect these interests, students and other participants may not copy, record, reproduce, screenshot, photograph, or distribute the following content:

- Live discussions or meetings
- Discussion boards
- Rehearsals, Critiques and other creative activity

- Images of students, faculty, or other participants

Any attempt to disrupt an online course or event (e.g., “Zoombombing”) or to use the College’s online platforms to introduce malware or gain unpermitted access to files or networks is prohibited and may violate other University policies depending on the nature of manner of the conduct.

Students who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the UIC Student Disciplinary Policy.

### **ONLINE Course Communication Guidelines (Netiquette)**

- Be mindful of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different political ideologies and religious beliefs.
- Use good judgment when composing your written responses. Swearing and profanity should be avoided. Also consider that slang terms can be misunderstood or misinterpreted.
- Be careful using all capital letters when composing your written responses. This can be considered “shouting” on the Internet and is regarded as impolite or aggressive. It can also be stressful on the eye when trying to read your message.
- Be respectful of others’ views and opinions.
- Be careful when using acronyms. If you use an acronym it is best to spell out its meaning first, then put the acronym in parentheses afterward, for example: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). After that you can use the acronym freely throughout your message.
- Use good grammar and spelling in written communications.
- In emails, always identify yourself and what class and section you are in. It is a good practice to put your course and section in the subject line. This helps your instructor identify course-related emails.

You are presenting at a graduate conference in the humanities

## What is the vague title of your paper?

### Your first initial:

**A** - Situating  
**B** - Reinterpreting  
**C** - Critiquing  
**D** - A Reading of  
**E** - Activating  
**F** - The Politics of  
**G** - Representations of  
**H** - Interrogating  
**I** - Erasing  
**J** - Redefining  
**K** - Identifying  
**L** - Reimagining  
**M** - Performing  
**N** - The Legibility of  
**O** - Democratizing  
**P** - De-Centering  
**Q** - Gender and  
**R** - Debating  
**S** - Signaling  
**T** - Embodying  
**U** - Building  
**V** - The Role of  
**W** - Historicizing  
**X** - Repositioning  
**Y** - Destabilizing  
**Z** - Mapping

### Your last initial:

**A** - Spaces  
**B** - Bodies  
**C** - Identity  
**D** - Narratives  
**E** - Politics and Power  
**F** - Aesthetics  
**G** - Representation  
**H** - Historical Categories  
**I** - Pluralities  
**J** - Gender  
**K** - The Gaze  
**L** - Forms of Oppression  
**M** - Silences  
**N** - Power Structures  
**O** - Dissent  
**P** - Normativity  
**Q** - Progress  
**R** - Erasure  
**S** - The Self  
**T** - Queerness  
**U** - Modes of Being  
**V** - Ontology  
**W** - Agency  
**X** - Epistemologies  
**Y** - Intertextuality  
**Z** - Fields of Belonging

### Your Birth Month:

**January** - As a Site of Resistance  
**February** - As Performance  
**March** - As Coded Queerness  
**April** - As Cultural Mediators  
**May** - As Transformative Justice  
**June** - As Violence  
**July** - In an Intersectional Framework  
**August** - In New Media  
**September** - As a Form of Erasure  
**October** - As a Site of Political Contestation  
**November** - In Crisis  
**December** - Through a Critical Lens

### Optional: Add a prefix to your title

Your prefix is the last text message you sent followed by a colon