

AH 465 | Spring 2023 | T 3:30-6:00 | CRN 44152/44165

Prof. Blake Stimson | [Zoom](#) | [Office hours](#)

 ART HISTORY | [Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

# Arts of the Black Atlantic



Ousmane Sembène, *La noire de...*, 1966, still

## INTRODUCTION

This seminar will 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 understood to have triggered and expressed the contradictions introduced by the French revolution. If 1789 launched the conflicts between the *citoyen* and the comrade, the bourgeois, the bohemian and the proletarian, what defining conflicts did 1960—the so-called “Year of Africa”—introduce for our own time?

## 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.” To that end, let’s work together to avoid what Lisa Duggan calls “the ‘piranha feed’ process whereby the student with the most critical take on the assigned book wins, and anyone who praises it is dismissed as simple.”

## 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>	?	Putinism?	?	?	?	?

## 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 TWO assigned readings of your choosing. Only one presenter per reading please.
- **Final paper presentations:** Please plan on presenting a ten-minute version of your final paper during our last class meeting.

## PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

EXHIBITION REVIEW: Visit [The Language of Beauty in African Art](#) and [Contemporary Art of Africa and the Diaspora](#) and write a 500-word exhibition review. See [these guidelines](#). Reserve your free weekday AIC admission [in advance](#). Be sure to draw on at least two of the four kinds of art historical analysis listed below. **Due Friday, February 24 at 5 PM.**

TERM PAPER: Pick a single [artist](#) and write a 10-12 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 30 at 5 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.

For optional review and research purposes, here is the (very different) [syllabus](#) and [class slideshow](#) from the Spring 2021 offering of AH465.

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Date	Read   Screen   Review   Optional	Art
<b>ART AMBASSADORS</b>		
1/10	<p>SCREEN: <a href="#">Satchmo The Great</a> (1957)</p> <p>SCREEN: <a href="#">The First World Festival of Negro Arts by William Greaves, 1968, 40 minutes</a> (\$4.99)</p> <p>READ: Penny M. Von Eschen, <i>Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War</i>, "1: Ike Gets Dizzy," and "Epilogue"</p>	<p><a href="#">Cartoon</a> by Mischa Richter, <i>New Yorker</i>, April 19, 1958</p> <p>L'African Jazz, <a href="#">Indépendance Cha Cha</a>, 1960</p>
4/17 1/24	<p>READ: Cedart Tamasala &amp; Mathieu Kasiama, "<a href="#">Decolonizing Museums Doesn't Help Plantation Workers Like Us in the Congo. So We're Selling NFTs to Buy Back Our Land.</a>" <i>Artnet News</i>, 2022</p> <p>SCREEN: Human Activities, <a href="#">Plantations and Museums</a> (six short videos, approx 45 min total)</p> <p>SCREEN: Renzo Martens, "<a href="#">Plantations and White Cubes</a>," lecture, 2019 (35 minutes + optional Q&amp;A)</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Herbert F. Weiss, Richard B. Woodward, &amp; Z. S. Strother, "Art with Fight in It: Discovering that a Statue of a Colonial Officer is a Power Object from the 1931 Pende Revolt." <i>African Arts</i>, 2016, 56-69</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Alice Gregory, "<a href="#">Can an Artists' Collective in Africa Repair a Colonial Legacy?</a>," <i>The New Yorker</i>, 2022</p>	<p>SCREEN: Renzo Martens, <a href="#">Episode III: Enjoy Poverty, trailer</a>, 2008. (1 minute)</p> <p>SCREEN: Renzo Martens, <a href="https://youtu.be/vF0ZryOPpi8">Episode III: Enjoy Poverty, trailer</a>, 2008. (4 minutes)</p> <p>SCREEN: VOA Africa, <a href="#">report on Enjoy Poverty</a> (4 minutes)</p> <p>SCREEN: Renzo Martens, <a href="#">White Cube</a></p>

		- <a href="#">Official Trailer</a> , 2020. (2 minutes)
1/28 Sat	<p>10:30 AIC: Private tour of <a href="#">The Language of Beauty in African Art</a> by <a href="#">Constantine (Costa) Petridis</a>, chair and curator of Arts of Africa. We will meet at the Monroe entrance to the museum.</p> <p>2:00 AIC: Lecture: Bolaji Campbell, <a href="#">Yoruba Egungun Masquerade Performances for the Ancestors</a>, Fullerton Hall, <b>REGISTRATION REQUIRED</b>.</p>	
1/31	READ: Frantz Fanon, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> : Preface (by Jean-Paul Sartre), On Violence, Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity, Conclusion.	
	<b>INTERLUDE ON METHOD</b>	
4/24 optnl	<p>READ: <a href="#">Republicans are Increasingly Targeting 'Divisive Concepts' at Colleges and Universities</a></p> <p>REVIEW: James Sweet, <a href="#">"IS HISTORY HISTORY? Identity Politics and Teleologies of the Present" + apology</a></p> <p>REVIEW: Malcolm Foley and Priya Satia, <a href="#">"RESPONSES TO 'IS HISTORY HISTORY?'"</a></p> <p>READ: David Frum, <a href="#">The New History Wars: Inside the strife set off by an essay from the president of the American Historical Association</a></p> <p>READ: <a href="#">A Lecturer Showed a Painting of the Prophet Muhammad. She Lost Her Job.</a></p>	
	<b>ART MANAGERS</b>	
2/7	<p>READ: Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction" and "1 Nativism: The Theory: Sir Henry Maine and the Post-1857 Crisis of Empire," <i>Define and Rule: Native As Political Identity</i></p> <p>READ: Eva-Maria Muschik, "Introduction: Managing the World," and "Epilogue," in <i>Building States: The United Nations, Development, and Decolonization, 1945-1965</i></p> <p>SCREEN: Ousmane Sembène, <a href="#">La noire de...</a> (59 min)</p>	
optnl	<p>READ: Marcie Smith, <a href="#">"Getting Gene Sharp Wrong"</a></p> <p>READ: Julius Nyerere for the Tanganyika African National</p>	<a href="#">Arusha Declaration Monument</a>

	<p>Union, "<a href="#">The Arusha Declaration and TANU's Policy on Socialism and Self-Reliance</a>," 1967</p>	
2/14	<p>READ: Peter P. Ekeh, "Social Anthropology and Two Contrasting Uses of Tribalism in Africa," <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>, Oct., 1990, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Oct., 1990), pp. 660-700</p> <p>READ: David H. Price, "Fourteen: Untangling Open Secrets, Hidden Histories, Outrage Denied, and Recurrent Dual Use Themes," <i>Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology</i></p> <p>SCREEN: <a href="#">Margaret Mead interview on Cultural Anthropology</a> (1959)</p> <p>REVIEW: <a href="#">New Images of Man</a> (1959)</p>	
2/21	<p>READ: Stokely Carmichael, "Black Power in the USA," <i>The 1968 Congress of Black Writers</i></p> <p>READ: C.L.R. James interviewed by Michael Smith, "You Don't Play With Revolution," 1968</p> <p>SCREEN: <a href="#">The Lumpen: How the Black Panthers Used Music to Energize a Movement</a></p> <p>SCREEN: <a href="#">Merritt College: Home of the Black Panthers</a></p> <p>REVIEW: <a href="#">The Case of Richard Aoki: Berkeley Radical, Black Panther, FBI Informant</a></p>	
	<p><b>MODERN AND POSTMODERN BLACK ART</b></p>	
2/28	<p>REVIEW: Clement Greenberg, "The Identity of Art"</p> <p>REVIEW: W.E.B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art"</p> <p>READ: Ralph Ellison, "The Art of Romare Bearden"</p> <p>READ: Bayard Rustin, "The Role of the Artist in the Freedom Struggle"</p>	<p>Romare Bearden, <a href="#">Factory Workers</a>, 1942, <a href="#">The Dove</a>, 1964</p>
3/7	<p>READ: Leopold Sedar Senghor, "The Hidden Force of Black African Art," <i>Vogue</i> (Dec 1, 1966)</p> <p>READ: Elizabeth W. Giorgis, "Chapter 3: The Modernists of</p>	<p><a href="#">Tau Lewis</a></p>

	<p>the 1960s: Gebre Kristos Desta and Skunder Boghossian and Their Students,” <i>Modern Art in Ethiopia</i>, 118-121, 136-168.</p> <p>READ: Penny M. Von Eschen, “Soul Call: The First World Festival of Negro Arts at a Pivot of Black Modernities,” <i>Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art</i>, Number 42-43, November 2018, pp. 124-135</p>	
	<b>ART IN THE AGE OF THREE WORLDS</b>	
3/14	<p>Michael Denning, Introduction, <i>Culture in the Age of Three Worlds</i></p> <p>Philip E. Muehlenbeck, “John F. Kennedy’s Courting of African Nationalism”</p>	
3/21	SPRING BREAK	
3/28	<p>Monica Kim, “Introduction: War and Humanity,” <i>The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History</i></p> <p>Frances Stonor Saunders, “Introduction,” <i>The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters</i></p> <p>Susan Williams, “Infiltration into Africa,” <i>White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa</i></p>	
	<b>ART AND THE PERSISTENCE OF EMPIRE</b>	
4/4	<p>Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, <i>Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously</i>, Introduction and Chapter 4.</p> <p>Please also listen to some of these two musical examples he cites: <a href="#">Fela Sowande</a> and <a href="#">Sunny Ade</a>. Pro tip: both make good background music while you are reading if that is something that works for you.</p>	
4/11	<p>Rajeev Patel &amp; Philip McMichael, “Third Worldism and the lineages of global fascism: the regrouping of the global South in the neoliberal era”</p> <p>Prabhat Patnaik, “Why Neoliberalism Needs Neofascists”</p> <p>Christopher Mott, “<a href="#">Woke Imperium: The Coming Confluence Between Social Justice &amp; Neoconservatism</a>”</p>	
	<b>CHILE AS COMPARISON</b>	



4/18	SCREEN: Patricio Guzmán, <a href="#">Mi País Imaginario</a> (83 min)  READ: René Rojas, " <a href="#">Chile's Vote Was a Rebuke of the 21st-Century Left. Will We Listen?</a> "	
4/25	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS	

## UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE GUIDELINES

### CODE OF CONDUCT

Those acting on behalf of the University have a general duty to conduct themselves in a manner that will maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of the University and take no actions incompatible with their obligations to the University.

With regard to professional conduct, those acting on behalf of the University should practice:

- Integrity by maintaining an ongoing dedication to honesty and responsibility;
- Trustworthiness by acting in a reliable and dependable manner;
- Evenhandedness by treating others with impartiality;
- Respect by treating others with civility and decency;
- Stewardship by exercising custodial responsibility for University property and resources;
- Compliance by following State and Federal laws and regulations and University policies related to their duties and responsibilities;
- Confidentiality by protecting the integrity and security of university information such as student records, employee files, patient records, and contract negotiation documents.

Further information can be found [here](#).

### STUDENT GRIEVANCES

All UIC Students have the right to appeal adverse academic decisions or actions through a formal University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Academic Grievance process that is fair, takes a reasonable amount of time, and provides the Student with requisite levels of due process. Across UIC, the Academic Grievance process will include at least three stages: (1) the Student makes a sincere attempt to resolve their complaint informally with the Respondent (except in complaints or grievances that include complaints of [unlawful discrimination](#) or sexual misconduct, where an attempt at informal resolution is not required); (2) the Student/Grievant files a formal Academic Grievance with the appropriate Administrative Officer (AO) or their designee, which the AO attempts to resolve; and (3) if the Grievant is not satisfied with the AO's decision, she/he/they may

appeal the decision to the appropriate Grievance Officer (GO). Decisions of the GO are final and cannot be appealed except in matters where a claim of sexual misconduct or unlawful discrimination has been made by the Student in the Academic Grievance and reviewed by the AO/GO, or where the Student has alleged that a significant procedural error(s) occurred in the Academic Grievance process that could substantially affect the outcome of the decision. In these cases, the Chancellor or their designee will review the record and issue a decision. The Chancellor's decision is final and no further appeal is available.

Further information can be found [here](#).

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As an academic community, UIC is committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, and administrators—share the responsibility of insuring that these standards are upheld so that such an environment exists. Instances of academic misconduct by students will be handled pursuant to the [Student Disciplinary Policy](#).

### **DISABILITY**

The University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course are welcome, but must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). You may contact DRC at 312-413-2183 (v) or 312-413-0123 (TTY) and consult [this resource](#).

### **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

Students who wish to observe their religious holidays shall notify the faculty member by the tenth day of the semester of the date when they will be absent unless the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, the student shall notify the faculty member at least five days in advance of the date when he/she will be absent. The faculty member shall make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize the student for missing the class, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, give the student an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed by those students in attendance. If the student feels aggrieved, he/she may request remedy through the campus grievance procedure.