

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S STUDIES
GSWS 2230F: Introduction to Black Diaspora
Fall 2023

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Instructor: Dr. Cornel Grey

Class Time:

Location:

Office:

Phone:

Email:

Office Hours:

We are here, because you were there.

-Ambalavaner Sivanandan

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an in-depth exploration of the Black Diaspora, focusing on the histories, experiences, and cultural productions of Black people throughout the world. This course begins with an examination of the historical and cultural contexts of the Black Diaspora, including the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and migration. We will analyze literature, music, film, and visual art, examining how these cultural productions reflect and shape the experiences of Black people across the world. We will also explore the ways in which Black people have used cultural production as a form of resistance and liberation.

ASSESSMENTS

Discussion Posts (25%)

Students will be graded on five online discussion posts for the term. Each post should be between 200-250 words. Students have the option of submitting up to seven posts (only the top five grades will be counted for the assignment). Discussion posts should be uploaded by midnight the day before each class. Students are not required to provide a summary of the week's readings but rather a critical response to the arguments presented in the text. Students are encouraged to highlight specific concepts or examples that stood out to them. Questions are welcomed as well. We may take up some of these questions during class.

Archival Assignment (25%)

Students will select an archival text from the collections and/or databases provided by the instructor. For the purposes of this assignment, a 'text' can be a letter, speech, poem, ledger, advertisement, photograph, or any other primary source material that speaks to the experiences of Black people across the diaspora. Students will consider the context in which the text was produced. This includes historical, cultural, social, and political factors that may have influenced the creation of the text. Students are encouraged to reflect on the composition of the material, its purpose and how it has circulated over time. Students will analyze the text and submit an essay (750-1000 words) that details their findings. Students are expected to tease out key themes and attend to the stylistic choices of the creator (e.g., writing style, perspective, form). Students' analysis must be supported by thorough engagement with at least three secondary sources on the topic. This includes, for example, scholarly journal articles and monographs.

Storyboard (50%)

The final output for this critical reflection assignment can be submitted in a format of the student's choosing. Students can submit their reflection in a traditional essay format, an audio/podcast recording, a video or mini-documentary recording, a (digital/physical) scrapbook or some other means agreed upon between the student and the instructor. This assignment invites students to chart their own histories in relation to Black diaspora. This task necessarily demands that students speak to histories including (but not limited to) Atlantic enslavement, settler colonialism, Indigenous dispossession, indentured labour and other forms of voluntary and forced migration. Put differently, this assignment asks each student to consider how we came to be here and how we are implicated in each other's histories. As you grapple with questions of nation, identity, and citizenship, it is important to note that each student will have a different point of departure. Students are strongly encouraged to examine how and when Black life shows up across space and time when reviewing their sources. This assignment is split into three parts:

Proposal: 10%

Annotated Bibliography: 15%

Creative Output: 25%

WEEKLY TOPICS

Week One, September 13 (Introductions)

Week Two, September 20 (The Slave Economy)

Week Three, September 27 (A New World)

Week Four, October 4 (Black Life in Canada)

Week Five, October 11 (Food)

Week Six, October 18 (Visual Cultures)

Week Seven, October 25 (Soul, Sound and Sensation)

Week 8, November 8 (Queer Diasporas)

READING WEEK (OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 3)

Week 9, November 15 (Shoreward)

Week 10, November 22 (Religion)

Week 11, November 29 (Black Europe)

Week Twelve, December 6 (The Living Revolution)