CIEE Cape Town, South Africa

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<tr>
<th>Course title:</th>
<th>Atlantic Crossings</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Course code:</td>
<td>SOCI 3101 CTSA</td>
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<td>Programs offering course:</td>
<td>Cape Town Open Campus Block</td>
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<td>Open Campus Track:</td>
<td>Language, Literature, and Culture</td>
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<td>Language of instruction:</td>
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<td>Term:</td>
<td>Spring Block I 2020</td>
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</tbody>
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**Course Description**

Anchoring the course in Cape Town and its position in Atlantic history, this course provides participants with a glimpse of the deep, rich, and seemingly infinite histories that make up the history of the Atlantic Ocean. While this course is primarily an exploration of Atlantic studies, it clarifies the relationship between migration studies, refugee studies, diaspora studies and contingent disciplines because of its focus on crossing. “Atlantic Crossings” looks at push-and-pull factors for crossing, the difference between voluntary and forced crossing, and the mobility and adaptability of people, flora, fauna, ideas, goods and diseases. The course studies the intricate and fascinating histories of crossings through the lens of transculturation and transnationalism. This course is thus interested in cross-Atlantic circulations and circuits. We will trace, for example, the ways in which political philosophies unleashed by the French revolution influenced the Haitian Revolution and how these ideas in turn made their way to the Cape Colony. We will get impressions of how the music of Satchmo, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald Joe Lewis and Sugar Ray Robinson was not only popular in South Africa’s townships in the 1950s due to its high aesthetic and entertainment values, but more relevantly how this music inspired cultures of resistance and political action in apartheid South Africa that, in turn, inspired US civil rights activists in the 1960s. More recently, the #RhodesMustFall movement coincided with the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which, in turn, became a source of inspiration for the #FeesMustFall protests on South African campuses during 2015-2016. While giving students a strong grounding in the social and
intellectual contexts of such Atlantic crossings, this course reviews this rich history of interaction, the taking-with vs the leaving-behind, the transitioning, transforming, and the shared experience of immigrating.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Apply the frame of the Atlantic world as a lens of analysis for how crossings occur at both a physical and metaphorical level.
- Knowledgeably appraise a variety of case studies that exemplify significant impacts that Atlantic crossings have had on both sides of the Atlantic in the fields of politics, economics, and culture.
- Critically compare and contrast subjective experiences within the physical and cultural crossings between Africa and America.
- Explore the idea of an Atlantic archive and engage seminal texts that, in multiple genres, express diverse points of view and identity formations.

Course Prerequisites

Interest in history as a field of study. This course is a 3000-level course and students are generally expected to have been exposed to cultural studies and some critical theory, in addition to history.

Methods of Instruction

The methods of instructions in this course are deliberately diverse and interactive. In terms of reading alone, we will read from Lawrence Hill's novel Someone Knows My Name, we will read poems, scholarly articles, oral history transcriptions, newspaper articles, blogs, and social media. In addition, music plays a role each week, and so does film. Each week begins with a ‘poem of the week’ and a ‘song of the week,’ for example, that informs the arch of learning of the respective week. As many guest speakers as possible are scheduled to co-teach certain sessions in order to afford as many viewpoints as possible. Students are expected to prepare thoroughly for class as each session contains student-facilitated activities, and the quality of discussion depends on level of preparation. In addition to student-led learning, each session of this course contains a lecture component, a guided discussion component and a viewing component. Plenty of writing exercises in class help students generate
genuine paper and project topics. Students are requested to take the initiative to maintain strands of conversation through the discussion thread on Canvas. To process, engage and build on lecture material, students frequently work in small groups to accomplish collaborative learning tasks. Finally, excursions to Seapoint Promenade, the Slave Lodge, and Kirstenbosch Gardens in Cape Town will provide important opportunities for learning. In addition to the scheduled class times, it may be necessary to schedule 2 film screenings. Attendance at these is not mandatory, but students who do not attend take responsibility for watching Sankofa and Mama Afrika through their own means.

**Assessment and Final Grade**

1. 2 Reflection Papers  
   20%
2. Context Presentations  
   20%
3. 2 Quizzes  
   20%
4. Final Project  
   20%
5. Participation  
   20%

**TOTAL**  
100%

**Course Requirements**

**2 Reflection Papers**

These papers ask for a reflective analysis of two of the poems studied during this course. In addition to responding generally to the poem, the student should connect and reflect on theme(s) that somehow pertain to his/her personal history or experience of coming to Cape Town. In addition, both reflections must somehow consider Aimé Césaire’s statement, “Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge.”

**Context Presentations**

Each student must prepare 2 context presentations during week 2, 3, 4 or 5. For both presentations, students work in pairs, but it is not permitted to work with the same partner for both presentations. Presentations should be 10-15 minutes long. Each team also submits a one-paragraph abstract or summary of the reading, or a specific highlight from the reading, the night before the presentation is scheduled to happen during class.
1. One context presentation is about the novel Someone Knows My Name by Lawrence Hill (2007). In pairs, students present, contextualize and engage an excerpt from Someone Knows My Name. Through close reading and extraction of historical information, one goal of every presentation should be to help the class understand an aspect about Atlantic history.

2. The other context presentation should be about any of the assigned readings or viewings listed or mentioned in this course. As with the presentations on Someone Knows My Name, it is important to not only introduce and contextualize a topic from the reading, but also to formulate a discussion prompt that will help facilitate a short discussion after each presentation.

2 Quizzes

The 2 quizzes will pertain to readings of week 1-3 and weeks 4-5 respectively. They will be made up of 4 short essay questions. The quizzes will open on canvas for a 6-hour period on their respective due dates, even though it only takes approximately 1.5 hour to complete each quiz. Students may refer to their notes and course materials.

Final Project

This course incorporates several narrative genres, including film, poetry, music and oral history. This is because it is so central to the learning outcome of this course for the student to appreciate the many diverse narrative modes that people have used in order to express their experience and memory of their Atlantic crossing. Each mode, or genre, allows for a unique kind of transmission of information, experience, memory; all genres make up the Atlantic archive. For the final project, students experiment with one mode/genre to address a particular theme of interest that pertains to ‘Atlantic crossings.’ Choose one of the below and write an accompanying essay about the background and process of completing the process. During session 6.2 every student presents a component of their project. The entire project, essay included, should amount to 2500 words.

Choose one of the projects below:

- Compose a song about the Atlantic and/or Atlantic crossings
• Write a poem or a collection of poems about the Atlantic and/or Atlantic crossings
• Create a mini-documentary or fictitious film about the Atlantic and/or Atlantic crossings
• Record or document an oral history project, podcast or digital story-telling project about the Atlantic and/or Atlantic crossings

In addition to the song/poem/documentary/digital story-telling project, write an essay to explicate your process. So for example, if the word count of your song amounts to 500, write a 2000-word essay to go with it. If your poems add up to, say, 1000 words, then a 1500-word essay should accompany the poems. For the documentary and digital story-telling project, it will be required to submit a script in addition to the digital file. The script should amount to 2500 words total.

Criteria for evaluation:

1. Background research is evident; student demonstrates deep engagement with a particular topic and initiative to self-educate about it. Student rigorously engages key ideas and debates that were introduced through the course
2. Knowledgeable appraisal of one or more impacts that an Atlantic crossing has had in the fields of politics, economics and/or culture.
3. Strong and confident command of language, especially in the use of vocabulary that has been widely contested, application of academic vocabulary that was introduced during the course, and word choice overall.
4. Willingness to explore both, the possibilities and limitations of the chosen artistic mode/genre.
5. Overall cohesion and purposefully structured or juxtaposed ideas facilitate the transmission of a complex topic.
6. Adequate referencing and crediting.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom
discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

**Attendance**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class: 1.1 Orientation (Where are we?), Introductions (Who are we?)

In addition to getting to know each other, this session provides an overview of the course, especially its objectives and learning goals. The session facilitates active listening skills and conversation about what America means to us, how we conceptualize and visualize America, and how we trace personal history of crossing in our personal family
backgrounds. A major take-away from this first session is a list of working definitions of contested concepts such as Africanism, pan-Africanism, transnationalism or Americanism.

**Required Viewing (after class)**

- “The Hamilton Mix Tape: Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)” by K’naan
- “This is America” by Childish Gambino
- “Hawaii ’78” by Israel ‘Iz’ Kamakawiwo’ole
- “Somos Sur” by Ana Tijoux and Shadia Mansour
- “Borders” by M.I.A.
- “This Land” by Gary Clark Jr

**Required Reading**

- Poem of the Week: “The Scar” by John Hewitt

**Class: 1.2 Excursion to Two Oceans Aquarium**

Let’s begin our course by the Atlantic Ocean. After a tour of the aquarium where we will learn about the ocean as ecological system, we will take a short ride to Mouille’s Point/Green Point park to build cohort community and discuss “Atlantic Freedom.” After this session, students should have a broad understanding of what Atlantic Studies is/ is not; students will also have clarity about what the course expects, and how to pace the workload for it. Laurent Du Bois’s major argument in “Atlantic Freedom” has to do with the ethics of positionality and a crisis of historical conceptualization. He raises our awareness about the production of history and the archive, in this case the Atlantic history and archive. Leaning on the Haitian thinker Jean Casimir, Laurent Dubois asks, when you write the story of Columbus arriving in what the indigenous people then called Ayiti, you have to make a decision: are you on the boat or on the shore?”

**Required Reading**
Week 2
Class: Contact Zones

2.1

Drawing from Mary Louise Pratt’s seminal work, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, this session builds familiarity with Pratt’s theoretical concept of a contact zone.” Viewing the Atlantic as a giant contact zone, “spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other” (Pratt, 1991) lays the foundation for other debates, concepts and frameworks that have by now fused into the overall Atlantic discourse. This session introduces students to some of the major debates and contributions to the field, including the Red Atlantic, Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic” (1993), Joseph Roach’s “circum-Atlantic performance” (1996) and Sertima’s research on pre-Colombian contact between the Americas and Africa.

Required Reading

• Poem of the Week: from Kamau Brathwaite’s The Arrivants
• Short excerpt from:
• De las Casas, Bartolome, “A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies at
  http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/contact/text7/casas_des
• Van Sertima, Ivan, They Came Before Columbus, New York: Random House, 1976, pp.1-18; 261-271.

Required Listening

• Song of the Week: Dar Kom die Alibama

Required Browsing

• https://guides.library.harvard.edu/blackatlantic#s-lg-box-13499147

Suggested Reading


Class: 2.2 Transculturalization, Creolization and Transnationalism

Now that we established that the Atlantic is both, a literal space and a socially constructed space, and that in these space(s) correlate to Pratt’s contact zone, we turn our focus to the circulation of cultural capital, knowledge networks and liberation ideologies. In preparation for our trip to the Slave Lodge, this session’s lecture component exposes students to the history of contact at the Cape, paying particular attention to circulation as opposed to mere transfer through contact. We will trace, for example, the ways in which political philosophies unleashed by the French revolution influenced the Haitian Revolution and how these ideas, in turn, made their way to the Cape Colony. To show how this cross-cultural/ intercultural relationship is in fact several centuries old. The scope of this course, and session 2:2 only allows for two case studies, the aforementioned 1803 Haitian revolution and the Black Jacobins, and the case study of Afrika Bambaata and the Zulu Nation (1993), which took its inspiration from the history of Zulu people when it contributed to the founding of Hip Hop in the South Bronx. The Hip Hop revolution that began in the US then emigrated (or disseminated?)
throughout the world, and, arguably, Cape Town became the cradle in which South African Hip Hop was born. This Hip Hop then again makes its way to the USA.

Required Reading

• Hill, Lawrence, Someone Knows My Name, New York/ London: W.W. Norton& Company, 2017, 24-44.

Suggested Reading


Class: 2.3 Co-curricular excursion to Slave Lodge and Company Gardens, Cape Town

The tour of the Slave Lodge museum and the surrounding Company Gardens will generate much food for thought as it comprises an overwhelming history lesson that begins around 1650. Cape Town became an international nexus point; being a port city, a refreshing station, and trade hub along major trade routes shaped Cape Town as a global City. After visiting the Slave Lodge, we will discuss our preliminary impressions of how Cape Town figures in Atlantic history.

Required Reading

Suggested Reading


Due: Reflection Paper 1

Week 3
Class: Waves of Pain, Waves of Memory
3.1

This week we take a historical birds’ eye view of instances where a massive surge of people crossed the Atlantic. There is a question whether people from, say, India are also part of the Atlantic crossing history; India does not border the Atlantic Ocean and yet India’s Diaspora has largely crossed the Atlantic. In this session we will learn about India’s potato famine of the 1840’s, during which more than a million people left the shores of India to settle in the United States. As we consider various viewpoints on these major events, the discussion component of this session asks participants to complicate the definitional parameters of concepts like diaspora, citizenship, belonging, or nation.

Required Reading

- Poem of the Week: poems by Lucille Clifton
Cantwell, John Davis. “A great-grandfather's account of the Irish potato famine” (Medical Center) vol. 30,3 (2017): 382-383. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5468053/


Hill, Lawrence, Someone Knows My Name, New York/ London: W.W. Norton

Required Listening

• Song of the Week: The Girl I left Behind Me// Spailpin Fanaugh

Suggested Reading


Class: 3.2 Waves of Protest, Waves of History

Further expanding the metaphor of waves, this session reviews major moments in history that exemplify a circulation of contact across the Atlantic, as opposed to a one-way or two-way street transfer of something. We will review the abolitionist movement, the history of West Indian immigration to England, as well as the connection between the civil rights movement and the anti-apartheid movement. Students will work in small groups in order to engage more deeply with one of the readings that are due for this session.

Required Reading (read a minimum of ONE)

• Selvon, Sam, Lonely Londoners, Essex: Longman, 1956, 23-35.
• Mpofu-Walsh, Sizwe, “The game’s the same: #MustFall moves to Euro-America,” in Susan Boysens (ed.), Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016, 74-86.
Required Listening

- “Strange Fruit” (Billie Holiday and Rene Maran versions)
- Uhuru Afrika album by Randy Weston

Due: Quiz 1

Week 4
Class: 4.1 History of an ocean, ocean of History

We begin this week with the heavy and heavily disturbing visualization of the Atlantic ocean as literal burial ground. Short excerpts from Feeding the Ghosts will offer a glimpse into the lives of thousands and thousands of people who were thrown overboard during their crossing. People were thrown overboard for many reasons, and many jumped themselves, choosing death over slavery. After bringing this massive tragedy into focus, the lecture component of this session then gives an overview of ways in which this burial ground has functioned as a symbolic space in literature, film and performance arts. One major way in which the ocean floor has functioned symbolically connects to topics like forgetting, burying the past and all its untold stories, and disappearing in an ocean of history. To prevent untold stories from ‘sinking to the ocean floor’ there is a constant need to recuperate stories, revise the discourse, build cross-Atlantic understanding. To exemplify this, the session ends with an immersion into the relationship between indigenous people of the Americas and those that crossed the Atlantic. We will specifically learn about Afro-Mexicans and the Spanish-speaking black Atlantic, but we will also pay attention to highly specific communities such as the re-located Pieds Noirs (repatriates from former French colonies in Africa), who were resettled in Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina.

Required Reading

- Poem of the Week: Coolie Odyssey by David Dabydeen

Required Listening

• Song of the Week: Calypso and Haiti, I’m Sorry by David Rudder

Suggested Reading

• Nematya Blyden, “‘This na true story of our history’: South Carolina in Sierra Leone’s historical memory,” Atlantic Studies, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2015), 355–370.

Class: 4.2 Ship-wrecked Relationships

This session explores the specific relationship between African-Americans and Irish-Americans during the 19th century. We will study the life of Frederick Douglass, particularly his time in Ireland, in order to appreciate dimensions of a cross-Atlantic relationship that so productively challenges ideas about race and ethnicity. This will connect us back to the idea of ‘tired, poor and huddled masses,’ the famine in 1840s Ireland, and the circulation of abolitionist ideas. We will read several excerpts from Someone Knows My Name to supplement our understanding of the abolitionist movement as the first international human rights campaign, predating the United Nations by a hundred years.
Required Reading


Required Viewing

- Frederick Douglass and the White Negro (2008), directed by John J. Doherty

Due: Reflection Paper 2

Week 5
Class: 5.1 (Im)migrants and Global Citizens

This week we review what we know vs what we want to know about Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, which is undoubtedly one of the most enduring symbols of the US as multicultural space. This session interrogates how the call for tired and poor immigrants, which is engraved at the base of Lady Liberty, clashes so strongly with current sentiments about immigrants and immigration in the United States. We compare this with xenophobic sentiments in South Africa and arrive at the question of how to be a global and national citizen at the same time.

Required Reading

- Poem of the Week: “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus

Required Listening

- Song of the Week: “We are the World” by Michael Jackson

Suggested Reading


Class: 5.2 Seeds and Roots

This session will take place at the Kirstenbosch Gardens where we will learn about the many species of plants and animals that now make up ecosystems in South Africa. After considering the transportation and dissemination of seeds (plant species), we will learn about the global dissemination of diseases that continues to be a consequence of Atlantic crossings. The transmission of biological products (fauna, flora, and pathogens) have radically influenced and reshaped the Atlantic world, collaterally leading to the creation of what Alfred Crosby has referred to as ‘neo-Europes’. While it is not risk-free to make the metaphorical connection here, we will conclude this session by positing the immigrant body as a host and transmitter of both, disease and culture. We will then analyze how this body adapts to its new environment, and how it grows roots and bears seeds in symbolic ways.

Required Reading

Suggested Reading


Class: 5.3 Cross-Atlantic Solidarity and Cosmopolitanisms

After debriefing our Kirstenbosch excursion and generating a synthesis of course material, we open up a discussion about what multiculturalism, international solidarity, transnationalism, global citizenship and cosmopolitanism means to us. Students will workshop the bearing these terms have within their specific academic discipline and career.

Required Viewing

• Mama Afrika (2011), directed by Mika Kaurismaki

Required Listening
• Song of the Week: African Convention by Miriam Makeba

Due: Quiz 2

Due: Context Presentations are scheduled during weeks 2, 3, 4, 5.

Week 6

Class: 6.1 Hyphen-Americans

In the spirit of Cape Town’s surfing culture, we will apply the metaphor of the surf-board to the hyphen between something and American. Even when we say Native American and the hyphen is absent, we are qualifying the adjective ‘american’ with an-other adjective. In this course we managed to scratch the surface of African-American, Irish-American and Native American history; it was beyond the scope of this course, and beyond the scope of any Atlantic Studies program, to do justice to the diversity of told and untold, published and unpublished, recorded and undocumented, and the remembered, mis-remembered then re-remembered stories that make up the Atlantic experience. This session symbolically imagines a position on the hyphen between the implied pre-American heritage and a citizenship to the United States. The final lecture triangulates between literal (passport), cultural, and consumer citizenships while also facilitating a discussion about identity formation and belonging.

Required Reading

• Poems of the Week: ‘Emmett Till’ and ‘Prophecy’ by Aimé Césaire


Required Listening

• Song of the Week: African Convention by Miriam Makeba
Due: Final Project

Class: 6.2 Final Projects and Conclusions

During our last session we will show-case highlights of the course and each student will present a portion of their final project.

Course Materials

Readings

• DuBois, L., “Atlantic Freedoms” available at: https://aeon.co/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=Laurent+DuBois
- Mpofu-Walsh, Sizwe, “The game’s the same: #MustFall moves to Euro-America,” in Susan Booyens (ed.), Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016, 74-86.
- Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5468053/

Online Resources

• https://guides.library.harvard.edu/blackatlantic#s-lg-box-13499147
• https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144265/poems-on-immigration
• https://www.okayafrica.com/
• http://chimurengachronic.co.za/
• https://africasacountry.com/

Media Resources

• Mama Afrika (2011) by Mika Kaurismaki
• Sankofa (1993) by Haile Gerima
• Sing Your Song (2011) by Susanne Rostock