

African American Art



Kara Walker, *Gone: A Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred b'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart*, 1994

ARH 4930: African American Art
Spring 2021
M 12:50-1:40 [Period 6]
W 12:50-2:45 [Period 6 & 7]

Professor Ashley Lazevnick
alazevnick@ufl.edu
Office Hours: FAC 113
M 11:30-12:30 & W 10:30-12:30
or by appointment

Description

This course surveys African American art and culture from the seventeenth century to the present. It investigates work in a wide range of media—painting, sculpture, quilts, photography, music, ephemera—produced during this period by people of African descent in North America. A significant component of the course will focus on the social and political context for this production and the ways that scholars have worked to define “African American art” in relation to Euro-American art.

Goals of the Course

- To become familiar with major artworks and movements of African American art of the 17th through the 21st century
- To situate artistic production by artists of African descent within broader cultural, intellectual, and racial concerns of this period
- To develop skills in the critical analysis of race and identity in the display and interpretation of art

Grade Breakdown

Attendance and Participation	10%
Discussion posts (4)	20%
Group Presentation	10%
Exams (2)	30%
Response Paper	10%
Final Project: StoryMap webpage	20%

Explanation of Grading Standards

Grade Range	GPA
A = 94-100	4.0
A- = 90-93.5	3.67
B+ = 87-89.5	3.33
B = 84-86.5	3.0
B - = 80-83.5	2.67
C+ = 77-79.5	2.33
C = 73-76.5	2.0
C- = 70-72.5	1.67
D+ = 67-69.5	1.33
D = 64-66.5	1
D- = 60-63.5	.67
E, I, NG, WF = 59 or less	0

Attendance

As this class will be heavily discussion-based, participation in the synchronous online meetings—or face-to-face meetings—is an integral part of the student’s grade. Full attendance in the live meetings will be especially important in trying to maintain the continuity of the classroom experience. Attendance will be taken in each class, and students are granted **one** unexcused absence for the semester. Any additional unexcused absence will result in a deduction of 1/3 of the final letter grade (per absence) for the course.

Absences will be excused in the case of severe illness, a family emergency, or religious observation. Please contact me directly, and in advance, concerning these and any other potential class conflicts.

For more on the University’s attendance policy:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Technology & Etiquette

We will be meeting in a hybrid fashion, with in person and online instruction synchronous via Zoom. Zoom is an inherently distracting platform; I ask for your patience and composure during our time together. Out of respect for fellow students, please refrain from disruptive behavior, including texting and getting up unnecessarily in the middle of class. It is expected that the internet will be used for course material only; outside websites or messaging platforms are prohibited during our meetings.

Please note: Our class sessions will be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. **I kindly ask that you keep your video on during our class time; this will help us keep a degree of connectivity at a distance. However, if you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, please notify me at the beginning of the semester.** Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Canvas & Email

All course-related business will be conducted through canvas. This is where you will download class readings, turn in assignments, and take quizzes. If you have any questions for me, or would like to schedule a meeting, **please email me through Canvas**. I will try to respond to emails in a timely manner but note that I will be checking emails only during weekdays, until 6 pm. Please plan accordingly.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion Posts (20%)

***Due 10 a.m. the day of class**

This course will include frequent discussions based on the daily readings and artworks introduced in class. Students should come prepared having read and reflected on the assigned readings, ready to ask insightful questions of one another and connect the readings to other topics covered in the semester. To that end, students will be responsible for posting responses to **four** (out of 7) readings over the course of the semester, indicated by ***post** on the syllabus and corresponding to a forum on Canvas.

These responses are intended to spark conversation in advance of class discussions, and they are an opportunity for you to pose questions, examine a theme in greater depth, or raise difficulties that may have come up in the readings. Although these responses may be informal and short (under 300 words), they should demonstrate that you have completed the required assignments and thought deeply about the issues and topics addressed by the texts. The format should include: **a short summary of the text (3-5 sentences max), comments on passages that you found intriguing and/or confusing, and at least ONE question for the group (some questions will be compiled to be answered in class).**

Visiting Artist/HESCAH Response Paper (10%)

***Due at the start of class Monday 3/22**

Students will write one response paper on one of the Visiting Artist or HESCAH Lecture Series of the 2020-2021 year. Recordings of Fall lectures are available online. The paper should be 2-3 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 pt. font). You are not required to conduct research for these papers, though should you use any outside source material, you must cite accordingly, using Chicago Manual of Style guidelines.

You may reflect on the aspects of the lecture that you found provocative, moving, or insightful. Be precise in your explanation and cite specific examples from the lecture. Then explain how the lecture related to the topics covered in this course. Did the lecture resonate with a particular reading or work of art that we have studied? Did the artist/art historian draw on some of the course's overarching themes or on artistic techniques discussed in class?

Note: Because of the variety of speakers not all of the lectures will be suitable for this assignment. Choose one from the following:

1-PAUL MPAGI SEPUYA

Online Lecture: 6:15PM, Tuesday, September 15th, 2020

2--Dr. Aruna D'Souza, "Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And"

Thursday, October 15, 2020 @ 06:00 pm

3-Dr. Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, "Metabolizing Memory: Cyclical History in the Work of Kara Walker and Carrie Mae Weems"

Tuesday, December 1, 2020 @ 06:00 pm

4- Suzanne Blier, Allen Whitehill Clowes Professor of Fine Arts and Professor of African and African American Studies, Harvard University

Thursday, March 18 at 6PM

Group Presentations (10%)

Presentations will take place on Wednesday 2/17

For this assignment, students will split into small groups to present on four historical exhibitions that provoked protest or backlash in relation to issues of race, identity, and representation. It will be the task of each group to present a 20-minute PowerPoint that introduces to the class to the main themes of the exhibition and the context of its organization as well as summarizing the nature of the controversy around the show. The ultimate goal will be to study these case studies in relation to one another, in order to analyze the successes and failures in exhibiting African American art.

- 1) *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900–1968*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1969
- 2) *Contemporary Black Artists in America*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1971
- 3) *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, Los Angeles County of Modern Art, 1976
- 4) 1993 Biennial Exhibition, the Whitney Museum of American Art

Exams (30%)

Two exams will take place over the course of the semester: a mid-term and a non-cumulative final. Exams will include multiple choice questions, slide comparisons, and short essay questions. For slide identifications, you will be asked to address the significance of artworks in the context of the broader themes covered in the readings and discussion. I will make lecture slides available on Canvas in PDF form, identifying select works for which you should be responsible (expect to memorize about 30-35 per exam).

Final Project (20%)

Prospectus due Monday 3/15

Project due Monday, 4/26

For your final project, you will design an interactive digital map that reflects on the diasporic nature of African American art. You may choose to focus on one artist of African descent or an artistic movement, and you will design a digital exhibition that traces the artistic influences, travels, exhibition venues that pretrain to your topic. The goal of this project is to explore the multiple paths of cultural expression and the hybridity of African-American art. You may choose to focus on any topic between 1780 and today.

An example of digital mapping can be found on the Cultural Expressions page of the National Museum of African American History and Culture: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/cultural-expressions>.

COURSE POLICIES

Diversity Statement

The intent is that we explore the content of this course in a way that is respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, ability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. The intent is also to present content that explores diverse points of view, which might be challenging. Maintaining a respectful environment will be our responsibility. The intent is that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Accommodations

I am committed to ensuring access to course content for all students. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, please meet with me within the first two weeks of the term so we can develop an implementation plan together. It is important to meet as early in the term as possible; this will ensure that your accommodations are implemented early on. If you have accommodations for test-taking, please remember that arrangements must be made at least a week before the date of the test or exam.

Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here](#).

Late Work

Late work will only be accepted under extenuating circumstances. Please contact me in advance if you anticipate any issues in meeting the deadlines for this class. In fairness to your fellow students, any work turned in late without explanation will be reduced 1/3 a letter grade for every day late.

Academic Integrity & Honor Code

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states:

“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’*”

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

For this class, infractions on academic integrity may include cheating on quizzes, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. Proper citations are required for representing any idea that is not your own; Chicago Manual of Style is the preferred citation style for Art History. If you have questions about plagiarism, you may consult the following library guide: <http://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/copyright/plagiarism>.

UF’s policies regarding academic honesty, the Honor Code, and student conduct related to the Honor Code will be strictly enforced. **This means that cheating and plagiarism will be penalized, and a report will be filed with the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution office.**

CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact “U Matter, We Care” so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Email: umatter@ufl.edu

Phone: 352-392-1575

Website: <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>

Counseling and Wellness Center:

Address: 3190 Radio Road, Gainesville, FL 32611 Phone: 352-392-1575

Website: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), at the Student Health Care Center:

Phone: 352-392-1161

Website: http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/sexual_violence

ACADEMIC RESOURCES:

The Writing Studio

302 Tigert Hall and 339 Library West

Offers help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers, as well as online tutoring.

Phone: 352-846-1138

Website: <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

E-learning Technical Support:

Email: learningsupport@ufl.edu.

Phone: 352-392-4357 (select option 2)

Website: <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

Library Support

For assistance in using the libraries and finding resources.

Email: <http://answers.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>

Phone: 352-273-2805

Website: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>

Teaching Center

For tutoring and strengthening study skills.

SW Broward Hall

Email: teaching-center@ufl.edu

Phone: 352-392-6420

Website: <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Graduate Students enrolled in this class are responsible for completing all of the required reading and assignments. Graduate students will write one additional discussion post and will not be required to participate in the group assignment.

The final project will be extended, and include a transcript of 6-8 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 pt. font), with at least 6 scholarly sources. Graduate students must consult with me individually about their project over the course of the semester.

Grade Breakdown	
Attendance and Participation	10%
Discussion posts (5)	25%
Exams (2)	30%
Response Paper	10%
Final Project	25%

IMPORTANT DATES

W 2/17 **Group Presentations**

M 3/8 **EXAM 1**

M 3/22 **Visiting Artist/HESCAH Response Paper DUE**

M 4/19 **EXAM 2**

M 3/15 **Final Project Prospectus Due**

M 4/26 **Final Project Due**

Readings

Required Textbook: Lisa Farrington, *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). [Farrington].

Additional readings will be made available as PDFs on Canvas (grouped by week under the “Files” tab).

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 **Introductions**

M 1/11

W 1/13

Week 2

M 1/18—NO CLASS MLK DAY

W 1/20 **Colonial America**

Week 3 **The Abolitionist Movement**

M 1/25

***post**

W 1/27

Week 4 **Civil-War Era Painting and Photography**

M 2/1

***post**

W 2/3

Week 5 Reconstruction-era Romanticism

M 2/8

***post**

W 2/10

Week 6: Monuments, Conventions, & Exhibitions

M 2/15

W 2/17 **Group Presentations**

- 1- *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900–1968*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1969
- 2- *Contemporary Black Artists in America*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1971
- 3- *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, Los Angeles County of Modern Art, 1976
- 4- *1993 Biennial Exhibition*, Whitney Museum of American Art

Week 7: The Harlem Renaissance

M 2/22

***post**

W 2/24

Week 8: The Great Depression and WW2

M 3/2 **Roundtable Discussion:** Exhibiting African American Art at the NGA

W 3/4

Week 9: Folk & Vanguard Art

M 3/8 **Exam 1**

W 3/10 **Roundtable Discussion:** Exhibiting, Labeling, and Classifying “Folk” Art

Week 10: Washington Color School & Abstract Expressionism

M 3/15 **Final Project Prospectus Due**

***post**

W 3/17

Week 11: Black Arts Movement

M 3/22 **Visiting Artist/HESCAH Response Paper DUE**

W 3/24

Week 12 Postmodernism

M 3/29

*** post**

W 3/31

Week 13 Culture Wars

M 4/5

W 4/7 **Roundtable Discussion:** Issues in African American Art History

Week 14 Contemporary Directions

M 4/12

***post**

W 4/14

Week 15 Conclusions

M 4/19 **Exam 2**

W 4/21

Final Project Due Monday, April 26th at midnight