

Black Geographies

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Office hours: By Appt
Meeting ID: 226 306 4279

Fall 2020
Tuesday 1:40p to 4:40p
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Structure of the course:

With this course we will approach Black geographies as an ever-unfolding spatial expression of Black studies. Some questions that subtend this course are: 1) What are black geographies?; Who may see/produce a Black geography; 3) What is the relationship between Black place-making and Black being/ontology; What is the future of Black geographies in and outside of academia? The course is structured as an advanced study group. As such, students will have an opportunity to lead discussions on a text, in the spirit of camaraderie. We are here to help one another understand more. The course will begin with an engagement of key works on Black geographies. We will come to see institutional Black geographies as concerned with the Black spatial imaginaries formed in the aftermath of enslavement and colonialism in the Western hemisphere. As such, our readings will center experiences in the United States and, to some extent, its former metropole (England). To help us along the way, we will think through works in cognate disciplines (e.g. English and Anthropology) in order to decipher to what extent spatial imperatives are inherent in these works. A goal of this course is to study works (and if we're lucky) begin the process of developing one of the key methodological approaches of Black geographies – sight.

Texts

Each of the texts in the course schedule are required. Any additional readings are hyperlinked in the syllabus or posted on Canvas. Suggested readings are not mandatory. Instead, they are meant to aid in your future study of Black geographies.

Assignments

You will be assessed according to a combination of assignments: participation (i.e. productive contribution), reaction papers, seminar leadership, and your final papers. Each component comprises 25% of your final grade.

Participation – 25%

We are all familiar with the process of a seminar. Each of us are responsible for the tone, tenor, and trajectory of this seminar. Thus, though you are not the main facilitator, I require you to join in and usher class conversations. No one person will graft all there is to know from an assigned text. Therefore, I will rely each of you to help us all produce as comprehensive an understanding of the texts as possible. To those who are reserved, I implore you to step up when needed. To those the extroverts, you are encouraged to step back, when necessary.

Reaction Papers – 25%

Short response papers are due weekly, no later than **10 AM on the Monday** before the seminar meeting. Please post them as a threaded discussion into Canvas so that the seminar leader can see initial reactions before class. These threaded responses will be important resources to have, years after you have completed this course. Responses should be no more than 750-1000 words, and should be written as critical assessments of the readings. Please don't spend time summarizing the readings – you may do that briefly in a few sentences but no more than that. Instead I look forward to careful and thoughtful discussions, ideally with an argument about the reading, methods/methodology, how the ideas from the readings could be pushed further, or about the insights the readings hold for your own research. Here are some suggestions to get you started, but you need not be confined to these:

- How does the author make his/her/their arguments? What is most promising about these arguments? What are their limitations?
- What is the “take home” message of the readings? Is it productive for your own research agenda, or the author's for that matter?

- What concepts/terms does the author introduce and how do they labor within the text?
- What does the approach allow us to think about? What perspectives does it foreclose? What is omitted?
- If they are building an empirical case, does their evidence fit their theoretical approach? How does the author's chosen method/ology contribute to the formation of their argument or theoretical framework? Or vice versa?
- On weeks with more than one author: bring the readings in conversation with one another. One possibility is to consider the ways that they define or use key terms.

Seminar Leadership – 25%

We will alternate leadership of the seminar. Seminar leaders will guide us through the readings and provoke discussion on the topics at hand – aided by the student reflections that will be posted on Canvas. This should include doing a little research to find out the disciplinary backgrounds of the authors and other relevant information, as well as placing them in context in terms of the theorists they draw on or the theoretical approaches to which they contribute. Seminar leaders should arrange to meet with me and discuss their presentations before seminar – ideally by the Monday before class. I will upload a sign-in sheet in Canvas where you can sign up to facilitate a reading. This sheet will be up by the first day of class -- September 1st. If you have creative or innovative ideas for leading seminar, you are encouraged to experiment, so long as they are presented to me ahead of time.

Final Essay – 25%

The final component of class is a research paper to be devised in consultation with the instructor. I suggest you use this paper to bring ideas from class into conversation with your own research focus. Ideally, your final paper will be an essay that can have life beyond our classroom. Rather than expend your ideas and energy solely for a grade, I believe your time will be best spent developing an idea that you can submit for publication. **Sole authored** papers should be a maximum of 20 pages, double-spaced – not including references. In addition to sole-authored papers, I am open to other forms of written work. For instance, I would entertain (and perhaps encourage) a **book review** final paper, provided you converse with Black geographies and have specific plans to submit the review to a reputable journal in your field. If desired, I am open to suggestions for a **co-authored** paper, the length of which, will be the same as a sole authored paper. If co-authored, the essay must be written with someone from our class. Whichever you chose, **final essays are due December, 15th at 5pm.**

[If you have not familiarized yourself with a citation manager, I encourage you to do so.
The university provides access to a number of paid and open source options]

Schedule

This list of readings is somewhat preliminary and may be adjusted following our discussion on the first day of class.

Date	Topic and Readings
Sept 01	<p data-bbox="264 1333 737 1367">Introduction What is a Black Geography?</p> <p data-bbox="264 1402 1227 1436">McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. (2007). Chapter 1. Black Geographies and the Politics of Place</p> <p data-bbox="264 1436 1052 1470">McKittrick, K., (2011). On plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place</p> <p data-bbox="264 1470 688 1503">Sharpe, C. (2014). Black Life Annotated</p> <p data-bbox="264 1535 513 1568"><u>Supplemental Reading</u></p> <p data-bbox="264 1568 1227 1602">McKittrick, K. (2006). Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle</p> <p data-bbox="264 1633 1344 1692">Woods, C. (2017). Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans</p>
Sept 08	<p data-bbox="264 1724 1024 1757">NO CLASS – I will be observing the #SCHOLARSTRIKE for racial justice</p> <p data-bbox="264 1757 914 1791">Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1W7WzQyLml</p>

Black (non)Being and/in the Space of the World

- Sept 15 Hartman, S., & Wilderson, F. (2003). [The Position of the Unthought](#)
Jackson, Z. (2020). *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an AntiBlack World*

Supplemental Reading

Hartman, S. (1997). *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and self-Making in 19th Century America*
Wilderson, F. (2010). *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms*

Sept 22 **Regional Geographies**

Woods, C. (1999). *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta*

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- Sept 29 Wilson, B. (.2019). *America's Johannesburg: Industrialization and Racial Transformation in Birmingham*

Supplemental Reading

Simone, N. [Mississippi, Goddamn](#)
King, M.L.K. (1963). [Letter From A Birmingham Jail](#)

Oct 06 **A (post)Chocolate City**

Summer, B.T. (2019). *Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City*

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- Oct 13 Reese, A. (2019). *Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, DC*

Supplemental Reading

Funkadelic, P. [Chocolate City](#)

Oct 20 **Diasporas: Longing to Be-**

Walcott, R. (1997). *Black Like Who: Writing Black Canada*

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- Oct 27 Khan-Perry, K. (2013). *Black Women Against the Land Grab: Fighting for Racial Justice in Brazil*

Supplemental Reading

Hawthorne, C. (2017). *In Search of Black Italia: Notes on Race, Belonging, and Activism in the Black Mediterranean*
Valle, M. (2019). *Burlesquing Blackness: Racial Significations in Carnival and the carnivalesque on Colombia's Caribbean Coast*

Nov 03 **Black-Queer-Trans***

Cohen (1997). [Punks, Bulldangers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics](#)
Bey, M. (2017). [The Trans*-ness of Blackness, The Blackness of Trans*-ness](#)
Ellison et al. (2017). [We Got Issues: Toward a Black Trans*/Studies](#)

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- Nov 10 Snorton, C. R. (2017). *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*

Supplemental Reading

Macharia, K. (2019). *Frottage: Frictions of Intimacy Across the Black Diaspora*

Nov 17 **White Folk Do Black Geographies?**

Williams, B. (2020). The Fabric of Our Lives“?: Cotton, Pesticides, and Agrarian Racial Regimes in the US South

Giancarlo, A. (2018). [“Don’t call me a Cajun!”: Race and Representation in Louisiana’s Acadiana Region](#)

Allen, D. (2020). Black Geographies of Respite: Relief, Recuperation, and Resonance at Florida A&M University

Tyner, J. (2004). [Territoriality, social justice and gendered revolutions in the speeches of Malcolm X](#)

Nov 24 **Brainstorm Session**

*We will use this time to discuss one another’s essay ideas and any issues you may have. Each student will have 15 minutes to share ideas and receive feedback.

Dec 01 **Virtual Writing Day**

*We will use this virtual writing session as a follow-up to our brainstorm session. You do not have to stay the entire length of class. However, you must attend and participate.

Dec 08 **Living for the City**

Family Properties: How the Struggle Over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America

Supplemental Readings

Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America

Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City

Dec 15 **FINAL PAPER DUE**
