

McGill University

McGill Institute for the Study of Canada

Black Canada

Instructor: David Austin

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Course: Cans 415, Fall 2021

Class Hours: Monday, 3:35-6:25

Room: Ferrier 105

Office hours: Thursdays, 3:30-5, via Zoom

Course Description

This course will establish, take for granted and explore the social, political and intellectual impact of Canadians of African and Caribbean descent while situating this population within the wider global and transnational political context. Black Canadian history, politics and thought will be examined and framed in relation to the history of migration and immigration, and within the context of diaspora, transnationalism and contemporary struggles for social transformation and freedom within and beyond the Canadian nation-state.

Course Context

Beginning with the history of colonialism and slavery in Canada, the course will migrate across time and space in order to probe the dynamics of power associated with race alongside gender and class.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Montreal became a veritable Caribbean island in which both local and exile politics played a central role in humanizing the existence of people of African descent in the city and across the country. Shifting between Canada and the Caribbean, this course will also examine the politics and sociology of Blacks in Canada with an emphasis on the “Caribbean island of Montreal” and how, in struggling to humanize their existence, people of African and Caribbean descent, including members of Canada’s longstanding Black community, impacted Canada while at times playing an important role in political events in the Caribbean.

While some emphasis will be placed on the 1960s and 1970s as an important turning point in terms of Black politics in Canada, the course will generally examine the relationship between the past and the present and in relation to imagined possibilities for a just and egalitarian society.

Course Objectives

Drawing on current thinking, research and documentation, the goal of the course is to expose students to a range of social and political issues related to the Black experience in Canada. The approach to the course will be phenomenological, that is to say drawing on the historical-political-intellectual experience and movement of Black Canadians over time and space. We will examine issues such as colonization, slavery, migration, immigration, multiculturalism, state surveillance, protest and rebellion and historic events

such as the 1968 Congress of Black Writers at McGill University and the 1969 student protest at Sir George Williams University (present-day Concordia) as important turning points in Canadian history. We will also discuss the reverberations of these events in the Caribbean and how they are remembered today in relation to our current political moment.

Course Books

The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006).

Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017).

Cecil Foster, *Blackness & Modernity: The Colour of Humanity and the Quest for Freedom* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2007).

Sean Mills, *A Place in the Sun: Haiti, Haitians, and the Remaking of Quebec* (Kingston-Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2016).

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013).

In addition to the above books, we will read articles and texts that highlight the transnational politics that connected the Caribbean to Canada.

Among the themes that this course will examine include:

Migration * Class * Race * Intersectionality * Gender * Nationalism * Transnationalism * colonization/decolonization * Internationalism * Exile * Colonialism * Freedom * Multiculturalism * Underdevelopment * Nationalism * Diaspora * Fear * Labor * Alienation * Political economy * Slavery * Immigration * anti-Blackness * Surveillance * Sexuality * Criminalization and incarceration * Solidarity * Social Transformation

Format

Unless things change during the course of the semester, the seminar will be taught in person. Students are expected to come to class having thoroughly read and engaged the course material and prepared to actively participate in class discussions. Beginning in the second week, students will deliver presentations on the course readings and identify questions and issues that arise in the texts, The class will then engage in discussion related to issues and questions tied to the readings in order to deepen our understanding of them. Guest speakers will share their insights on issues related to course themes in order to expand our understanding of what we have discussed in class.

Pedagogical approach

This course is a seminar and students are expected to come to class having read, fully engaged and ready to discuss the course material. Students will give a short presentation

on the readings at the beginning of each class followed by a facilitated discussion and lecture by the professor designed to situate and contextualize the texts.

Active presence and participation is mandatory and will be evaluated based on critical insights related to the readings and the connections made between them and contemporary issues and problems related to the course theme, and how they relate to the wider political context. Throughout the course, a particular emphasis will be placed on the meaning of dispossession and freedom. When you are reading the materials, try to identify the author's thesis in each article or book chapter and how it relates to the course theme. Which points you disagree, with and why? How do the authors support their arguments? What evidence or examples do they provide to make their points?

Class attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. Absence due to religious observance is covered by the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Classroom Etiquette Statement

Open and frank dialogue and exchange is essential to the course. However, all comments must be made in a respectful manner that is considerate of your classmates and sensitive to the reality that some among you may be directly impacted by statements made in the classroom. Going to the bathroom is an act of nature and one of life's necessities, so when duty calls, please do not ask for my permission.

Students with disabilities

Students who require academic adaptation or services may discuss their needs with the professor and/or contact the McGill Office for Students with Disabilities (<http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>) or phone (514) 398-6009.

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Language of Submission

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

- This right applies to all written work that is to be graded, from one-word answers to dissertations.
- This right does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

(Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009)

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Class participation and discussion/facilitation (30%)

As a seminar, class participation is a central component of this course. This involves actively reading and critically engaging the course material before attending the class as well as your active participation in class discussions and group work. Ten percent (**10%**) of the participation grade is dedicated to individual class presentations on the readings, beginning in week two. **Presentations** should include: i) a thorough explanation of the readings; ii) your critical thoughts and reflections on the readings; iii) 3-5 critical questions based on themes in the readings that can serve as a basis for class discussion.

Reflection Essays (30%)

For six (6) of the weekly readings you are required to submit a maximum 500-word reflection essay on the texts. The first reflection must be based on week two's reading.

Your reflections should demonstrate an ability to understand and critically analyze each reading, and where relevant, make links between the texts. They should also clearly state which aspect(s) of the readings you are addressing and raise critical questions about the themes addressed in the readings. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that you are keeping up with and engaging the readings, and to provide an initial basis for class discussion. All assignments are due at the beginning of class and must be typed and doubled spaced. **Assignments will not be accepted after we have discussed them in class.**

Final term paper and Presentation (40%)

Your final term paper should be 4000 words (excluding footnotes and references). Ten percent (10%) of this assignment will include a **presentation** based on your research. The remaining 30% will be based on your final essay.

To meet the requirements of the course, students must complete all written assignments and presentations. Please be sure to save back-up copies of your papers as you work on them. Papers must be typed and double-spaced.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

13 September: Introductions/Transatlantic Slavery, Colonialism and Canada

Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique*, “Preface,” 1-13. Chapter 1: “The Torture and Hanging of Angélique,” pp. 14-22 and Chapter 2: “Atlantic Origins: The Slave Woman from Portugal,” 23-67, Chapter 3: “The Secret of Slavery in Canada,” pp. 68-106, Chapter 4: “Bourgeois Slaveholders: François Poulin de Francheville and Thérèse de Couagne,” pp. 107-140.

20 September: Slavery, Agency, Terror and the Law

Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique*, Chapter 5: “Angélique’s Montréal,” pp. 141-174, Chapter 6: “First Fire, First Flight,” 175-189, Chapter 7: “April’s Fire,” pp. 189-199, Chapter 8: “The Aftermath,” pp. 200-213, Chapter 9: “The Trial,” pp. 214-251, Chapter 10: “The Verdict,” pp. 252-260, Chapter 11: “The Appeal and Final Judgment,” pp. 261-181, Chapter 12: “The Execution,” pp. 282-286, Chapter 13: Angélique, the Arsonist,” pp. 286-292, Epilogue: “A Silenced Voice Heard Again,” pp. 293-306.

Guest: Afua Cooper

27 September: Slavery’s Afterlife

Cecil Foster, *Blackness & Modernity*, Chapter 12: “Slavery and Death,” pp. 277-304 and Chapter 13: “Ethno-Racial Bondage,” pp. 305-324.

Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, Chapter 1: “Devaluing Black Life, Demonizing Black Bodies,” pp. 17-49.

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, Chapter 1: “A New Beginning, and the Afterlife,” pp. 1-12.

Dorothy W. Williams, “Black Media in Montreal: In Defense of Abyssinia,” pp. 129-149, *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual History in the Making Conference: History and Media*, March 17, 2001, Concordia University, Montreal.

Guest: Dorothy Williams (TBC)

4 October: Language, Nationalism and Power

Carla Marano, “‘Rising Strongly and Rapidly’” The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Canada, 1919-1949,” *The Historical Review* 91(2), 232-259.

Sean Mills, *A Place in the Sun*, Chapter 1: “Language, Race and Power,” pp. 21-50; Chapter 2: “Missionaries and Paternalism,” pp. 51-73, Chapter 4: “Internationalism and the National Question,” pp. 109-132.

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, Chapter 3: “Old Ghosts and the Myth of Two Solitudes,” pp. 37-52, and Chapter 4: “Nègres Blancs, Nègres Noirs,” pp. 53-72.

14 October * (THURSDAY) *****

Sean Mills, *A Place in the Sun*, Chapter 3: “The Poetics of Exile,” pp. 77-108, Chapter 5: “Migrants and Borders,” pp. 133-165 and Chapter 6: “The Location of Knowledge,” pp. 166-193.

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*. Chapter 5: “Kindred Souls and Duppy States,” pp. 73-93.

Guest: Desirée Roachat

18 October: Mosaic Myths and Multiculturalism

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, Chapter 6: “Etre et Noir – Being and Blackness: Memory of the Congress,” pp. 94-128.

Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, Chapter 2: “The Black Side of the Mosaic: Slavery, Racial Capitalism and the Making of Contemporary Black Poverty,” pp. 50-82.

Cecil Foster, *Blackness & Modernity*, Chapter 14: “Multiculturalism and Blackness,” pp. 329-359, Chapter 15: “Promises of Multiculturalism,” pp. 360-392, and “Blackness: Social and Political in Canada,” pp. 330-346.

Guest: Cecil Foster

25 October: The Plantation-to-Plant-to-Prison Pipeline

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, Chapter 7: “Days to Remember: The Sir George Williams Narratives,” pp. 130-156 and Chapter 8: “Fear of a Black Planet,” pp. 157-176.

Sean Mills, *A Place in the Sun*, Chapter 7: “Sex, Race, and Sovereign Dreams,” pp. 194-223.

Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, Chapter 3: “Arrested (In)Justice: From the Streets to the Prisons,” pp. 83-115.

Film: The Ninth Floor

1 November: Misogynoir and Multiculturalism

Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, Chapter 4: “Law Enforcement Violence Against Black Women: Naming Their Names, Telling Their Stories,” pp. 116-127, Chapter Five: “Misogynoir in Canada: Punitive State Practices and the Devaluation of Black Women and Gender-Oppressed People,” pp. 128-157.

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, Chapter 9: “Still a Problem,” pp. 177-192.

Cecil Foster, *Blackness & Modernity*, Chapter 16: “Blackness: Essences, Mythologies, and Positioning,” pp. 393-413, Chapter 17: “Neo-Mythic Multiculturalism: Blackness in Canada’s Mythology,” pp. 414-429.

8 November: Canadian Blackness in Theory and Freedom

Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, Conclusion: “From ‘Woke’ to Free: Imaging Black Futures, pp. 229-234.

Cecil Foster, *Blackness & Modernity*, Chapter 19: “New Ideals of Canadian Blackness,” pp. 447-477, and Chapter 20: “Black Canada – Reconciliation?,” pp. 478-503.

Chike Jeffers, “Do We Need African Philosophy?,” *Dialogue* 51 (2012), pp. 643-666.

W.F. Santiago-Valles, “The Caribbean Intellectual Tradition that Produced James and Rodney,” *Race and Class* 42(2), 2000, pp. 47-66.

Guest: Chike Jeffers

15 November: Canada and the Caribbean

L. Elena Delgado and Rolando J. Romero, “Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Mignolo,” *Discourse*, 22(3), Fall 2008, pp. 7-33.
<http://www.unc.edu/~aescobar/wan/walter.pdf>

Rhoda Reddock, “Radical Caribbean Social Thought: Race, Class Identity and the Postcolonial Nation,” *Current Sociology Monograph*, 62(4) 2014, pp. 493–511.

Carole Boyce Davies, Introduction: “Recovering the Radical Black Female Subject,” *Left of Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 1-27.

Peter James Hudson, “Imperial Designs: The Royal Bank of Canada in the Caribbean,” *Race & Class*, 52(1), pp. 33-48.

Kate Quinn, Introduction: “New Perspectives on Black Power in the Caribbean,” in Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), pp. 1-24.

Guests: Alissa Trotz

22 November: Canada, the Caribbean and the Black Radical Imagination

Anthony Bogues, “The Abeng Newspaper and the Radical Politics of Postcolonial Blackness,” in Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), pp. 76-96.

Robert A. Hill, “From *New World* to *Abeng*: George Beckford and the Horn of Back Power in Jamaica, 1968-1970,” *Small Axe*, 24, October 2007, pp. 1-15.

Paget Henry, "Black Power in the Political Thought of Antigua and Barbuda," in Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), pp. 181-196.

Michael O. West, "Seeing Darkly: Guyana, Black Power, and Walter Rodney's Expulsion from Jamaica," *Small Axe*, 25 February 2008, pp. 93-104.

Rupert Lewis, "Jamaican Black Power in the 1960s," in Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), pp. 53-75.

Brian Meeks, "Black Power Forty Years On – A Retrospection," in Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), pp. 261-274.

Guest: Robert Hill (TBC)

29 November: Class Presentations and Paper Discussions

6 December: Class Presentations and Paper Discussion