

## **McGill University**

McGill Institute for the Study of Canada

### **Black Canada**

**Instructor:** David Austin

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**Course:** Cans 415, Fall 2023

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

**Room:** Arts 350

**Office hours:** Thursday 2-4 pm

### **Course Description**

This course will explore the social, political and intellectual impact of Canadians of African and Caribbean descent in Canada while situating this population within the wider global and transnational political context. The history, politics and thought of people of African descent in Canada will be examined and framed in relation to migration and immigration and within the context of the wider Black 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 while probing the dynamics of power in general, and in relation to race, gender, class and sexuality. At times shifting between Canada and the Caribbean, the course will also examine the politics and sociology of Blacks in Canada with a particular emphasis on Montreal as a transnational political site and how, in struggling to humanize their existence, people of African and Caribbean descent impacted Canada while at times playing an important role in political events in the Caribbean.

### **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. In the process, we will think through the question: what does freedom mean?

### **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).

Mairuth Sarsfield, *No Crystal Stair* ([1998] Montreal: Linda Leith Publishing, 2021).

David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013/2023).

In addition to the above books, we will read articles and book chapters that highlight the transnational politics that have 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**

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 to deepen our understanding of them. On occasion, guest speakers will share their insights on issues related to course themes in order to expand our understanding of themes 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 integrated lecture by the professor designed to situate and contextualize the texts.

Active presence and participation are 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](http://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 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 (35%)*

For seven of the weekly readings, you are required to submit five 350-word **reflection essays** and two 500-word **book reviews**.

Your reflections and reviews 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.

The first review is of week two's reading *The Hanging of Angelique*. For week **four** you must also write a review of the novel *No Crystal Stair*.

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 (35%)*

Your final term paper should be 3000 words (excluding footnotes and references). Ten percent of this assignment will include a presentation based on your research. The remaining 25% 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

### **11 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.

### **18 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.

*Book Review Due*

### **25 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.

### **2 October: Post-Emancipation Black Self-Organization**

Mairuth Sarsfield, *No Crystal Stair*, 1-149.

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

### **6-11 October: Fall Reading Break**

**12 October:** *Book Review of No Crystal Stair.*

### **16 October: Contending Nationalisms**

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. 53-7, Chapter 5: “Kindred Souls and Duppy States,” pp. 73-93.

Sean Mills, *A Place in the Sun*, Chapter 6: “The Location of Knowledge,” pp. 166-193.

Amanda Ricci, "Searching for Zion: Pan-African Feminist Thought and Practice in English-speaking Black Montreal (1967-1977)," *Left History*, 17(1), Spring/Summer 2013, pp. 43-74.

Desirée Rochat, "La Maison d'Haïti: Haitian Stories of Resistance and Black Diasporic Activism in Montréal, 1972–1986," *Social History/Histoire Sociale*, 55(114), pp. 325-344.

Guest: Desirée Rochat

### **23 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.

Sean Mills, *A Place in the Sun*, Chapter 5: "Migrants and Borders," pp. 133-165.

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 and Chapter 15: "Promises of Multiculturalism," pp. 360-392.

Guest: Cecil Foster

### **30 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, and "The Plantation-to-Plant-to-Prison Pipeline," pp. 232-242.

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

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

Guest: Chike Jeffers

Film: *The Ninth Floor*

### **6 November: Misogynoir and Multiculturalism**

Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, Chapter 3: "Arrested (In)Justice: From the Streets to the Prisons," pp. 83-115, 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 17: “Neo-Mythic Multiculturalism: Blackness in Canada’s Mythology,” pp. 414-429.

**13 November: Canada, the Caribbean, and the Radical Imagination**

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.

Beverley Mullings, “Caliban, Social Reproduction and Our Future Yet to Come,” *Geoforum*, vol. 118, January 2021, pp.150-158.

Robert Hill, “Redemption Works: From ‘African Redemption’ to ‘Redemption Song’”, *Literature and Arts of the Americas*, 43(81), 2010, 200-207.

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.

Guest: Beverley Mullings

**20 November: Canada, the Caribbean, and the Radical Imagination**

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.

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.

**27 November**

Class Presentations and Paper Discussions

**30 November**

Class Presentations and Paper Discussions

**4 December**

Class Presentations and Paper Discussions and Wrap-up