

LT304 “Borderless and Brazen*”: a Comparative US-German Literary Perspective on the Black Radical Tradition

*This is the English translation of the title of Afro-German poet May Ayim’s poem, “grenzenlos und unverschämt – ein gedicht gegen die deutsche scheinheit“ (1995)

Class times: Fridays, 9am – 12:15pm (online)

Zoom link (same every week):

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89847174413?pwd=Skw2QU1JZIZQVHVZV0hZZ3pxZWtJdz09>

Meeting ID: 898 4717 4413

Passcode: DDaKD4

Seminar Leader: Kathy-Ann Tan

Email: k.tan@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

In this course, we will trace the trajectory of the Black radical tradition through a comparative US-German literary perspective. Our point of departure will be its early beginnings as charted out in W.E.B. Du Bois’ 1903 essay, “The Souls of Black Folk”, and we will continue with the New Negro/Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts movements of the 1920s and 1960s respectively. We will acknowledge the transatlantic dimension of the Black radical tradition by exploring the poetic and essayistic writings of Black German scholars such as Maisha Eggers, Ika Hügel-Marshall and May Ayim, as well as Audre Lorde, a central figure whose work was highly influential on both sides of the Atlantic. We will examine how the Black radical tradition is significant not only as a body of critical thought that seeks to bring about a restructuring of political, economic, and social relations, but also as a literary and artistic movement that carves out a space of memory, acknowledgement, empowerment and freedom by way of the poetic imagination.

Excerpts from (will be made available digitally; this course is not accompanied by a reader):

May Ayim. *Blues in Black and White* (2003 in English) ISBN: 978-0865438903

Audre Lorde. *Sister Outsider* (1984) ISBN: 978-0241410509

bell hooks. *Belonging: a Culture of Place* (2019). ISBN: 978-0415968164

W.E.B. Du Bois. “The Souls of Black Folk” (1903)

Alain Locke. *The New Negro* (1925)

Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)

Fred Moten. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003)

Katharina Oguntoye, Maisha Eggers and Peggy Piesche, et. al. “Looking Backward and Forward: Twenty Years of the Black Women’s Movement in Germany” (2016)

Ika Hügel-Marshall. *Invisible Woman: Growing Up Black in Germany* (1993 in English)

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assignments

This course has two essay assignments: one mid-semester and one end of semester essay (**5000 – 7000 words in total**). It also has informal assignments, including giving presentations on readings and writing reading responses and/or discussion questions in advance of seminar meetings. Since this is a seminar, active and informed participation in class is a required and graded element of the course.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown:

Class Participation: 30%

Mid-term essay: 30%

Final Essay: 40%

Essay Deadlines

Mid-term essay: Friday March 24, 2022 at 12 noon

Final essay: for graduating students: Wednesday May 17, 2022 at 12 noon
for all other students: Wednesday May 31, 2022 at 12 noon

All essays are to be submitted electronically via email: (k.tan@berlin.bard.edu).

Schedule

Week 1 – February 3. Introduction to the Black Radical Tradition.

Reading: Excerpt from Fred Moten's *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003)

Week 2 – February 10. The “beginnings” of the Black Radical Tradition in the USA

W.E.B. Du Bois. “The Souls of Black Folk” (1903) and Excerpt from Alain Locke. *The New Negro* (1925)

Week 3 – February 17. The Black Radical Tradition in the mid-20th Century.

Excerpt from Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)

Week 4 – February 24. The Black Radical Tradition Today: Black Lives Matter.

BLACK LIVES MATTER <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

#SAYHERNAME <http://www.aapf.org/shn-campaign/>

more links and material will be provided

Week 5 – March 3. Belonging and (Un-)Belonging: Autobiographical Writing on Growing up Black in the US and Germany:

Excerpt from bell hooks. *Belonging: a Culture of Place* (2019) and Excerpt from Ika Hügel-Marshall. *Invisible Woman: Growing Up Black in Germany* (1993 in English)

Week 6 – March 10. The Black Radical Tradition in American Film. Part I.

3 short Films of the L.A. Rebellion. “Hour Glass” (1971) by Haile Gerima (13 mins), “Daydream Therapy” (1977) by Bernard Nicolas (8 mins), “Rain” (1978) by Melvonna Ballenger (16 mins). Link to films will be provided.

Week 7 – March 17. The Black Radical Tradition in American Film. Part II. Excerpts from Spike Lee's *BlackKkKlansman* (2018), Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2018), and Sun Ra's *The Space is the Place* (1974)

Week 8 – March 24. The Black Radical Tradition in Music.

Afro-futurism and/in the Work of Angel Haze, Mykki Blanco, Janelle Monáe, etc. Links to music and music videos will be provided.

Mid Term essays due: Friday, March 24 at 12 noon.

Week 9 – March 31. The Black Radical Tradition in Art, Part I

The works of Lorraine O’Grady, Carrie Mae Weems, Lorna Simpson, Simone Leigh, etc. Links to artworks will be provided. Excerpts from Simone Leigh’s Loophole of Retreat at the 2022 Venice Biennale.

Week 10 - No class. Spring Break (Monday, April 3 – Sunday, April 9)

Week 11 – April 14. The Black Radical Tradition in Art, Part II. The works of Wangechi Mutu, Renee Cox, Kara Walker, Kerry James Marshall, Mickalene Thomas, Kehinde Wiley, etc. Links to artworks will be provided.

Week 12 – April 21. Guest Artist Talk: Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro on her visual art and life performance, as well as artistic research on archives of Black women’s struggle and resistance.

Week 13 – April 28. Transatlantic Perspectives out of Germany, Part I.

Film excerpts from Audre Lorde – *The Berlin Years, 1984 – 1992* and excerpts from Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* (1984).

Week 14 – May 5. Transatlantic Perspectives out of Germany, Part II.

May Ayim’s *Blues in Black and White* (2003 in English) and Katharina Oguntoye, Maisha Eggers and Peggy Piesche , et. al. “Looking Backward and Forward: Twenty Years of the Black Women’s Movement in Germany”

Week 15 – May 12. Transatlantic Perspectives out of Germany, Part III. Berlin-based web series “Polyglot”, Documentary "AfroGermany: Being Black and German", etc. Links to works will be provided.

Week 16 – No Class (Completion week)

Final essays due: for graduating students: Wednesday May 17, 2022 at 12 noon

For all other students: Wednesday May 31, 2022 at 12 noon