

AH265: THE ART OF AFRO-LATIN AMERICA
Spring 2026 | Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:45am-12:15pm

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Office Hours: By Appointment



Roberto Diago, *Autorretrato*, mixed media on jute, 300 × 200 cm, 2000

Course Description

Since the early colonial times, art has been integral to the experiences of Afro-Latin Americans and to the development of their societies. Through the arts, Afro-Latin Americans have sustained kinship and created spaces of resistance against racism, reinterpreting the past, engaging with the present, and envisioning new futures. Their art has also been central to the development of Latin American national cultures and identities. Even though Afrodescendant artists bring a distinct voice to hemispheric debates over race and nation, their output has been, until very recently, largely overlooked by museums, curators, and scholars. This course introduces students to the emerging field of Afro-Latin American art, reflecting on the questions of what Afro-Latin American art is and what it does within Latin American societies. It also provides an overview of the main scholarly debates that have shaped the field. The course unpacks the tension over representation and authorship that grounds the concept of Afro-Latin American art; it studies the output created by Afro-Latin Americans, but it also focuses on artistic production that recreates African-related themes. These explorations are based on the analysis of primary sources, in particular visual sources, taking both a chronological and thematic approach that studies this artistic production within processes of colonialism, slavery, national formation, and diasporic exchange.

Course Objectives

Students will: 1) Critically understand the relationship between artistic production and its socio-economic environment; 2) Appreciate the significance of the arts to issues of race, gender, nation, religion, and how the arts are central to the creation of social difference; 3) Learn about Afro-Latin American artists, their art, and their social contributions, identifying main themes and forms of representation; 4) Identify the main debates that have shaped the field of Afro-Latin

American Art; 5) Develop historical methodological skills through the analysis of a variety of primary and secondary sources; 6) Improve speaking and listening skills through active participation in group discussions; 7) Improve writing abilities focusing on identifying, developing, and structuring clear thesis statements.

Requirements

This course requires consistent preparation and engagement. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, attend class regularly, deliver oral presentations, submit written assignments by the stated deadlines, and contribute thoughtfully to discussions.

Participation in class discussions is essential and involves respectful communication as well as meaningful engagement with the course materials. It contributes to the class's collective understanding by sharing insights, noting what you found important, surprising, or confusing, and expressing agreement and disagreement thoughtfully.

This is a reading-intensive course.

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.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

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. Beyond this allowance, each additional absence will result in a 10% reduction of the course participation grade. Students who are unable to attend a scheduled class session should notify the instructor in advance via email and provide a justification for the absence. Responsibility for completing missed coursework, lectures, or assignments rests with the student. Attendance via remote or virtual means is not permitted.

Bard College Berlin may 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.

Assessment and Assignments

- 1) Attendance and participation (30%): As stated above, students are expected to complete all the assigned readings. They should be ready to engage in thoughtful discussion of the texts through respectful interactions during class. Support for developing effective participation and writing strategies is available and students are encouraged to discuss approaches to participation with the professor during office hours.
- 2) Class presentation (15%): Each student will give an in-class presentation on one assigned reading of their choice. Presentations should be 10 minutes in length. Oral presentations are part of professional life, particularly (but not exclusively) in academia. They should be coherent and engaging.
Presentations should identify: 1) What is the argument? 2) What is the scholarly intervention: What is the manuscript doing -- periodizing? contesting? theorizing? 3) What are the contributions of the author to the existing scholarship? 4) What evidence is the author giving - is it convincing? 5) Are there limitations? Give your critical assessment of the reading; 6) Raise questions to open the discussion.
Presenters must respect time limits.
Please email me your top two preferences by Monday February 2nd.
- 3) Mid-term paper: Literature review paper (20%): Take 3 assigned texts on any given topic covered in class (e.g. Afro-aesthetic interventions in colonial art; art and ideologies of racial harmony, etc). Find and read 2 additional academic articles on the topic you have chosen. Identify: 1) What are the main questions asked by the authors? 2) What are the main arguments proposed by the authors? 3) What are the main agreements and disagreements between the authors? 4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the literature? Give your critical assessment of the literature; 5) Listen to the scholarly conversation: What are the boundaries of that conversation, what are the silences, what new questions could be pursued by future scholars?
The literature must be approved by the professor.
Submit your proposed topic and selected supplementary readings to the professor by February 27th.
Paper due: March 27th.
- 4) Final assignment: Research paper (30%) and short artist presentation (5%)
 - a) Research and write about the life and work of an Afro-Latin American artist, analyzing how their work responded to or intervened in society and how it related to structures of race and inequality. The paper should: 1) Explain why you selected this particular artist; 2) Provide historical background on the artist and the works analyzed; 3) Interpret the artist's life and oeuvre in relation to its social and political context. You may do so by engaging with one of the main questions discussed each week or by developing an alternative line of inquiry that reflects your own interests.
 - b) This assignment also includes a brief in-class presentation of up to 5 minutes. During the presentation, students should: 1) Introduce the artist selected to the class and

explain your reasons for choosing them; 2) Identify your favorite artwork by that artist and explain why it stands out to you.

Paper length: 3000 words.

Submit the name of your selected artist, the potential artworks to be analyzed, and the central question around which you will focus your analysis by April 8th.

Paper due: May 15th.

All written assignments should use double spaced, font Time New Roman, size 12.

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 will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. 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.

Grade Breakdown

- Attendance and participation: 30%
- Class presentation: 15%
- Mid-term literature review paper: 20%
- Final research assignment: 35%
 - Research paper: 30%
 - Short artist presentation: 5%

Use of Electronics

Electronic devices, including mobile phones and computers, are not to be used during class meetings, except in cases of formally approved disability accommodations.

Reading Materials

Reading materials will be available via Google Classroom. Purchase of books is not needed.

Schedule

UNIT 1: Colonial Traces: Afro-Latin Americans as Authors and Objects of Representation

Week 1: Introduction to Afro-Latin American Art: What Does It Mean to Be an Afrodescendant Artist in Latin America? What Is Afrodescendant Art?

Session 1 (January 28th)

- Alejandro de la Fuente, "Afro-Latin American Art." In Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews. *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 348-396.

Session 2: (January 30th)

- Teodoro Ramos Blanco, "The Contribution of the Black Form to the Plastic Arts," *Atenas* (Havana, Cuba Dec. 1951). In Paulina L. Alberto, et al. *Voices of the Race: Black*

Newspapers in Latin America, 1870-1960. Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 330-337.

- Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews, "The Making of a Field: Afro-Latin American Studies." In Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews. *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 1-11; 15-18.

Week 2: Afro-Aesthetic Interventions in Colonial Art: How Did Afro-Latin Americans Contribute to the Visual Culture of their Colonial Societies?

Due Monday Feb. 2nd: Submit the titles of two assigned readings you have selected for your presentation.

Session 1 (February 4th)

- Ximena A. Gómez, "From Ira to Imagen: The Virgin of the Antigua as a 'space for Correlation' in Seventeenth-Century Lima." *Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2021, pp. 214-37.
- Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, "After Redemption and Abandonment: José Antonio Aponte's Libro de Pinturas in the Field of Visual Portraiture." *Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2021, pp. 305-40.

Session 2 (February 6th)

- Kenneth Mills, et al, "Jeremiah in the Stocks-Baroque Art from the Gold Fields of Minas Gerais, Brazil." In *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*. Scholarly Resources, 2002, pp. 356-359.
- Myriam A. Ribeiro de Oliveira, "Aleijadinho and Mestre Valentim." In *The Afro-Brazilian Touch: Meaning of the Artistic and Historical Contribution*, edited by Emanuel Araujo. São Paulo: Tenenge, 1988, pp. 17-20.

Week 3: Afro-Latin Americans as Objects of Representation: How Was Blackness Visualized in Colonial Latin American Art?

Session 1 (February 11th)

- Rebecca Earle, "The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification, and Colonialism," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 73, No. 3, 2016, pp. 427-466.
- Kenneth Mills, et al, "Two Castas Paintings from Eighteenth-Century Mexico." In *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*. Scholarly Resources, 2002, 360-365.

Session 2 (February 13th): *How Did Slavery Shape Latin American Visual Cultures?*

- Angela Rosenthal and Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, "Envisioning Slave Portraiture." In Lugo-Ortiz, Agnes I., and Angela Rosenthal. *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 1-38.

Week 4: The Institutionalization of Whiteness in Art: How Did Early Latin American Visual Art Academies Construct Race?

Session 1 (February 18th)

- Alejandro de la Fuente, "Their Primorosas Obras? Art and Whiteness in Colonial Cuba." In Alejandro de la Fuente and Cary Aileen García Yero, *My Own Past: Afrodescendant Contributions to Cuban Art*. Cambridge University Press, 2025, 3-22.
- Paul Niell, "Founding the Academy of San Alejandro and the Politics of Taste in Late Colonial Havana, Cuba." *Colonial Latin American Review* 21:2 (2012): 293-318.

Session 2 (February 20th)

- Rafael Cardoso, "Academicism, Imperialism and National Identity." In Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd. *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*. Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Week 5: Afro-Latin American Art in the Age of Revolution: How Did Afrodescendants Enter the Iconography of the New Post-Colonial Nations?

Session 1 (February 25th)

- María de Lourdes Ghidoli, "Abolition and Post-Abolition in the Visual Culture of Latin America: Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, and Peru." In David Bindman et al, *The Image of The Black in Latin American and Caribbean Art. Book 2*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023, 42-68.
- María Dolores Ballesteros Páez, "The Image of the Black in the Formation of Latin American Nations." In David Bindman et al, *The Image of The Black in Latin American and Caribbean Art. Book 2*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023, 68-85.

Session 2 (February 27th)

- Mey-Yen Moriuchi, "From Casta to Costumbrismo: Representations of Racialized Social Spaces," in Pamela Patton, *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*. Leiden; Boston, Brill Press, 2016, pp. 213-241.
- Kenneth Mills, et al, "America Nursing Spanish Noble Boys." In *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*. Scholarly Resources, 2002, 395-396.

Due Friday Feb. 27th: Submit your proposed topic and selected supplementary readings for the mid-term literature review paper.

UNIT 2: Making National Arts and Ideologies of Belonging

Week 6: How Were Ideologies of Racial Harmony Both Constitutive of and Shaped by Art: The Case of Cuba.

Session 1 (March 4th)

- Juan Martínez, "Chapter 3: The Vanguardia Generation and the Re-creation of National Identity." In *Cuban Art and National Identity: The Vanguardia Painters, 1927-1950*. Florida: The University Press of Florida, 1994, pp. 51-94.
- Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001, 178-199.

Session 2 (March 6th)

- Juan Martínez, "Lo Blanco-Criollo as lo Cubano: The Symbolization of a Cuban National Identity in Modernist Painting of the 1940s." In Damián J. Fernández and Madeline Cámara. *Cuba, the Elusive Nation: Interpretations of National Identity*. University Press of Florida, 2000.

Week 7: How Were Ideologies of Racial Harmony Both Constitutive of and Shaped by Art: The Case of Brazil.

Session 1 (March 11th)

- Paulina Alberto, "Fraternity: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1925-1929." In *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2011, pp. 69-109
- Manuel Querino (2022 [1916]) "The African Race and its Customs in Bahia," introduction by Roberto Conduru. *Art in Translation*, 14:1, 8-72 (selections)

Session 2 (March 13th)

- Rafael Cardoso, "Samba and the Brown Body Politic: Di Cavalcanti and the Making of Brasilidade." *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2024, pp. 94-99
[In-class conversation with Dr. Rafael Cardoso.](#)

Week 8: How Does Art Interrupt the Myth of the White Nations? The Cases of Argentina and Uruguay.

Session 1 (March 18th)

- Exequiel Adamovsky, "Race and Class through the Visual Culture of Peronism." In Paulina Alberto and Eduardo Elena, *Rethinking Race in Modern Argentina*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 155-184.
- Alberto, Paulina L. "El Negro Raúl: Lives and Afterlives of an Afro-Argentine Celebrity, 1886 to the Present." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 4, 2016, pp. 669-710

Session 2 (March 20th)

- Michele Greet, "Racial Cadence in Pedro Figari's Candombe." *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2024, pp. 100-04.
- George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay*. 1-6

Week 9: When Latin American Art Turns to Abstraction: How Did the Post-1940s Abstract Movements Conceal, Reveal, or Reconfigure Race?

Session 1 (March 25)

- [Guided visit of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut with Dr. Clara Ruvituso.](#)

Session 2 (March 27th)

- Cary Aileen García Yero, "Lo Negro in Abstraction." In *Sights and Sounds of Cubanidad: Race, Nation, and the Arts in Cuba, 1938-1958*. (Diss.) Harvard University, 2020.
- Marcio Siwi, "A New International Visual Identity: Race, Ideology, and Abstract Art in Postwar Brazil, in "Making the Modern and Cultured City: Art, Architecture, and Urbanism in Postwar São Paulo, 1945 - 1968," (diss.) New York University, 2017, pp. 64-93.

Due March 27: Mid-term literature review paper

Week 10 (March 30th- April 5th): Reading Break

UNIT 3: Black Mobilization and Activism, 1960s-2000s

Week 11: Dismantling Myths: How Have Visual Artists Exposed the Fiction of Racial Harmony?

Session 1: April 8th

- Rafael Queneditt, "We Decapitated Time in a Drop of Water." In *Grupo Antillano: The Art of Afro-Cuba*, edited by Alejandro de la Fuente. Pittsburgh: Fundacion Caguayo & University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013.
- Judith Bettelheim, "Grupo Antillano, Revisited." In *Grupo Antillano: The Art of Afro-Cuba*, edited by Alejandro de la Fuente. Pittsburgh: Fundacion Caguayo & University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013, 35-48.

Due April 8th: Submit the name of the artist you have selected, the works you plan to examine, and the central question that will guide your final research paper.

Session 2 (April 10th)

- Odette Casamayor-Cisneros "Elusive Faces: Representations of Blacks and Blackness in Contemporary Cuban Art." In Alejandro de la Fuente, et al. *Queloides: Race and Racism in Cuban Contemporary Art = Raza y Racismo En El Arte Cubano Contemporaneo*. Mattress Factory: Distributed by University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.
- Ariel Ribeaux, "Neither Musicians nor Athletes: Notes for the Dark Book." Grupo Queloides website, http://queloides-exhibit.com/queloides_antecedentes2_ribeaux1.html. Translation available via Google Classroom.

Week 12: Afrofuturism: How Are Afrodescendant Visual Artists Threading Past and Present to Envision the Future?

Session 1 (April 15th)

- Mark Dery, "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose." *Flame Wars*, Duke University Press, 2020, pp. 179-191.
- James J. Fisher, "Revolutionary Art and the Creation of the Future: The Afrofuturist Texts of José Antonio Aponte and Martin R. Delany." *Arts (Basel)*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2024.

***Session 2: How Have Ritual Knowledge, Africa, and Notions of Diaspora Shaped Transnational Visions of Blackness?* (April 17th)**

- Abigail Lapin Dardashti, "Negotiating Afro-Brazilian Abstraction: Rubem Valentim in Rio, Rome, and Dakar, 1957-1966." *New Geographies of Abstract Art in Postwar Latin America*, 1st ed., Routledge, 2019, pp. 84-103.

Week 13: The Burden of Representation: What Does It Mean to Have Freedom as an Afrodescendant Artist?

Session 1 (April 22nd)

- Kobena Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation", *Third Text* 4:10 (1990), pp. 61-78.
- Frantz Fanon, "By Way of Conclusion." In *Black Skin, White Masks*. Pluto Press, [1952] 1986, pp. 223-232.

Session 2 (April 24th)

In-class conversation with Afrodescendant artist Yoel Díaz Vázquez (awaiting confirmation)

- Yoel Díaz Vázquez, "Recreating a Silenced Newspaper." *ReVista*, Feb 1st 2024. <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/recreating-a-silenced-newspaper/>

Week 14: Afro-Latinx: What Are the Borders of Afro-Latin American Art?

Session 1 (April 29th)

- Tatiana Flores, "Latinidad Is Cancelled: Confronting an Anti-Black Construct." *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2021, pp. 58-79.
OR
- Abigail Lapin Dardashti, "Afro-Latinx Intersections: Nuyorican and Afro-Brazilian Art and Activism in New York City." *American Art*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2022, pp. 98-125.

Students' artist presentations

Session 2 (May 1st) Holiday

Week 15: Contested Statues, Contested Histories: How Has Race Shaped the Politics of Memorialization in the Region?

Session 1 (May 6th)

- Roberto Conduru, "Sound, Fury, and Freedom: Monuments Against Slavery." In David Bindman et al, *The Image of The Black in Latin American and Caribbean Art. Book 2*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023, 334-375.
- Michel Trouillot, "Epilogue." In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 1995, 154-157.

Students' artist presentations

Session 2 (May 8th)

Students' artist presentations and conclusions

Final research paper due May 15th.