

FRIT 3053
Meeting time/location
Spring 2021

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Office hours: Zoom by appointment

THE BLACK MEDITERRANEAN

GE Diversity: Global Studies; GE Cultures and Ideas

The history of the Mediterranean has often been written as one of contact and conflict between the North and West (Europe and Christianity) and the South and East (North Africa, Western Asia, and Islam). Although scholars are increasingly attentive to the place of sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees in the contemporary Mediterranean, the growth of such studies risks suggesting that Blackness is somehow “new” to the Mediterranean space. A careful examination of Mediterranean history and culture shows, instead, that Black peoples have been integral to Mediterranean societies from the beginning. This course offers a broad survey of the Black Mediterranean, from the Ancient World through the present. We will explore Blackness in Classical civilizations, the construction of race in Europe’s Middle Ages, the enslavement of Black peoples in Muslim lands of the Middle East and North Africa, and the legacies of colonialism in France and Italy today. Our course materials will include literary texts, films, and academic treatments of the Black Mediterranean.

Requirements

Participation – 30 points*
Weekly responses – 30 points
Final exam or final paper– 40 points

*This grade includes miscellaneous pop quizzes and in-class writing assignments, which will become more frequent if I feel a significant portion of the class is not coming prepared for discussion.

Departmental Grading Scale:

A 93-100	B 83-87	C 73-77	D 65-67
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	E 64-0
B+ 88-89	C+ 78-79	D+ 68-69	

All Readings Are Available on CarmenCanvas

A Note on Covid-19

A syllabus is a contract, and students may expect their instructors to abide by the terms set forth in that contract. During this most unusual year, however, I request your flexibility with regard to the potential necessity of moving this course online should university operations be curtailed. If it becomes necessary to complete the semester online, you will find all the relevant material on Carmen. Given the small size of this course, if we move online we will continue to meet synchronously (live) during our scheduled course time. I will provide more detail about online operations if it becomes necessary. Please write me if you have any concerns or questions about this possibility or if you need to share relevant information about your internet and technology access options should the move online occur.

GE Cultures and Ideas (assessment plan appended)

Goals

Students evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation.

Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.
2. Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

Satisfying ELOs

Through films and readings drawn from around the Mediterranean, students will learn about expressions of Black identity. They will consider the construction of race across a number of Mediterranean cultures. Students will examine how ideas of Blackness have evolved over a broad historical span. Students will formulate responses to these issues in discussion, response papers, and in a final exam or long-form research paper.

GE Diversity-Global Studies (assessment plan appended)

Goals

Students understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.

Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S.
2. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

Satisfying ELOs

Course materials consider Blackness in France, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece, Israel, and Egypt. Students will consider the relationship between Black identity in the American context and Black identities in the Mediterranean world. In discussion, students will evaluate how their expectations about race may be challenged in foreign contexts.

Participation (attendance, quality of classroom interaction)

Consistent, respectful, and informed participation is expected from every student in the course. Students should prepare carefully for class by completing all readings in advance. Participation should be thoughtful, respectful, and critical. You are expected to read all course materials in advance of the date they appear on the syllabus, and to come to class with *annotated* readings and reading notes. Students who do not feel comfortable speaking in class should see the instructor after the first or second session to discuss alternative arrangements.

Weekly Response Papers

Each week (not including week one), students will write informal, 1-2-page responses to the week's readings. Your responses should demonstrate that you've read and understood the readings and should help you clarify your reactions to the course material. Use them to frame the questions and comments you might wish to make in class. While these responses are informal, they should still exhibit careful, critical thought and engagement with the readings. Each response is worth five points, for a total of 30 points. Responses should be submitted on our course's CarmenCanvas page.

Final Exam (see also Final Paper, below)

The final exam will be open book and open note. You will be asked to provide thoughtful responses to eight questions, each worth five points, for a total of 40 points. Date and time TBA.

Final Paper (see also Final Exam, above)

In lieu of the final exam, students may choose to write a final research paper. This paper should be 10-12 pages, double-spaced. Students must develop a clear argument and use appropriate evidence (including course materials AND additional materials) to support it. Students who wish to pursue this option should inform the instructor by the third week of the session.

Absences

After the first unexcused absence, each absence will lower your final grade by one third (i.e. from B+ to B, etc.). Absences for religious observance, illness, family emergencies, etc., are excused. Note that late arrivals to class affect your participation grade.

Technology Policy

Although research continues to suggest that reading from and taking notes on a paper copy of a text results in better analysis and retention of information, given the large number of readings for this course you are permitted to read on a digital device. You may use any digital reader to follow along in class, if that is your preference. You are required to turn off your Wi-Fi and data connections during class to minimize the possibility of digital distraction. Please be respectful of your, your classmates' and your instructor's time and attention. Students using cell phones during class will be asked to leave.

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that the land our course meets on has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, specifically the Shawnee, Miami, Wyandot and Delaware Nations. I honor and respect the diverse Indigenous peoples connected to this territory on which we gather.

Statement on Commitment to Diversity

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Please be mindful that identity, experience, and expertise are NOT THE SAME THING. Identity, experience, and expertise overlap to form our perspectives on art, culture, politics, and the world at large. Students are encouraged to bring their individual perspectives (their identities, experiences, and areas of expertise) into the classroom, and to be respectful of their classmates' perspectives. Any individual perspective has the potential to enrich OR limit one's ability to engage with, appreciate, and respond to course material.

Statement on Sexual Misconduct/Relationship Violence

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu.

Academic Integrity

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Please note: Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Disability Services; Students with Differing Abilities

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical

conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's [request process](#), managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Syllabus (reading schedule subject to change; all readings provided through web links or available for download on CarmenCanvas)

Week 1. Introduction to the Black Mediterranean

Oct 15: Framing the Discourse

- "The Black Mediterranean and the Politics of the Imagination," SA Smythe (position paper) <https://merip.org/2018/10/the-black-mediterranean-and-the-politics-of-the-imagination/>
- "White Innocence in the Black Mediterranean," Ida Danewid (position paper) <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2017/06/07/white-innocence-in-the-black-mediterranean/>

Week 2. Black Histories of the Mediterranean

Oct 20: Blackness in the Ancient Mediterranean

- *Black Athena*, Martin Bernal (academic book excerpts); *Black Athena Revisited*, ed. Mary Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers (academic book excerpts); *Black Athena Writes Back*, Martin Bernal (academic book excerpts)
- *From Slave to Pharaoh: The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt*, Donald B. Redford (academic book excerpts)

Oct 22: Race in the Mediterranean Middle Ages

- *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, Geraldine Heng (academic book excerpts)

Week 3. Blackness in the Islamic Mediterranean

Oct 27: Slavery in the Ottoman Empire

- "Enslaved and Emancipated Africans on Crete," Michael Ferguson (academic book chapter)

Oct 29: The Black Maghreb

- *Black Morocco: A History Slavery, Race, and Islam*, Chouki El Hamel (academic book excerpts)
- "Black Spirits, White Saints: Music, Spirit Possession, and Sub-Saharan in Tunisia," Richard C. Jankowsky (academic article)

Week 4. Black Jews; Colonial France

Nov 3: Black Jews in Israel

- "Can the Ethiopian Change His Skin? The Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) and Racial Discourse," Steve Kaplan (academic article)
- "Becoming a Black Jew: Cultural Racism and Anti-Racism in Contemporary Israel," Uri Ben-Eliezer (academic article)

Nov 5: Senghor and Francophonie

- *The Negritude Movement*, Reiland Rabaka (academic book excerpts)
- Poems by Léopold Sédar Senghor (<https://www.europenowjournal.org/2018/02/28/four-poems-by-leopold-sedar-senghor/>, <https://allpoetry.com/Leopold-Sedhar-Senghor>)

Week 5. Postcolonial France

Nov 10: Black France

- *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism*, Dominic Thomas (academic book excerpts)
- *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness*, eds. Tricia Danielle Keaton, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Tyler Stovall (academic book excerpts)

Nov 12: Black Feminisms in France

- *Readings TBA*

Week 6. Italy, from Colonial to Postcolonial

Nov 17: Colonial Italy: Oil and Africa

- "Before *The Battle of Algiers*: Sartre, Colonialism, Industrial Cinema, and an Unmade Film," Luca Peretti (<http://sensesofcinema.com/2017/sartre-at-the-movies/sartre-colonialism-industrial-cinema-and-an-unmade-film/>)

Nov 19: Black Italia

- "Black Italia: Contemporary Migrant Writers from Africa," Alessandra di Maio (academic book chapter)
- "Towards a Critical Introduction to an Italian Postcolonial Literature – A Somali Perspective," Ali M. Ahad (academic article)
- *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, eds. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (academic collection excerpts)

Week 7. Postcolonial Italy 2

Nov 24: Migrants and Refugees

- *Adua*, Igiaba Scego (novel excerpt 1 pdf, novel excerpt 2 at <http://numerocinqmagazine.com/2017/08/04/adua-novel-excerpt-igiaba-scego-translated-jamie-richards/>)

- *Asmat*, Dagnawi Yimer (short film, <https://vimeo.com/114343040>)

Nov 26: No class, Thanksgiving

Week 8. Postcolonial Italy 3 – Remote class after Thanksgiving

Dec 1. Migrants and Refugees, cont'd

- *Mediterraneo*, Jonas Carpignano (film)

Dec 3. Review, evaluations, and final thoughts

Final exam information TBA.