

Black Studies. A Critical Introduction

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Black people are particularly vulnerable to forms of social and premature death in the current crises of liberal democracies and neoliberal racial capitalism. The necropolitical regimes in the Mediterranean Sea, the Prison Industrial Complex, mass criminalization, policing and environmental racism are just some of the modalities of structural violence that especially poor black people are exposed to in postcolonial capitalist societies. In this seminar, we will analyze and discuss scholarship within the interdisciplinary field of Black Studies that situates anti-blackness within the legacies of enslavement, colonialism, and conjunctures of racial capitalism. The course introduces students to some of the key approaches (Black Radicalism, Racial Capitalism, Black Resistances, Black and African Feminisms, Afro-Pessimism) and concepts (such as fugitivity, marronage, Black Pacific, Black Atlantic and Black Mediterranean), and will engage with resistances and the politics of Black life from a transnational and feminist perspective.

Requirements: Each student needs to actively participate in class, join a group to discuss the readings for one session and present the discussion minutes. The point of the latter is not to summarize the text, but to critically discuss it and to suggest questions/issues to be debated in class. Students aiming for a Modulprüfung need to write a 5000 to 6000 word paper based on topics of their group discussion or on other topics discussed in class, to be handed in by the end of March.

Session Nr.	Date	Topic	Texts/ Material
1.	16.10.2019	Introduction: Critical Black Studies	
2.	23.10.2019	The Haitian Revolution	<p>Cyril L. R. James (1938), <i>The Black Jacobins. Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution</i>. London, Excerpts.</p> <p>Gurminder Bhambra (2016), "Undoing the Epistemic Disavowal of the Haitian Revolution: A Contribution to Global Social Thought", <i>Journal of Intercultural Studies</i> 37 (1): 1-16.</p> <p>Jeanette Ehrmann (2018), „Haitian Revolution“, <i>Krisis. Journal for Contemporary Philosophy</i>: http://krisis.eu/haitian-revolution/</p>

3.	30.10.2019	Black Radical Critiques of Capitalism	<p>W.E.B. Du Bois (1935), <i>Black Reconstruction in America</i>, New York: The Free Press, pp. 3-31.</p> <p>Oliver C. Cox (1962), <i>Capitalism and American Leadership</i>, New York: Philosophical Library, Excerpts.</p>
4.	06.11.2019	Black Sociologies	<p>W.E.B. Du Bois (1994), <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>, New York, pp. 1-7.</p> <p>Lewis Gordon (2000), "What does it mean to be a problem? W.E.B. Du Bois on the study of black folk", in: <i>Existential Africana</i>. London, Routledge, pp. 62-96.</p>
5.	13.11.2019	Anti-Colonial Theories	<p>Frantz Fanon (1963), "On Violence", <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>, New York, Grove Press, pp. 1-52.</p> <p>Walter Rodney (1972), <i>How Europe Underdeveloped Africa</i>, Howard University Press, pp. 147-203.</p>
6.	20.11.2019	Racial Capitalism I	<p>Cedric J. Robinson (1983), "Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development", <i>Black Marxism. The Making of the Black Radical Tradition</i>, London: Verso, pp. 9-28.</p> <p>Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2017), "Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence," in: Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (eds.): <i>Futures of Black Radicalism</i> (London: Verso, pp. 225-240.</p>

7.	27.11.2019	Racial Capitalism II	<p>Nikhil Pal Singh (2016), "On Race, Violence, and "So-Called Primitive Accumulation", <i>Social Text</i> 34(3): 27-49.</p> <p>Peter J. Hudson (2018), "To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism and Justice. Racial Capitalism and the Dark Proletariat", in: Boston Review, online: https://bostonreview.net/forum/remake-world-slavery-racial-capitalism-and-justice/peter-james-hudson-racial-capitalism-and</p> <p>Robin D.G. Kelley (2017), "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?", in: Boston Review, online: https://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism</p>
8.	04.12.2019	Racial Gendered Capitalism and Black Feminist Thought	<p>Jones, Claudia (1949), "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!", in: <i>Political Affairs</i>, pp. 3-19.</p> <p>Angela Davis (1998), "Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation", <i>The Angela Davis Reader</i>, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 161-192.</p> <p>Hortense J. Spillers (1987), "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book", <i>Diacritics</i> 17(2): 64-81.</p>
9.	11.12.2019	Black Atlantic and Critical Cultural Studies	<p>Paul Gilroy (1993), "The Black Atlantic as Counterculture of Modernity", <i>The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness</i>, London: Verso, pp. 1-41.</p> <p>Stuart Hall (1993), "What Is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture?", <i>Social Justice</i>, 20(1/2): 104-114.</p>
10.	18.12.2019	African Feminisms and Queer Formations	<p>Amina Mama (2020), "'We will not be pacified': From freedom fighters to feminists", in: <i>European Journal of Women's Studies</i>, 27(4):362-380.</p>

			Sokari Ekine (2012), "Contesting Narratives of Queer Africa", <i>Queer African Reader</i> , Dakar: Fahamu, pp. 78-92.
11.	15.01.2020	African Political Theory	Achille Mbembe (2013), <i>Critique of Black Reason</i> . Durham: Duke University Press, Introduction and Chapter one.
12.	22.01.2020	Afro-Pessimism	<p>Saidiya Hartman (2017), "The Burdened Individuality of Freedom", <i>Afro-Pessimism. An Introduction</i>, Minneapolis 2017, pp. 31-48.</p> <p>Jared Sexton (2006), "Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word", <i>Rhizomes. Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge</i>, 29, pp. 1-21.</p> <p>Annie Olaloku-Teriba (n.d.), "Afro-Pessimism and the (Un)Logic of Anti-Blackness, in: <i>Historical Materialism</i>, online: https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/articles/afro-pessimism-and-unlogic-anti-blackness</p>
13.	29.01.2020	Black Pacific	<p>Robbie Shilliam (2015), "Black Power and Mana Motuhake", <i>The Black Pacific. Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections</i>, London: Bloomsbury, pp. 35-51.</p> <p>Teresia Teaiwa et al. (2017), "Black and Blue in the Pacific. Afro-Diasporic Women Artists on History and Blackness", <i>Amerasia Journal</i>, 43(1): 145-193.</p>
14.	05.02.2020	Black Mediterranean	<p>SA Smythe (2018), "The Black Mediterranean and the Politics of Imagination", in: <i>Middle East Research and Information Project</i>, 286 https://merip.org/2018/10/the-black-mediterranean-and-the-politics-of-the-imagination/</p> <p>Katherine McKittrick (2014), "Mathematics Black Life", in <i>Black Scholar</i>, 44(2): 16-28</p>

15.	12.02.2020	Black Politics in Germany and Final Discussion	<p>Hakim Adi (2008), "Pan-Africanism and communism: the Comintern, the 'Negro Question' and the First International Conference of Negro Workers, Hamburg 1930", in: <i>African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal</i>, 1(2): 237-254.</p> <p>May Opitz (Ayim), Katharina Oguntoye and Dagmar Schultz (1991), <i>Showing Our Colors Afro-German Women Speak Out</i>, University of Massachusetts Press, chapter one.</p>
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