Welcome! In this class we will study the experiences of Africans and their descendants from the Caribbean to Mexico, from Brazil to Uruguay. This writing-intensive seminar reveals the profound impact of Africans on the broadly-defined Latin American region during the last five hundred years. As a result, our readings and discussions will address the early interactions between West and West Central African kingdoms with Portuguese priests, merchants and slave traders. This is not a course on slavery, but the historical experience of enslavement will be analyzed in order to inform the lives of free people of African descent throughout Latin America.

African religion and its adaptation to the American setting, particularly in relation to music and dance, will be a prominent theme within our seminar. Just as the voudoun ceremonies of the Haitian Revolution combined music and religious forms with political consciousness, the cabildo ceremonies of Africans and creole Cubans also emerged as spaces for socialization and political plotting. Along the same lines, the rise of samba and capoeira in Brazil also speak to a fusion of African forms of spirituality and recreation for everyday uses.

While the Brazil, Cuba and Haiti undoubtedly form the “core” regions of the African diaspora within Latin America, in this class we will develop a more profound understanding of “peripheral” areas where African-descendants impacted local culture, religion and politics. Studies on Uruguay and Mexico, for instance, will help us understand and critique the idea of racial democracies and mestizaje at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Requirements & Grading

No knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese is needed for this class. All class materials have been written or translated into English. No previous knowledge of the Latin American region is required either.

Your objective for this course is to produce a well-researched, original paper on any aspect of the African diaspora (within the Latin American region). Students enrolled in HIS 251 will write a 15-page paper. Students taking the writing-intensive (HIS 251W) course will produce a 20-page paper. An annotated outline of your research paper will count for 10% of your grade for the semester. A finished first draft will be worth 20%. The final version paper will amount to 40% of your final grade.

Attendance in a seminar of this nature is essential and will be worth 20% of your final grade. You are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. Subsequent absences will be penalized. Online assignments and classroom participation will be worth the final 10% of your grade for the semester. You are responsible for coming to class prepared with notes and questions for discussion. This means all assigned readings must be completed in time for Thursday’s discussion sections.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University’s Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/.
Required Books


Course Schedule


What is a diaspora? What is the African diaspora?
Map and statistics from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (online resource)

Colin Palmer, “Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora,” 1-6*
*Portuguese in West Africa*, 1-24

**Week 2 - The Iberian Precedent: Islam, Catholicism and Slavery - Sept. 8-10**

James Sweet, “The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought,” 143-166*
Henry Louis Gates, “The Life and Work of Juan Latino,” 14-51*

In-Class Exercise: *Portuguese in West Africa*, 148-150, 47-51

**Week 3 – Black Conquistadors, Auxiliaries and Servants - Sept. 15-17**

Heywood & Thornton, *Central Africans*, 49-79*
*Portuguese in West Africa*, 100-107, 151-153, 167-171
Mathew Restall, “Invisible Warriors,” 44-64 (available via library website)
Week 4 - The African Reality: Kingdoms, the Portuguese and the Slave Trade - Sept. 22-24

Portuguese in West Africa, 121-147, 153-158
Newson & Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 72-120
Alonso de Sandoval, *A Treatise on Slavery*, 49-59*

Week 5 - Faiths upon Faiths: African, European and Indigenous Religion - Sept. 29 - Oct. 1

Alonso de Sandoval, Selections from *A Treatise on Slavery*, 27-43, 100-116*
James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 119-160*

Week 6 – Rebellions of the Enslaved: Yanga (Mexico), Palmares (Brazil), and Haiti - Oct. 8

No Class on Oct. 6
(Fall Break)
Matt Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 21-119

Week 7 - Haiti, Cuba and the Quest for Freedom - Oct. 13-15

Matt Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 120-190

Week 8 – The Memories and Solitudes of a Maroon - Oct. 20-22

Annotated Outline Due on Oct. 20 @ 2 p.m.

Week 9 – Brazilians by War: Soldiers, Capoeira(s) and the New Republic - Oct. 27-29

Eduardo Silva, *Prince of the People*, 19-50
Maya Talmon-Chvaicer, *Hidden History of Capoeira*, 1-68

Week 10 – Freyre’s Brazil vs. Bimba’s Brazil - Nov. 3-5

Eduardo Silva, *Prince of the People*, 51-106
Maya Talmon-Chvaicer, *Hidden History of Capoeira*, 69-120

FILM: “Mestre Bimba – A Capoeira Iluminada”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gxm0-M5YaFY

Week 11 – Blackness, Music & Citizenship - Nov. 10-12

George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*, 1-84
Delia Poey, *Cuban Women and Salsa*, 33-76*
Week 12 – Constructing Culture in the Diaspora - Nov. 17-19

George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*, 85-140
Mark Sawyer, “Joe Arroyo, Salsa, and Negritude,” 135-148*

FILM: *Black in Latin America: Brazil, A Racial Paradise?*
In-Class Exercise: The Poetry of Nicolás Guillén

First Submission Due on Nov. 17 @ 2 p.m.

Week 13 – Racial Democracies vs. Multicultural Nations - Nov. 24

George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*, 141-174
or
Bettina Ng’Weno, “Beyond Citizenship as We Know It,” 156-175 (via library site)
or
Keisha Khan Y. Perry, “The Black Movement’s Foot Soldiers,” 219-241 (via library site)

No Class on Nov. 26 (Thanksgiving)

Week 14 – Afro-Mexicans? - Dec. 1-3

Christina Sue, *Land of the Cosmic Race*, 1-144

Week 15 – Research Projects - Dec. 9-11

Final Paper Due on Dec. 11 @ 2 p.m.

Week 16 – Finals Week – Dec. 16-18

No Final Exam