

Kara Walker, *Darkytown Rebellion*, 2001, Installation view at Brent Sikkema, New York, Projection, cut paper and adhesive on wall

Art History 116:

Topics in Modern & Contemporary Art

**Black Atlantic: Art of the African Diaspora**

Wednesday 3-5:50 PM

Douglass Hall 208

Elaine O’Brien, Ph.D.

Hours: Tu 4:30-6pm; W 12:30-2

Office: Kadema 190

[eobrien@csus.edu](mailto:eobrien@csus.edu)

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/o/obriene/>

Seminar description:

This seminar considers the global influence of African cultures due to the massive dissemination of individuals forced out of Africa across the Atlantic following the Conquest, from the early 16th century until the end of the Slave Trade in the first half of the nineteenth century. (See the map on the last page of this syllabus.) The seminar focuses on the art of the 20th and 21st centuries. For us, « Black» culture is a synonym for the multicultural art of Africa and the African diaspora. The art we consider is the fruit of centuries of incessant cross-fertilizations of cultures by way of individual artists. Readings include essays and one work of fiction. Music, film, and literature are comparative topics with guest specialists presenting and discussing them with us. Research papers track the influences and intentions of selected artists whose work explores «black» identity and experience. Students with at least 12 upper-division units of art practice have the option to produce artworks inspired by the art of a major African diaspora artist.

The question we will consider, both objectively and subjectively, in all assignments, presentations, and discussion is whether or not identity is located in a place or a race. Are spatial and racial identities constructs or myths, or is there something « authentic » about them? One objective of this seminar is for you to locate yourself as a professional or professional to be. Do you believe that what you produce culturally is shaped by where you were born and raised, or by your race ? You will present your research paper or art project in class as a PowerPoint presentation. Presentation format is flexible for artworks, which may be presented live.

Prerequisites: Upper-division or graduate status; completion of the University’s Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement; completion of Art 1B or equivalent; and an upper-division course in a related subject area or instructor’s permission.

**Required readings:** No textbook. Readings are listed on the schedule, below, and available on the course website: <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/o/obriene/> (Art 116, “Readings”). Always print them out, mark the hard copy for talk points and questions, and bring them to seminar on the date they are being discussed.

We are reading a short work of fiction: “Love,” the first part of *Love, Anger, Madness: A Haitian Triptych*, by Marie Vieux-Chauvet. Dr. Hellen Lee-Keller, a specialist on this author, will be talking with us about it on October 27th. Please order a copy now ($14) and read it before then. <http://www.amazon.com/Love-Anger-Madness-Haitian-Trilogy/dp/0679643516>

Course Requirements and Bases of Grade Evaluation:

**10% participation**: Good participation is how much you help others learn: a positive, questioning, engaged attitude toward the material and the class. This is evident in your attentiveness, comments, questions, listening with respect, attendance, being on time, and note taking.

* Attendance policy: Two unexcused absences reduce your grade by a letter grade; each subsequent absence reduces your grade by a whole letter. Four unexcused absences result in automatic failure. Chronic (more than 3 times) lateness or leaving early can reduce your grade by one letter. Scheduled appointments, transportation problems, and job demands are *not* excused. Illness and family/childcare emergencies are excused. Absence due to illness requires a medical excuse from a doctor or the CSUS student health clinic. Please inform me of family emergencies or any situation that will keep you from class or affect your ability to learn. Do not hesitate to come to see me during my office hours or make an appointment, and feel free to email me anytime.

NOTE: Please keep all cellphones and electronic gadgets turned off and out of sight during class. Laptops are permitted for course use *only* – notetaking, quick information checks during discussions, etc. I will ask you to leave class and count you absent if these requirements are ignored.

Note: No eating please.

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, (916) 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours early in the semester.

**20%** 1-page reading response papers: For each of the readings indicated on the syllabus,

1. Look up and write down the author’s education (as expert in subject)
2. Find and quote the author’s thesis statement. Put the page number.
3. Paraphrase the author’s thesis statement.
4. Write down 3 key points of the author’s argument from the beginning, middle, and end of the reading. The “key points” are not just interesting; they support the author’s thesis. Quote the author’s key points and paraphrase each one.
5. Conclude with the one most important question you got from the reading. These questions will be the basis of small group discussions.

NOTE: Always bring hard copies of the texts we are discussing to class.

**10%**Informal In-class commentaries:

Two parts:

1. At the beginning of each class, before the collaborative presentation (see below), you will write an informal summary of the main *thesis* and *supporting points of the argument* of the week’s reading. You may refer to your reading response paper as you write. The purpose is just to refresh your memory and prepare you for discussion.
2. At the end of class, after discussion, you will conclude the commentary with paragraph on *what you learned and will remember*. Turn in the commentary with the journal entry at the end of the class. I will mark them with a *check plus*, *check*, or *check minus* and return them to you.

**10%** Two collaborative presentations of readings :

Reading presentation groups will be selected on the first day of class. Get together outside of class with your group, discuss the readings you are to present and prepare a presentation of around 10 minutes that you will read at the beginning of the assigned class. Make a handout to distribute to the class before your presentation. For each reading, identify the author (why is he or she credible?), the thesis question and thesis, key points (supporting points) of the argument, your questions and positions.

NOTE: *It is crucial that the work be shared as equally as possible*. Begin your presentation with your names and an explanation of how the group prepared the presentation (for example, a meeting plus email exchanges, phone calls, whatever method you used), and which individual did what.

**35%** An 8-page (1800 word) Research Paper [See below for Art Project option for students with a minimum of 12 upper-division units in studio art practice]

Topic : Select an African diaspora artist as the topic for your paper. See the list of suggested artists at the end of the syllabus. If you select an artist not on the list, get my approval before writing your proposal. Of course some black artists do not take race or location (« black » « African ») as the primary subject of their art, but all serious black artists will have addressed it in some way.

NOTE: No more than two students can write on the same artist.

Note: Your research paper is eligible for the Witt prize for the best art history research paper, usually around $300, awarded at the Student Award presentation in February.

Format (Chicago full endnote and bibliographical citation style only. Please do not use parenthetical citations):

CSUS online Chicago style guide: <http://library.csus.edu/guides/wangh/chicagostyle.htm>

Online quick guide to Chicago style citations: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>

Note: We will have a library class in information literacy on September 8, and I am available during my office hours to instruct you. You can also get help at the Writing Center in Calaveras Hall, and University reference librarians are available to help you find information at the reference desk on the second floor. Do not hesitate to ask for help.

Use the Writing Center: For free, one-on-one help with writing in any class, visit the University Reading and Writing Center in Calaveras 128. The Reading and Writing Center can help you at any stage in your reading and writing processes: coming up with a topic, developing and organizing a draft, understanding difficult texts, or developing strategies to become a better editor. To make an appointment or a series of appointments, visit the Reading and Writing Center in CLV 128 or call 278-6356. We also offer real-time online tutoring and small-group tutoring. For current Reading and Writing Center hours and more information, visit the website at [*www.csus.edu/writingcenter*](http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter).

Note: Except for excused absences (see above), late papers are marked down half a letter grade for each class day they are late.

**Paper proposal and research bibliography**: Due September 29

**Proposal**: A one-page (250-word) *thesis statement*. For definitions of these terms, see website tutorial: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml>.

Important : The *thesis question* is the same for everyone. The question is: In what way(s) is the *oeuvre* (body of work) by the artist you have selected “African.” How does the artist identify with Africa ? How is it conveyed in his or her art? After you have done some preliminary research, propose an answer to that question and write it up as your *thesis statement*. The research you do for the paper will be to find out if your answer is correct. If you discover it is not correct, you can change your thesis.

Note : I recommend that you see me during my office hours for help selecting your topic and formulating your proposal. You can also email me your thesis statement up to one week before the due date if you want my advice.

**Research bibliography**: This is acompletelist in correct Chicago style format for *every* source of information available on your topic. The bibliography is the starting point of your research and tells you if your thesis about the topic has already been published. It should include *everything* published on your subject in books, articles, films, documentaries, and the web. *Primary sources* – interviews and unpublished archival research – are cited too. Look in books, catalogues, art encyclopedias, and articles for the citations of their sources and copy them into your research bibliography. *You will not use all of the resources you find*. The “research” bibliography is not a “selected” bibliography (sources you actually use).

* Refer to CSUS library art history research resources: <http://csus.libguides.com/arthistory>
* Use full-text peer-reviewed articles only. (definition: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/lsl/help/modules/peer.html>
* Use WorldCat (OCLC) for resources in libraries worldwide that can be ordered through Interlibrary Loan. Allow a minimum of two weeks.
* Recommended databases: Art Full Text, JSTOR, Project Muse, Academic Search Premiere, Oxford Art Online
* Consult the bound *Art Index* (Library 2nd floor reference area) for magazine articles as far back as a century ago.

**First and Second (final) draft have exactly the same requirements:**

* First draft (see below, second draft, for requirements) due **October 27**
* Peer Review: Make your suggestions on a hard copy of your partner’s paper. Download the peer review worksheet available on my homepage, left hand side, and address all the questions. due **November 17**
* Second (final) draft due **Dec 1**

A 8-page (1800 word, 12 font, double spaced) research paper, including footnotes, “Works Cited” bibliography, and a cover page with your name, title of paper, course name, and date

Reproductionsof all artworks referred to in your paper with figure citations.

Staple in upper left corner (\*Please do not use plastic sleeves. I’ll want to make notes on the pages.)

Submit the final second draft in a sturdy, new, *flat*, 2-pocket file. Include all the work you’ve done: the original (marked) proposal, the research bibliography, and first draft. Submit all parts together. Your grade will be based on overall quality, effort, and presentation from start to finish.

Grading rubric:

* Strength and clarity of thesis: 20 points
* Logic of argument development (composition): 20 points
* Strength of visual evidence: 15 points
* How clearly and concisely the conclusion sums up the argument and evaluates the thesis: 5 points
* Quality of scholarly sources: 10 points
* Accuracy of citation usage and format (footnote and bibliography): 10 points
* Quality of writing (grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, etc.) and overall presentation = 20 points

100 total points: 100-90=A, 89-80=B, 79-70=C, 69-60=D.

NOTE: This class adheres to CSUS policy on plagiarism. Please review the policy: [*http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353*](http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353) Cite quotations and *all* information that is not general knowledge. Web sources must have *full* bibliographical information or they cannot be used in your paper. Wikipedia is excellent for figuring out your thesis and for preliminary searches, but it cannot be cited as a source for research papers because the authors are anonymous.

**Art Project option for students with at least 12 upper-division units in art studio practice**

Note: This require a one-on-one with me to discuss options. If you are interested, please see me before the end of the second week of classes. I can stay after class or you can come to my office hours. We can also talk on the phone.

Project description: Create an installation and/or performance work in any media.

* The work expresses your own locational and/or racial identity in some way, but it should not be didactic or explicit. It should convey some idea of how you see your own spatial and temporal location, how you identity yourself as an artist (not as a wife or father, friend, employee, etc.) of a particular time and place, and/or of universal time and global location. Think about questions such as what « diaspora » means, what not being located in one place, not being « home », makes possible and what it precludes.
* The work must incorporate music (or sound) or words (or literature) in a way that has meaning to you and the overall work.
* It should use as an inspiration the work of one African diaspora artist that you have researched. (see below)

Criteria for evaluation : You are free to make whatever you want. I will evaluate it on quality of research, use of research to advance you as an artist, sincerity and intelligence of self-reflection, seriousness of effort, and amount of time spent. I will NOT evaluate the « success » of the result. Take a chance. See if you can make an «ugly,» honest, and affecting work.

**Art** **Project Proposal and Research Bibliography**: Due September 29

* Follow format guidelines above for research paper proposal and bibliography, but with your artwork objectives in mind.
* Research one African diaspora artist (as for research paper, above) who identities as “African,” “African-American,” “African-British,” “African-Brazilian,” etc.
* Research his or her intentions and sources in visual art and find out what other arts, such as music, literature, dance, theater, popular culture, he or she has drawn upon.
* Using the research artist’s work as a springboard, appropriate his or her ideas for a work that might be quite unlike anything you have ever made. Write a one page (250 words) proposal for an inter-artistic (incorporating something from literature, music, etc. that you love) installation or performance work that communicates something about your own locational and/or race identity.

Write a *thesis statement* is about your own professional (as an artist) locational identity. For example : « As an art historian, I see myself as a world citizen. Since I practice my profession in a regional, not cosmopolitan location, my work aims to bring something of the larger art world to Sacramento, especially university students. The project I will present this semester is a course on African Diaspora art… «  [Then write a brief description of the project you plan to do.]

**Art Project report** : due Oct 27: A 250 word update on your progress with photographs and/or sketches or some other visual documentation.

*Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal…. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different than that from which it is torn… .*

T.S Eliot, 1920

**15%: Class presentation of your project or paper:** 30-minute illustrated talk. You are required to practice your presentation with me at least one week before you present it to the class. You are responsible for scheduling the practice session. Art project presentations can be live. The class can be the viewers/audience. But please discuss that with me ahead of time so we can plan it.

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**Schedule:** Subject to changes announced in class.

NOTE: Readings are available on the course website to download.

Sept 1: Introduction / schedule presentations / lecture on African and African diaspora artists

* Ella Shohat & Robert Stam, “Unthinking Eurocentrism”
* Michael Harris, “Art of the African Diaspora”

Sept 8: Meet in Library 2023 for information literacy instruction with Tamara Trujillo. The second half of the class will be a discussion of Shohat, Stam, and Harris

* Patricia Leighton, "The White Peril and L'Art Negre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism"
* Paul Gilroy, «  ‘Jewels Brought from Bondage’ »Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity»

Sept 15: Guest Jim Chopyak on African influence on world music / discussion of Leighton, Gilroy, and research paper and projects

* Chika Okeke, “Modern African Art.”

Sept 22: Discussion of proposals and Chika Okekereading */ Amistad* (film)

* Enwezor, Okwui and Octavio Zaya. “Negritude, Pan-Africanism, and Postcolonial African Identity: African Portrait Photography.”
* Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism*”* (1955)

Sept 29: Research Paper & Art Project Proposals due Discussion of Enwezor, Zaya, and Césaire

* Robert Stam, “Carmen Miranda, Grande Otelo, and the Chanchada, 1929-1949” from Tropical Multiculturalism: A Comparative History of Race in Brazilian Cinema and Culture.
* Rouch, Jean, and Ousmane Sembène. “A Historic Confrontation between Jean Rouch and Ousmane Sembène in 1965: ‘You Look at Us as if We Were Insects.”

**October 5** at 6:30pm: Extra Credit Opportunity: Free public film screening, Mendocino Hall 1005

*Unveiled Views: Muslim Women Artists Speak Out*

A film by Alba Sotorra

2009, 52 minutes, Bosnian, Turkish, Farsi, Urdu, English subtitles

Introduction by Elaine O’Brien

Audience response and discussion after the film

<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c781.shtml>  (more information, including the film trailer)

Oct 6: Guest Roberto Pomo. Screening of  *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Based on the Gabriel Garcia Marquez short story), 1988, Director: Fernando Birri. Discussion of Stam, Rouch and Sembene

* Lowery Stokes Sims, « The Post-Modern Modernism of Wifredo Lam »

Oct 13: No Class / Class makeup: Visit to Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) in San Francisco

<http://www.moadsf.org/> and the SFMoMA lobby and study the vast Kerry James Marshall murals *Mount Vernon and Monticello* (you don’t have to pay to do this) <http://www.sfmoma.org/exhibitions/388>. The two museums are located a few blocks from each other. Check out SFMoMA’s museum’s online interactive features on Marshall’s installation before you go. Pick up the Marshall brochure available in the lobby.

Note: SFMoMA is closed on Wednesdays. MoAD hours : Wednesday through Saturday, 11am-6pm.

Class makeup museum assignment : Due December 8 1) 4 photos(attached to or inserted into the paper): 2 photos of you inside the MoAD museum galleries where permitted, and 2 photos of you in the SFMoMA lobby looking at the Marshall murals 2) a 200-word (typed, double space, 12-font) description of one artwork that is about « black » identity. Write one paragraph (c. 100 words) on what is so « African » about it.

Oct 20: Discussion of Sims and your papers and projects

* Assignment : Finish reading “Love” by Marie Vieux-Chauvet. Bring your copy of the book marked with passages for discussion with Dr. Lee-Keller. Focus on location and identity in a way that will be useful to your individual projects and papers.

Oct 27: Research paper first draft due / Art Project report due / Guest Hellen Lee-Keller / lecture and discussion of novel, “Love,” the first part of *Love, Anger, Madness: A Haitian Triptych*, by Marie Vieux-Chauvet.

* Gerardo Mosquera, “Africa in the Art of Latin America”

Nov 3: Discussion of Mosquera and individual papers and projects

* N’Goné Fall , «Providing a Space of Freedom : Women Artists from Africa»

Nov 10: Discussion of Fall and your individual papers and projects

* Kwame Anthony Appiah, « Whose Culture is it, Anyway ? »

Nov 17: Discussion of Appiah and and individual papers and projects / Peer Review due

Nov 24: Presentations

Dec 1: Final draft of research paper // Presentations

Dec 8: Make-up class museum assignment due // Presentations

NOTE: No final exam and no office hours during final exam week. You can contact me through email. If you give me a postage-paid self-addressed envelope I will mail your paper and project materials to you.

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**List of suggested artists** (Look for more artists in the course readings, do online research, and go to the library stacks and skim through books.)

**Artists of the Harlem Renaissance would be an excellent choice :**

* + Jacob Lawrence
  + Augusta Savage
  + Aaron Douglas
  + Archibald Motley
  + Lois Mailou Jones
  + Palmer Hayden
  + Romare Bearden
  + Sargent Johnson
  + William H. Johnson
  + Beauford Delaney
  + Norman Lewis

**Contemporary African diaspora artists from PBS series, *Art in the 21st Century***: for quick bios on these artists, go to <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/index.html>

* + Laylah Ali
  + Mark Bradford
  + Michael Ray Charles
  + Ellen Gallagher
  + Trenton Doyle Hancock
  + Kerry James Marshall
  + Julie Mehretu
  + Pepon Osorio
  + Martin Puryear
  + Yinka Shonibare
  + Kara Walker
  + Carrie Mae Weems
  + Fred Wilson

