This course negotiates the complex range of influences that construct black culture and identity in Britain today from socio-cultural, historical, geo-political and aesthetic standpoints. The changing conceptions of Black British identity (and its detractors), is explored in a cross-disciplinary curriculum which attempts to straddle the perhaps irresolvable division between the recognition of cultural differences and the refusal of marginalisation, as played out in the urban context, namely London. Key areas of investigation include: representation via literature, drama, film, television, music, sport and the visual arts and the ways in which these areas are shaped by and shape black citizens’ experiences of society’s institutions through the media, education, criminal justice system and the arts. As an indicative rather than definitive hold-all, or framing device, the use of the term ‘Black British’ follows the Parekh Report’s lead, that ‘belonging is about full acceptance, being recognised as an integral part of the community’ (2000:54). The course assumes automa cultural constituency for indigenous black Britons as they belong to and contribute distinctively to contemporary society. It moves beyond centring inheritance in terms of the immigrant or arrivalist sensibil in order to explore Britain’s unique manifestation of the African diaspora as sited firmly within contemporary Europe. The breadth of the course aims to: introduce students to cultural criticism and theory; apply this to Black Urban Studies in the British context and encourage research into a wider range of questions that will arise from investigating the above.

By the end of the programme, students should have gained knowledge and understanding of:

- significant intellectual and historical contexts that inform contemporary Black British culture and its relationship to the urban space.
- selected critical and theoretical debates about the characteristics of literary and socio-cultural...
innovation in writing and representation.

- factors which facilitate or impede cultural citizenship and their connection to a sense of belonging

**Written coursework should demonstrate ability in and evidence of:**

- writing lucidly and with focused relevance
- identifying and examining key issues in relation to the work in hand
- drawing upon and evaluating primary and secondary sources as appropriate
- sustaining a critical response through the development of coherent analysis
- presenting written criticism that displays insight, intelligence and stylistic aptitude
- structuring and sustaining a coherent argument at an appropriate level

Class participation: (10% based upon preparation and one presentation exercise weekly per student lasting 10-15 minutes as detailed under Class Description)

**Essays:**

1 x 4,000 words (90%) submitted in session 14.

Topics will be distributed in the first session for essay one and in week seven for essay two. Students may NOT re-write their own versions of these topics but must follow the rubric exactly and answer the set question. For the second longer essay (60%) you will be expected to incorporate the ideas and material covered on the course and to take this in new directions based upon your area of particular interest.

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Grade A:** At the top end of this grade, the assessed work would need to demonstrate evidence of exceptionally rigorous and sophisticated analytical research in its conceptualization; a highly secure and discriminating knowledge of the field of study in its cross-disciplinarity and to be stylistically exceptional and accomplished in its presentation. At the lower end, work will show evidence of rigorous analytical research in its conceptualization; feature a secure and discriminating acquaintance with rather than knowledge of the field of study, engage with the subject in a notably intelligent way; offer clear and efficient presentation with careful and accurate scholarly procedure and consistently display outstanding merit in all or a combination of these areas

**Grade B:** To achieve this grade, the assessed work would need to demonstrate an overall achievement of the learning outcomes to a good level which would indicate some qualities of Grade A work at the lower end of the scale. The difference would be in the degree of realisation. Thus, the work would show evidence of good analytical research, registering cross-disciplinary aspects; a soundness of argument or analysis; a good acquaintance with the field of study; a good level of coherence, relevance and efficiency in its style of presentation, largely following correct scholarly procedure. The work should be of high merit in all of these areas, or considerable merit in some areas and a good standard in others.
Grade C: A mark in this category would mean that the assessed work would demonstrate a majority of the learning outcomes had been achieved to threshold level. The grade would reflect solid competence and achievement, although the work might be partial rather than consistent in clarity, precision and effectiveness. Research would show some evidence of the ability to identify relevant issues, but might, for example, be inconsistent in its recognition of the need for a contextual framework in its deployment of ideas and registering of cross-disciplinarity; or, it might rely too heavily on secondary sources at the expense of developing an independent critical standpoint; be insufficiently detailed; or tend towards description rather than analysis. The work should be of a good standard in the areas listed above or good in some areas and of a satisfactory standard in others.

Grade D: This grade would indicate that the majority of outcomes have been achieved to a less than satisfactory state. Marks in this category would reflect work that is significantly inconsistent in its level of response to the set task or the conceptualisation and realisation of the project. It would be applied to work which does not utilise a sufficient range of processes or materials; or, its research shows limited evidence or little ability to identify the relevant issues. There would be limited or inconsistent deployment of analytical or contextual skills and poor scholarly presentation.

Grade F: A mark in this category would represent a significant failure to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes. While the work may not be without merit, the concept may have been realised inappropriately or ideas may have remained under-developed; the range of research may have been limited, with little interpretation or analysis of material; or, it may be lacking in breadth or largely devoid or unaware of the need for a conceptual framework and lacking in focus or coherent argument. It would be scholastically and stylistically incompetent.

Required Text(s)


Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

The following texts will be distributed in extract form as photocopies in the COURSE READER in advance of class. They are to be read in the order directed by the weekly schedule that follows the list - in conjunction with the reading set from the required texts above.

All films and television programmes will be viewed in extract form in class.


Coard, Bernard. ‘How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School


Storm Damage Written by Lennie James, directed by Simon Cellan-Jones. BBC 2000.

Session 1

28th September

From postwar to post-colonial to Black British (I) : City, Dwelling, Imaginings

In a post-colonial context, the front room deserves further study because it raises questions about modernity and migrant aesthetics, the process of decolonisation and the subjective desire to redefine oneself through material culture in the home.

(Michael McMillan 2008)

Racialised restrictions and ‘white open spaces’; the legacy of “No Irish, No Dogs, No Coloured”; the aspirational domestic and the aesthetics of marking out territories in a changing urban landscape and socio-economic circumstances, the 1950s/60s then and now.

Preparatory reading/ viewing:


Selvon, Sam. The Lonely Londoners

In Class - viewing of Tales From the Front Room Prod. And Dir. Zimena Percival

Session 2

5th October

OCTOBER IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN THE UK

From postwar to post-colonial to Black British (II): Political Activisms

FROM THIS SESSION ONWARDS STUDENT PRESENTATIONS WILL BE BEGIN EACH WEEK. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE 10% CLASS CONTRIBUTION MARK THAT IS INCLUDE IN YOUR FINAL GRADE.

‘Come what may, we’re here to stay’

(Linton Kwesi Johnson)

The post-imperial city and the imperial mindset, 1970s/80s. The Deptford Fire, mobilisation of the black London community against racism and establishment disregard. Class and political affiliation, ‘black’ as political affiliation rather than ethnic identity.

Preparatory reading:


Excerpts from The Stuart Hall Project dir. John Akomfrah (2013)
From postwar to post-colonial to Black British (III) : Arenas of Contestation in the Arts

Traditionally sport, carnival and music have been the cultural spaces accorded to the black community in British culture. This session looks at the interfaces in politicised expression of those circumscribed by delimiting stereotypes and the resistances to them by considering representations and receptions of black people’s contributions to the arts.

Preparatory reading/viewing:


In-class viewing of excerpts of *Playing Away* Written by Caryl Phillips, directed by Horace Ove. 1986.

No Justice, Just Us’ : The Black Body in the Criminal Justice System

As The Parekh Report reinforces, the longstanding problematic relationship between the criminal justice system and the black body in the public space has defined contemporary social relations and degrees of belonging and unbelonging for indigenous black Britons. The watershed of the publication of the Macpherson Report (2000) and its findings of endemic institutional racism in Britain is negotiated implicitly in the polemic and representational forms of this session.

In the light of recent uprisings in London and other urban spaces in the UK, we will consider the political and media viewpoints of who constitutes the “feral underclass” that the Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke termed in relation to the history of discrimination and disenfranchisement.

Preparatory reading/viewing:

Johnson, Linton Kwesi. ‘Sonny’s Letter’ – CLASS HANDOUT


TOPICS FOR FINAL ESSAY DISTRIBUTED

At Face Value: Representing Black Experience in Film, Television and the Visual Arts

As black figures were habitually invisibilised in history and their demographic and social presence discounted, in the visual arts and its counterparts of film and television, the scarcity of black people has been notable and sustained – despite changing social realities – up to the present. This session traces
contemporary artists whose work across various media literally illuminates and restores the contribution of black people to the field.

Preparatory reading/viewing:
EITHER

Sealy, Mark. ‘Black Photographic Practice: An Interview with Abdu’ Allah.’ *Black British Culture and Society* Owusu. 220-229.


OR

AND

Extracts will be shown in class from:


---

**Session 6**

26th October

**Mixed Heritages: Mixed Messages**

Struggles over ethnic or racial classification are emblematic of struggles over the right to a social identity and over the matter of self-definition.

(Jill Olumide 2002)

Children born to parents of different or intermixed racial lineages have similarly, historically, traversed straightforward categories of upbringing and cultural affiliation. This has produced conundrums of political identification and self-terming that was frequently at odds with social nomenclature - which aimed to do this identifying for them - indicated by the indiscriminateness of 1980s social policies where black and Asian people for example, were housed under the same (discriminatory), multicultural umbrella. This session considers how we are to make sense of the census featuring a methodology of comparison and contrast between British and American approaches to demographic measurement.

Preparatory reading:

Kay, Jackie. *The Adoption Papers* 10-34.


**FALL BREAK 30TH OCTOBER TO 8TH NOVEMBER**

**Session 7**

**The Care System: Facts, Aesthetics and Fictionalising**
In contemporary representations of the institution of the family and in particular that of the mother/child relationship, a unique British manifestation of African diasporic inheritances has emerged, produced by writers who embody a protean identity in terms of racial and cultural knowledge and standpoints which have traditionally been edited out of the familial story. “Trans-raised” (coined by writer and performer Valerie Mason-John) describes a generation of people who grew up in Britain in the 1960s and 70s who self-identify as black or mixed race but were reared by white people: adoptive or foster parents or in white-run care institutions. This session looks at representations of looked-after and adopted children (as created by themselves as adults) to investigate how the parameters of the national story are being flexed.

Preparatory reading/viewing:


Dr Fiona Peters will discuss her research concerning trans-racial adoption and fostering.

Black Women: Activism and Visibility, Textuality and Sexuality.

British Black lesbians write in a variety of styles and employ many different forms: […] Of course we share much common ground with other Black people, especially heterosexual Black women writers, and with white lesbian writers. However, Black lesbian literature is not a fusion of these two with an extra dash of feminism and race awareness.

(Anita Naoko Pilgrim, 1999)

Considering black women’s historical marginalisation and resistances to this in a range of activisms from historical retrievals of black women’s presence to assertions of difference and the relationship to feminism.

Preparatory reading:

Carby, Hazel. ‘White Woman Listen!’ in Owusu ed., 2000, 82-8


Levy, Andrea. Small Island


WE WILL ALSO RETURN TO MOJISOLA ADEBAYO’S MONODRAMA Moj of the Antarctic

Students’ attention is drawn to the Contemporary Black British Women’s Writing Network
http://www.vub.ac.be/TALK/BBWW/
and
http://mediadiversified.org/2014/10/30/black-british-feminism-it-is-collective-and-collaborative/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dscx4h2l-Pk;

In preparation for the next session, please make sure you have read My Fathers’ Daughter by Hannah Pool.
### Session 9

**23rd November**

**GUEST SPEAKER**

debbie tucker green is one of Britain’s leading playwrights and film makers. Her texts place poetry in the heart of theatre and also stage taboo topics and black-centred experiences from women’s perspectives. In *nut* we shall consider how mental health issues are rendered in her distinctive poetic-dramatic style. This will be followed by:

**Hannah Pool, journalist, memoirist, Chair of UK Feminista**

who will discuss her book *My Fathers’ Daughter*

Preparatory reading:

* tucker green, debbie. *nut*
* Pool, Hannah *My Fathers’ Daughter*

### Session 10

**30th November**

**Activate and Commemorate: Education and Other Processes of Publishing and Archiving Black British Experience**

I was educated to be English. Alongside me – learning, watching, eating and playing – were white children. But those white children would never have to grow up to question whether they were English or not. (Andrea Levy, 2000)

The critical attention given to black writers in Britain has been dominated by white scholars at home and abroad, leaving many writers feeling that they are left on the sidelines, de-authorised to participate in critical conversations about their own work or a field in which they have expertise. Many anthologies on the field have contextualised artistic endeavour within socio-cultural and issues-based frameworks of analysis or else, Black British writing’s admission to critical discourses is frequently premised upon connections being made to established, white-dominated, authoritative traditions and aesthetic models, or, as responses to specific socio-political conditions. The ramifications of this upon black British identity are explored through issues surrounding the education system and the still developing networks of archiving.

Preparatory reading:

* John, Gus. ‘Parental and Community Involvement in Education’ in Richardson, ed. 2005. 97-107

Students are to offer a 5-10 minute outline of their research for the final essay topic and be prepared to answer questions on work-in-progress.

### Session 11

**8th December**

**Re-cap of course.**

**Final essay (4,000 words) due.**

HAND IN FINAL ESSAY
THERE IS NO EXAMINATION FOR THIS COURSE

15th December

Eating is not permitted in any classrooms in 6 Bedford Square or at Birkbeck College. Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided. Although use of a laptop for note-taking is acceptable, any other use in class is prohibited as is the use of mobile (cell) phones. Students will attend class having read the required materials.

WE WILL BE ATTENDING AT LEAST ONE EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH.

Costs are limited to travel within the Zone 2 area on London Transport.

Take advantage of the range that is offered by NYU and try to supplement these with attending events related to Black culture as advised by your tutor and also as derived from your own research. YOU ARE ADVISED TO VISIT THE BLACK CULTURAL ARCHIVE www.bcaheritage.org.uk while you are in London.

Estimated Travel Costs

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Australian-born Deirdre Osborne is a Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London, and promotes the work of black British writers in all contexts in which she has taught, from universities to high security prisons. Currently she is editing The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature (1945-2010) and has interviewed and published critical essays on key black British writers over the past decade (Kwame Kwei-Armah, Andrea Levy, debbie tucker green, Roy Williams, Lemn Sissay, SuAndi, Courttia Newland), in a range of journals such as New Theatre Quarterly, Women: A Cultural Review and the anthologies, Performing Poetry: Race, Place and Gender, Hybrid Cultures Nervous States (b Rodopi), Contemporary Poetry in Crisis (Palgrave), Methuen Modern British Playwrights, and ‘Black British Aesthetics Today’. She edited the Methuen classic of Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun, which has been translated into Portuguese. Her edited anthologies of Black British plays and critical introductions are, Hidden Gems Vol.I and Vol.II (Oberon, 2008 and 2012). Two further books are in preparation: the monograph Critically Black: Black British Dramatists and Theatre in the New Millenni (Manchester University Press), the edited Contemporary Black British Women’s Writing: Contradictions and Heritages. She co-edited Modern and Contemporary Black British Theatre (Palgrave, 2014). In 2012 she organized ‘D-Day: Celebrating Diane Abbott’s 25 Years as an MP’ on 26th October 2012, a day of panels and performances to honour Britain’s first black woman to be elected to the House of Commons, and in 2013 launched Radical Raconteurs with the first event 3Rs: An Evening with Darcus Howe’ to honour one of Black Britain’s longest-standing and leading political activists, writers and broadcasters. She co-convened the MA Black British Writing with Professor Joan Anim-Addo at Goldsmiths, University of London (taught from September 2015, the first degree in this field in the world.

NYU LONDON ACADEMIC POLICIES
Academic Integrity

At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others.

At NYU London, students will submit electronic copies of their written work to Turnitin via their NYU Classes course site. Instructions will be provided to you separately.

Late Submission of Work

Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor. Late work should be submitted in person to a member of NYU London staff in the Academic Office (Room 308, 6 Bedford Square) during office hours (Mon – Fri, 10:30 – 17:30). Please also send an electronic copy to academics@nyu.ac.uk for submission to Turnitin.

Work submitted within 5 weekdays after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100 point scale.

Written work submitted more than 5 weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

Please note end of semester essays must be submitted on time.

Attendance Policy

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. As classes typically meet once a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course.

To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

How to report an absence

Absences from class must be reported to NYU London administrative staff using the online Absence Form: http://tinyurl.com/nyulabsence

Absences can ONLY be excused if they are reported using this form. Students should NOT approach their class instructor for an excused absence. However, students should contact their class instructor to catch up on missed work.

Medical absences

If you are unable to attend a class due to ill-health, you must provide details of your illness and class(es) missed to NYUL staff using the online Absence Form WITHIN SEVEN DAYS of your return to class.

Please do not use the form to report a medical emergency or to request urgent assistance. In a medical emergency call 999 and ask for an ambulance. NYU London staff are available to offer support, whatever time of day. If you would like to speak to a member of staff urgently to request support with a medical problem, please call 0800 316 0469, selecting option 2.

Non-medical absences

If you have to miss class for an unavoidable, non-medical reason you must provide details to NYUL staff using the online Absence Form at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question. Examples of valid non-medical reasons are as follows: religious holiday; family wedding; scholarship competition; family emergency. If in doubt please speak to a member of Academics staff or email academics@nyu.ac.uk. Failure to provide requested documentation for these types of absences will result in the absence remaining unexcused.

Further information regarding absences

NYU London staff carefully monitor student attendance and absence records. In most cases full completion of the online Absence Form will be sufficient to excuse your absence. However, in certain circumstances, you will be asked to provide additional information/verification before it can be excused. If we notice that you have multiple absences you will be contacted to arrange a meeting with a member of staff.
Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam. Students may not take an exam before or after other students in the class, and may not leave the programme before all course work has been submitted.

Please refer to the NYU Wikis Page for the full absence policy: https://wikis.nyu.edu/x/awRgAw

NYU in London uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

- A=94-100
- A-=90-93
- B+=87-89
- B=84-86
- B-=80-83
- C+=77-79
- C=74-76
- C-=70-73
- D+=67-69
- D=65-66
- F=below 65

Where no specific numerical equivalent is assigned to a letter grade by the class teacher, the midpoint of the range will be used in calculating the final class grade (except in the A range, where 95.5 will be used).

NYU in London aims to have grading standards and results in all its courses similar to those that prevail at Washington Square.