



BLACK ITALIA

Race and Migration in Italian Culture

ITAL-UA 177: Black Italia

Course Description

This course analyzes the significant role of race and racism in Italian culture and history, from early modern travel writing to Black Lives Matter. Through a wide-ranging examination of films, novels, monuments, visual art, and nonfiction essays, we will explore questions of race, citizenship, immigration, and national identity, with particular attention to how Afro-Italian writers have articulated their own experiences. Delving into the world of postcolonial Italian fiction, we will reflect on the power of memory, narrative, and language in shaping our understandings of identity and community. A critical force in Italian culture and history, race offers a key lens for thinking many of the dynamics that structure contemporary Italian society, including migration, political corruption, inequality, waste, the global south, and ecological crisis. This course will be taught in English. No prior knowledge of Italian is necessary.

Course readings will include works by Igiaba Scego and Amara Lakhous. We will also watch a number of films, including works by Fred Kuwornu and Gillo Pontecorvo.

Course Goals

This course aims to enrich knowledge of contemporary Italian culture through reading, viewing, and discussing contemporary works of fiction.

Class Meetings

Where: Room 306 @ Casa Italiana

When: MW, 3:30-4:45pm

Instructor Information



Gianna Albaum

Office: Casa Italiana, 24 W. 12th Street (4th floor)

Hours: MW, 2-3pm

Email: gja234@nyu.edu

Don't be shy! Office hours are a space for one-on-one consultation on just about any topic related to your studies. Whether you are hoping to chat about literature, looking for advice about grad school applications, or just want some tips about where to eat on your next trip to Florence, the door is always open!

Course Readings/Materials

- Igiaba Scego, *Adua*
- Amara Lakhous, *Clash of Civilizations*

The course materials listed above are required texts and are available @ the NYU Bookstore.

Additional course texts will be made available to students through Brightspace, Kanopy, and other NYU platforms.

*Some texts available in Italian upon request.

Instructional Methods

This is a seminar based on collaborative discourse. Ask questions. Be curious. Your thoughts and questions will provide the starting point for our discussions.



Course Policies

Attendance

This is a small discussion-based seminar class. This means that frequent absences are detrimental not only to you but also to the class more broadly.

Students with 3 or fewer absences will have full marks for this portion of the grade.

Preparation & Participation

Being prepared to participate in discussions is an important part of your work for this class. This means having read, annotated, and thought about the text carefully before class starts.

Remember that asking questions is just as important as contributing your own ideas.

Class Discussion

As a non-Black instructor, I want to make sure that my voice is not the loudest one in the room. Students will take turns leading discussion for each class.

We will be particularly attentive in this seminar to *how* we discuss this topic, both in thinking about how to promote ethical discursive practices as well as thinking about what language our community would like to use in discussing race, with attention to conventional use of terms like black, POC, migrant, etc (in English and in Italian!).

Here are [some guidelines](#) for how you can support anti-racist class discussion. They will form part of your self-evaluations.

Late Work

You should submit all assignments *before class* on the due date. It is important that you complete your reflections before we discuss together as a group.

** Late assignments can be turned in within a week of the due date for half credit.

Academic Integrity

I expect all of your submitted work to have come from your brain and your hand. Here is the [NYU Official Statement on Student Integrity](#).

Useful Resources

- * [Temple University Rome: Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Study Abroad](#)
- * [Black Italia](#)

Support Services

[College Learning Center](#)

The College Learning Center is located on the 1st Floor of Weinstein Hall (right behind Java City). For information on one-on-one and group peer tutoring, please stop by the CLC, call (212) 998-8085 or go to their [website](#).

[Moses Center](#)

Students with diverse needs are welcome in this course! If you have a disability and/or health consideration that might require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or contact NYU's Moses Center at 212-998-4980 or nyu.edu/csd.

[Wellness Exchange](#)

The Wellness Exchange is your greatest mental health resource at NYU. Call the 24-hour hotline at (212) 443-9999, chat via the Wellness Exchange app anytime, [make an appointment](#), or [arrange a same-day Urgent Counseling session](#) to speak with a certified counselor about any day-to-day challenges or health concerns, including medical issues, stress, depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol or drug dependence, and eating disorders.

[Writing Center](#)

Students are encouraged to make use of the NYU Writing Center in order to structure and polish written projects.

You can make an appointment at the Center's [website](#).



COURSE GRADE BREAKDOWN

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ATTENDANCE	Attendance is crucial for success in a seminar class. More than 3 absences will significantly impact your attendance grade.	20%
PARTICIPATION	Your participation grade reflects a number of different things, including contributing actively to class discussions; listening to, supporting, and assisting your peers; asking for clarification when necessary; and coming to class having completed assigned work and ready to discuss .	20%
WRITTEN RESPONSES	Students will complete discussion posts and other written responses for most classes. These will include prompts asking you to reflect on your own experiences as well as on the readings.	15%
PRESENTATIONS & LEADING DISCUSSION	Students will prepare 3+ presentations on specific topics and/or readings throughout the semester and will lead discussion following their presentation. Presentations will be graded with a ✓-, ✓, or ✓+ (see rubric on Brightspace for details).	20%
BLACK ITALIA WEB EXHIBITION	As a class, we will create a collaborative web exhibition that will serve as a Black Italia resource hub as well as a guide to support students of color at NYU Florence. Students will contribute material and design pages for the site (no tech knowledge necessary!). Students can choose to work alone or in groups.	15%
COURSE PORTFOLIO	Students will create a portfolio as their final project for this course. See details here .	10%

Student Effort

It is NYU policy that a 4-unit course reflects about 4 hours of lecture and 8 hours of HW per week.

This course will include 2.5 hours of discussion per week, as well as a number of film screenings throughout the semester.

In addition to in-class time, you will have 60-100 pages of reading to complete each week as well as brief written reflections on those readings. Over the course of the semester, you will also complete a final project, which will include a written, creative, or multimedia element. I expect your 8 hours of at-home work for this class to be distributed more or less as follows:

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| 1. Watching/Reading Assigned Texts | (2-3 hours per week) |
| 2. Presentations and Leading Discussion | (2-3 hours per week) |
| 3. Final Project | (15 hours per project, or about 1 hour per week) |



“The highest rule of the word would consist in not appropriating the thing but letting it be as a thing. What is sought here is beyond: how to let be the other as other while speaking, speaking to them [...]; how to encourage the other to be and to remain other. How to let the other come into presence, even to lead them there, without claiming to be their founding.” (Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, p. 29)

A Final Note: Building an Anti-Racist Classroom

As a non-Black instructor, I have reflected at length on the best way to guide our course throughout the semester. Anti-racist pedagogy can mean many things, and teaching strategies must be adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of each course and each group of students. In constructing the syllabus for this course, I have relied on a few guiding principles:

- Privileging BIPOC authors, both in primary and secondary texts
- Sharing leadership: grounding class in student-led discussions
- Respecting and honoring diverse needs and perspectives
- Emphasizing vulnerability, honesty, and willingness to learn
- Recognizing the importance of supporting students through their own journeys of becoming (see quote above)

The first few days of class, we will spend a good part of class discussing your backgrounds and goals related to this course. What most interests you about this subject? What are you hoping to learn and explore? Which parts of the syllabus are most exciting for you? Are there any readings or films on this subject that you have found interesting? We will revise the syllabus together based on your interests and suggestions.

NYU Italian Statement on Diversity & Inclusion: "The Department of Italian Studies at NYU is committed to maintaining a respectful, safe, transparent, inclusive and supportive working environment for all who work within it—including faculty, students, staff, and visitors—regardless of disability, gender identity, nationality, race, class, religion, political views, socio-economic background, or sexual orientation. Our community stands together against harassment, intimidation or discrimination, and strongly supports efforts to encourage inclusivity in our working environment." See more on inclusion and diversity at the [NYU Italian website](#).

Calendar

** Please come to class having completed the readings/assignments listed for that day!

- 1/24 Ghali, "Cara Italia," "Wily-Wily," and "Wallah"; Tommy Kuti, "Afro-Italiano"
- 1/26 Igiaba Scego, "Sausages"
- *1/28** FILM: *18 Ius Soli* (Kuwornu, 2011)
- 1/31 Igiaba Scego, "Exmatriates"
- 2/2 Amara Lakhous, *Clash of Civilizations* (I)
- 2/7 Amara Lakhous, *Clash of Civilizations* (II)
- 2/9 Amara Lakhous, *Clash of Civilizations* (III)
- *2/11** [*If Only I Were That Warrior*](#) (Ciriaci, 2015);
[*The Battle of Algiers*](#) (Pontecorvo, 1966)
- 2/14 Igiaba Scego, *Adua* (I)
- 2/16 Igiaba Scego, *Adua* (II)
- *2/18** *Blaxploitation* (Kuwornu, 2016)
- 2/21 Igiaba Scego, *Adua* (III)
- 2/23 Igiaba Scego, *Adua* (IV)
- 2/28 *It Will Be Chaos* (Luciano & Piscopo, 2016)
- 3/2 *Terraferma* (Craiese, 2008)
- 3/7 *After Migration: Calabria* (Oyejide/Saner, 2021)
- 3/9 *The Encounter* (Rossi/Mellara, 2017)
- *3/11** *Like a Man on Earth* (Segre/Yimer/Biadene, 2008)
- 3/21-3/30** Book/Film Student Choice
- 4/4 *Zero*, pilot (Netflix, 2021)
- 4/6 *Zero*, episodes 2-3 (Netflix, 2021)
- 4/11** **Special Guest: Amara Lakhous**
- 4/13 ["My Very Personal Taste of Racism Abroad,"](#) *New York Times*
- 4/18-5/9 Black Italia Web Exhibition Project & Course Portfolios
Readings will be selected and presented by students in conjunction with their work building the Black Italia Web Exhibition.