

AAS 4625
ATLANTA AND BLACK POPULAR CULTURE
ATLANTA INFLUENCES EVERYTHING?

Spring 2025

M & W

2:00-3:15pm

Langdale 429

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Course Description:

This course is an upper-level seminar that will examine the cultural foundations of Atlanta's Black expression and experiences that have gained widespread popularity in mainstream society by asking the question "What is Atlanta's Black popular culture and why is it important? To answer this question, this course will explore the vast contributions that Black artists, musicians, filmmakers, writers, and everyday people who have contributed to Black life in Atlanta, Georgia. It will use a multidisciplinary approach to recognizing the social, political, and historical factors that have shaped the development of the Atlanta scene. This is an important topic to study because it challenges stereotypes about Atlanta's Black communities and promotes more accurate views us.

The course will explore the traditions of African aesthetics that sit at the foundation of Black expression as well as how Atlanta's Black communities—both nationally and internationally—have created new cultural expressions using tools of self-representation and resistance, often in response to exclusion from mainstream White American culture. It will consider how and why ideas of "authenticity" and respectability have been central to the construction of Atlanta's Blackness. This course will explore the past, present, and future of this phenomenon. Students will engage in literary texts, films, and other artifacts created by prominent Africana scholars, artists, and thinkers.

With an interdisciplinary approach through public memory, history, politics and popular culture and through Atlanta's public memorials, film, music, photography and literature, our focus will be on the major issues involved in the study of the Black experience, both the objective issues being analyzed in the research literature and the subjective issues of how the world sees Atlanta, Georgia as the Black Mecca. Our goal then is to provide an opportunity to understand the issues and enter a discourse based on images of Atlanta's standing within the Black World.

This course will allow students to view and compare multiple perspectives while focusing on the cultural foundations of Black Atlanta. In this, students will better understand the origins of many social issues by studying the cultural experiences of Black America as they navigate American society. Another part of this course is that it will ask important ethical questions and challenge students to consider these issues, but more importantly to appreciate and evaluate the processes involved in reaching logical conclusions.

Our emphasis is on what you know, and not your opinions. Informed opinions must be based on understanding the issues, and that requires study of the facts and also what others believe about those facts. Informed opinions must be earned through hard work of study and investigation.

By the end of this course, you should: (1) to develop a clear understanding of several fundamental concepts within the larger field of Africana Studies in general and the Black Atlanta in particular; (2) to develop a clear understanding of the key theories and ideological debates in Black life and history; (3) A clear understanding of Atlanta and the Black Mecca image; (4) to develop proficiency in clear and critical writing and media about these concepts, theories, and ideological debates.

THIS IS A CORE IMPACTS COURSE THAT IS PART OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AREA. THIS MEANS:

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Course Requirements:

Each student is responsible for (1) class attendance and class participation, (2) weekly reading assignments, (3) weekly discussion assignments (4) four reflective essays, (5) final project proposal, and (6) a final presentation.

Required Reading:

1. Maurice J. Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta*
2. Other reading will be provided by Dr. Hobson

Required Videos:

1. The Art of Organized Noise (2016)
2. *Maynard* (2017)
3. *Hip Hop Evolution: Atlanta* (2019)

4. *ESPN 30 for 30: Vick*, (2020)
5. *Atlanta's Missing and Murdered: The Lost Children* (2020)
6. *The BMF Documentary: Blowing Money Fast* (2022)
7. *Untrapped: The Story of Little Baby* (2022)
8. *Bo Legs: Marvin Arrington, Sr., An Atlanta Story* (2023)
9. *Freaknik* (2023)
10. *Fight Night and the Million Dollar Heist* (2024)

Required Podcast:

1. *King Slime: The Prosecution of Young Thug and YSL (Young Slime Life)*, iHeartRadio, Produced by George Chidi and Christina Lee, iHeartMedia, Inc., Summer 2023.
2. Get Your Freaknik On, *Into America: A Show* *Into America*: A show about being Black in America holding truth to power and this country to its promises told by people who have the most at stake, Produced by Trymaine Lee, MSNBC News, June 2022.
3. *The Epic of Collier Heights*. Produced by Christopher Johnson, 99% invisible, A Sound-rich, narrative podcast that discusses unnoticed architecture and design that shape our world, 2021.
4. *Fight Night and the Million Dollar Heist*. iHeartRadio, Produced by Jeffrey Keating, iHeartMedia, Inc., October 2020.

Assignments:

The reading assignments are listed on your “Schedule of Assignments” sheet. Be sure to read each on in full **BEFORE** the date listed.

Meetings:

This class will meet every **Monday and Wednesday, 2:00-3:15 pm** and is **IN PERSON**. You are expected to attend session and participate in the discussions. Failure to do so will result in you being withdrawn from the class at the behest of the professor.

Assignment and Grading Composition:

There will be a midterm exam and a final exam. You will receive a final letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F in the course. The grade equivalent of the points for all students will be as follows:

A + = 100-98	A = 97-94	A- = 93-90	Response Essays =	25%
B + = 89-87	B = 87-84	B- = 83-80	Final Project Proposal =	25%
C + = 79-77	C = 77-74	C- = 73-70	Citizenship =	25%
D = 60-69			<u>Final Project =</u>	<u>25%</u>
F = 59 and below			Final=	100%

Late Work Policy:

Late assignments will not be accepted. Begin assignments early so that you minimize unexpected problems and have to seek assistance. In the case of documented absences or emergencies you must address the issue at least 24 hours **BEFORE** the due date. All assignments should be submitted on time. The instructor will reserve the right to accept or decline late assignments. However, points may be deducted. **NO MAKE UP WORK AND EXTRA CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN.**

Class Attendance and Participation:

Valid documentation is required for an excused absence. Note, students who want to do well in the course will attend class as outlined in the class attendance policy:

<https://cetl.gsu.edu/services/instructional-support/constructing-a-syllabus/university-recommendations/>

Attendance is a central part of the student's evaluation for class participation. Class begins at 2:00 pm with roll call. Students who arrive between 2:01 pm and 2:05 pm are tardy.

Students who arrive after 2:05 pm are absent. Two instances of tardiness equal one absence. Students with four (4) or more absences will be encouraged to drop the course. Leaving class early equals an absence unless you have notified the instructor. If you must miss a class, prior communication with me is strongly encouraged. Please take care of all personal needs before entering class.

Class participation: This course places a strong emphasis on discussion of assigned readings as well as collective analysis of documents, videos, and images presented in the classroom. Your participation is, therefore, necessary. You are required not only to complete the readings, but also to verbally express your responses to them in class. Active class participation is required and will be documented. Active participation includes a.) attending class; b.) answering questions; c.) asking questions; and d.) contributing relevant conversation to the assignments.

University's Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism is the use of another person's work without proper citation. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. The submission of research or completed papers or projects by someone else is plagiarism, as is the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else when the faculty member specifically forbids that use. Failure to indicate the extent and nature of one's reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. Any work, in whole or part, taken from the Internet without properly referencing the corresponding URL may be considered plagiarism. An author's name and title of the original work, if available, should also be included as part of the reference. Finally, there may be forms of plagiarism that are unique to an individual discipline or course, examples of which should be provided in advance by the faculty member. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources, the appropriate ways of acknowledging academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness, and the consequences of violating this responsibility.

If you are still unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please refer to pages 17-22 of the Georgia State University *Student Code of Conduct Book* for clarification. This document can be accessed at

<https://provost.gsu.edu/document/academic-honesty-policy/?ind=1615915137714&filename=Academic-Honesty-Policy-February%202021.pdf&wpdmdl=8619&refresh=66cd24d6ef42e1724720342>. Students will be brought up on charges of academic dishonesty and will go before a hearing committee. Also, inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated in class or in any learning environment on or off campus. As stated in the *Student Code of Conduct Book*, inappropriate behavior can result in students being withdrawn from the course with a failing grade and expelled from Georgia State University.

Violations of the academic dishonesty rules are grounds for receiving an “F” in the course. See the University’s Policy on Academic Honesty (Section 409).

Plagiarism, Cheating via GroupMe/Group Chats:

“Sharing information/cheating via group messaging apps such as GroupMe or Slack is a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. While the existing policy does not require students to report when they witness someone else cheat, a close review of the evidence will sometimes reveal sufficient evidence to implicate all individuals responsible. If I suspect that a student has cheated by willingly allowing someone to use his/her work or if I witnessed a student using the work of someone else without permission,” I will submit an academic dishonesty claim on that student. If a student is found guilty of an Academic Dishonesty Charge and later consents to a background check, GSU is required to report all academic integrity violations which could interfere with plans for a promising career in a given field.

Please do not do it. The consequences far outweigh the immediate grade gratification.

Sharing of Instructor-generated Materials:

The selling, sharing, publishing, presenting, or distributing of instructor-prepared course lecture notes, videos, audio recordings, or any other instructor-produced materials from any course for any commercial purpose is strictly prohibited unless explicit written permission is granted in advance by the course instructor. This includes posting any materials on websites such as Chegg, Course Hero, OneClass, Stuvia, StuDocu and other similar sites.

Unauthorized sale or commercial distribution of such material is a violation of the instructor’s intellectual property and the privacy rights of students attending the class and is prohibited.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accommodations:

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable classroom accommodations to students who have confirmed disabilities that may impact their ability to fully participate in course activities or meet course requirements. Should you need more information on attaining disability status, please contact the Access & Accommodations Center immediately so that AACE may verify your disability and grant the appropriate accommodations. An instructor will only allow a student those accommodations verified by AACE after the student has delivered to the AACE prepared Instructor Notification form to the instructor.

Please note that instructors, while required to provide accommodations as approved by AACE, are not required to alter or waive essential elements or evaluation standards of any course. Instructors are also under no obligation to provide retroactive accommodations, so the timeliness of all accommodation requests is essential. Contact AACE by calling (404) 413-1560 or by visiting the Access & Accommodations Center in Suite 205 of the Student Center East. Students are also encouraged to review the ODS website and related University policies at <https://access.gsu.edu/>.

In keeping with our tradition of academic excellence and social responsibility, the Department of Africana Studies at Georgia State University welcomes all peoples regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender expression, sexual identity, or disability status. We

subscribe to the principles of self-determination for all peoples and intentionally seek to recognize and affirm all of the varied identities that we engage and encounter.

Coaching Hints:

Absolutely, positively, and without doubt, the *best way to achieve a good grade in this class* is to engage the required materials before attending the appropriate lecture. Without having engaged the assigned material a student has no context for the class presentation and therefore misses the important cultural points and connections.

Disruptive Behavior:

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of all diversity, including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your comments related to the class and content will be encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

<https://cetl.gsu.edu/services/instructional-support/constructing-a-syllabus/university-recommendations/>

Georgia State University Student Code of Conduct and Administrative Policies (July 2021)
pp.29-32.

Note: **PLEASE BE ON TIME** to avoid disrupting class. If you must be late, please take care not to disrupt the lecture. On special occasions when you may need to leave class early, it is possible to prearrange your exiting so that it will not be disruptive. Otherwise, you are expected to stay in class for the duration of the lecture/presentation. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner to create a good learning environment. **Disruptive behavior** exhibited by any student will not be tolerated and should the instructor judge a student disruptive, he/she may be removed from the classroom and required to drop the class.

Course Withdrawal Policy:

Be advised that the last day to withdraw from this course for this semester with the possibility of receiving a 'W' is **March 4, 2025**. If a student withdraws by this date but is failing the course, he/she will receive a 'WF.' All students who withdraw after this date will receive a 'WF.'

Involuntary Withdrawal: Section 1314.20, University Catalogue:

Students are expected to observe all policies governing the class. Faculty must clearly state these policies in the course syllabus. When a faculty member determines that a student violates one of the class policies (for example, has missed a required assignment or has excessive absences), that faculty member may withdraw the student from the course. Students involuntarily withdrawn prior to the midpoint of the course will be assigned a grade of "W." Students involuntarily withdrawn after the midpoint of the course will be assigned a grade of "WF." Note that a "WF" is treated as an F for GPA calculation purposes. Using the official Georgia State University email system, the instructor will notify a student who is

involuntarily withdrawn and is within ten days of this notification; the student may petition to the department chair for reinstatement in the course.

Telephones, Laptops and Food:

Upon entering class, all cellular phones, iPods, music devices, laptops, tablets, and other electronic equipment must be turned off; no vibrate or any other setting. **No Exceptions!** Put away all telephones. No telephones on the desk or in your hands; absolutely, no texting, checking emails, etc. If your telephone rings in class, you will be asked to leave. Gum chewing, eating, and smoking are not permitted in the classroom or in the computer lab areas.

Georgia Campus Carry:

The Campus Carry legislation allows anyone properly licensed in the state of Georgia to carry a handgun in a concealed manner on university property with noted exceptions. It is the responsibility of the license holder to know the law. Failure to do so may result in a misdemeanor charge and may violate the Georgia State Student Code of Conduct.

Statement Against Sexual Misconduct

In our commitment to a safe learning environment for everyone in our community, and in accordance with federal and state law as well as the policies of the University System of Georgia, the Department of Africana Studies will not tolerate any instance of [sexual misconduct](#). Beyond the pertinent institutional structures, policies and processes, sexual misconduct is diametrically opposed to the highest aspirations of community which reflect the self-determination of the origins of the department and the discipline. Consistent with this stance, the department will maintain regular training for faculty and staff as well as programming for our students to affirm our commitment to a truly safe and inclusive learning environment for all in our community. Further, we strongly encourage any member of our community that experiences or witnesses sexual misconduct to contact Human Resources by way of this [informal intake form](#). If you have concerns about your immediate safety or the safety of someone else, please contact the Georgia State University Police Department immediately if you are comfortable doing so.

Important Note About Confidentiality:

In instances of sexual misconduct, all university employees except those described below serve as Responsible Employees who are required to share all reports of sexual misconduct with administrative officials for university review – this includes all faculty and staff in Africana Studies. If you wish to disclose an incident of sexual misconduct confidentially, contact one of the confidential disclosure resources below.

While the services below are available to any student who has experienced any crime, sexual misconduct in particular may be disclosed confidentially.

- Georgia State University Counseling and Testing Center
75 Piedmont Ave. NE, Suite 200
404-413-1640
- Georgia State University Student Health Clinic
141 Piedmont Ave. NE, Suite D

404-413-1950

- Georgia State University Student Victim Assistance
75 Piedmont Ave. NE, Suite 239
404-413-1965

In accordance with Title IX Guidelines, the University offers these support services to assist students during this time. Support services are non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services and without charge.

Those unsure of the path that they should take can also contact the [Office of the Ombudsperson](#). The Office of the Ombudsperson is a resource for all members of the Georgia State University community seeking impartial, confidential assistance in informally managing a variety of conflicts. The Office of the Ombudsperson adheres to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, which were developed in accordance with commonly understood principles within the Ombuds profession: confidentiality, neutrality, independence and informality. Please know that the Ombudsperson, as an employee of GSU, is a Responsible Employee who is required to share all reports of sexual misconduct with administrative officials for university review.

For further information regarding University resources and the investigation process, please see the guidelines [here](#).

Statement on Diversity and Inclusion:

In keeping with this tradition of academic excellence and social responsibility, the Department of Africana studies welcomes all peoples regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender expression, sexual identity, or disability status. We subscribe to the principles of self-determination for all peoples and intentionally seek to recognize and affirm all of the varied identities that we engage and encounter. It is our goal as scholar-activists and teachers to touch each student, each faculty who teaches, each worker supporting the aforementioned goals, each community person we engage with, and the larger society will witness and benefit from our work to promote academic excellence and social responsibility grounded in the cultural heritage of Africana peoples. In short, we believe in humanity.

Religion Policy:

If a religious commitment prevents you from attending class, please inform me in writing in advance.

Contacting the Instructor:

My office is **IN PERSON** or **VIRTUAL**. My office hours are **Monday and Wednesday, 12:00-1:30 pm** or by **appointment**. I can be reached by e-mail at **mhobson@gsu.edu**. **I will only communicate with students via GSU issued email. All students are required to subscribe to GSU iCollege system and to check your GSU issued email.** If I receive an email from you, please give me 48 hours to respond. Oftentimes, I will respond to the whole class to ensure transparency and limit confusion and/or misinformation. If an email is received on a Friday, expect a response early in the following week. University policy states that the gsu.edu webmail account is the official means of communication.

One thing that will be emphasized in this course is professionalism. Student hostilities towards professors are on the rise. I will **NOT** tolerate, in any manner, any kind of disrespect. Please keep in mind the tone of your emails. Per your salutations, be courteous and respectful, as I will always be with you. Emails should be addressed as “Dear Professor Hobson” or “Dear Dr. Hobson.” Simply writing “Hey” or “Hey Teacher” is unacceptable. I will always respond to you by your whole name (i.e. **John Brown, Dear John Brown**). Please make note of this. **Lastly, this syllabus is subject to being amended if needed.**

SCHEDULE FOR READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The following are the dates by which each assignment must be completed

- Jan. 13: Introduction of the Course—Syllabus
- Jan. 15: Why Atlanta and Black Popular Culture?!

- Jan. 20: Observance of King Holiday
- Jan. 22: An Introduction to the Archives
Auburn Avenue Research Library,
Located at 101 Auburn Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30303
- Jan. 26: **Essay #1 Submission in iCollege due by 11:59 pm**

- Jan. 27: Black Culture vs Black Popular Culture
Through the Prism of Folklore, by Sterling Stuckey and “Of the Coming of John”
from *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W.E.B. Du Bois
- Jan. 29: Continued Discussions

- Feb. 3: Civil War Memory vs the Black Mecca
Readings—Hobson, Black Education/The Talented Tenth/W.E.B. Du Bois
and Booker T. Washington—Hobson, (Chapter 1, *The Legend of the Black Mecca*); “Black Mecca or Most Unequal U.S. City: Will the Real Atlanta Please Stand Up?,” *The Guardian* (In iCollege) to be watched along with Tell Them We’re Rising, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FscDlqZg5dk>
- Feb. 5: Black Economics/Sweet Auburn District/Black Entrepreneurship
The Atlanta Race Massacre and its Implications on Race in Atlanta
(re)Defining History: The 1906 Atlanta Race Massacre
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1Vnsd_MsO8

- Feb. 10: Black Politics—Primeus King/Atlanta Negro Voter League/Black Political Empowerment and Electoral Politics (Chapter 2—Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca*), **Maynard (Documentary)**, and *Bo Legs: Marvin Arrington, Sr., An Atlanta Story (Documentary)*, *The Epic of Collier Heights*. Produced by Christopher Johnson, 99% invisible, A Sound-rich, narrative podcast the discusses unnoticed architecture and design that shape our world, 2021: https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/the-epic-of-collier-heights/?fbclid=IwAR3G6--2MW2dzu1X4Mzjb2TYLPssFBfljYESzeozMaTSym_9AF2wHhipa-8
- Feb. 12: Continued Discussion with a Guest

- Feb. 17: *Fight Night and the Million Dollar Heist* (Peacock)
- Feb. 19: Continued Discussion with a Guest
- Feb. 23: **Essay #2 Submission in iCollege due by 11:59 pm**
- Feb. 24: Black Politics Continued—The Atlanta Child Murders (Chapter 3—Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca*) and *Atlanta's Missing and Murdered: The Lost Children*, **HBO Docuseries**
- Feb. 26: Continued Discussion with a Guest
- Mar. 3: Atlanta and the Rising Civil Rights Lore (Chapter 4—Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca*; Temple Lester's Video, *Andrew Young of Atlanta*; Hobson, *But For Bull Connor and Birmingham*.
http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2013/04/but_for_bull_connor_and_birmin.html;
- Mar. 5: Andrew Young's *Making of Modern Atlanta*, a documentary
- Mar. 10: The Olympic City (Chapter 5—Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca*) and *East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story* (PBS Documentary), and snippets of Tom Wolfe's *Man In Full*.
- Mar. 12: *Freaknik*, the Documentary; "Get Your Freaknik On," *Into America: A Show Into America*: A show about being Black in America holding truth to power and this country to its promises told by people who have the most at stake, Produced by Trymaine Lee, MSNBC News, June 2022:
<https://www.msnbc.com/podcast/into-america/get-your-freaknik-n1296676>
- Mar. 16: **Proposal for Final Project Due by 11:59 pm**
- Mar. 17: Spring Break
- Mar. 19: Spring Break
- Mar. 24: The Dirty South (Chapter 6—Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca*) and The Art of Organized Noize (Interview), *Hip Hop Evolution: Atlanta* (**Netflix**)
- Mar. 26: Continued Discussion
- Mar. 31: Continued Discussion with a guest
- Apr. 2: Visit to the King Center
- Apr. 6: **Essay #3 Submission in iCollege due by 11:59 pm**
- Apr. 7: Virtual Option
- Apr. 9: Virtual Option
- Apr. 14: Contemporary Atlanta
Atlanta and the Trap; *Untrapped: The Story of Lil Baby* (Amazon Prime)
Omeretta the Great
- Apr. 16: Tour of Sweet Auburn
- Apr. 21: Class Presentations

Apr. 23: Class Presentations

Apr. 28: Class Presentations

LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH A GRADE OF W IS MARCH 4, 2025