

Nigel De Juan Hatton, PhD
University of California, Merced

Aufbaumodule: American Studies (Lit/Kulturwissenschaft)
Blockseminar: June 1 – June 30, 2015
(for specific days and dates, see below)

“African American Lifeworlds, Global Thinking, and Human Rights”

This course places violence against African-Americans in the United States in global, legal, and historical context, ultimately asking the Kantian question of “What ought we do?” Gwen Carr, Wanda Johnson, Lucia McBath, and Sybrina Fulton have all recently joined a long list of African-American parents who have lost children to gun violence at the hands of state law enforcement agencies and/or private citizens evoking various forms of the right to bear arms. In the midst of their mourning and trauma, these parent-citizens have not only turned to domestic forms of legal, social, and political advocacy and recourse, they have also placed their stories on the international stage and within world forums, positing the presence of injustice at home as a genuine threat to justice globally. In doing so they continue a tradition of African-American international appeals, travel and thinking on inter-subjective lifeworlds. Discussing her son’s death, which resulted from a police chokehold, Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner, has said, “I’m not only here to speak about the injustice and the wrongdoing against my son. I’m here to speak about the injustice throughout the world.” The parents of Michael Brown, a teenager killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri, USA, traveled to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, to speak before the United Nations Committee Against Torture. Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin, has also appealed on a global level, asking U.S. senators to set aside allegiance to nation and “to simply think as human beings” when considering the injustice of the “Stand Your Ground” statutes that let her son’s killer go free. When Lucia McBath, mother of Jordan Davis, a Florida teen killed by an assailant who also cited “Stand Your Ground” as his defense, spoke before a U.S. senate subcommittee on human rights, she alluded to the day “fifty years ago that my father shook hands with Eleanor Roosevelt.” By linking her son’s death to the work of Roosevelt, a pioneering voice in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, McBath erases thresholds, barriers and binaries of foreign and domestic in favor of global thinking on state violence against African-Americans in the United States. Accordingly, this course examines and interrogates the hyper-in/visibility of black social problems and African-American subjectivity in the context of not only U.S. law and justice paradigms, but also global concerns and rights instruments such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, and the European Court of Human Rights. The analytic arc of the course is at once

legal, historical, cultural and literary, and works at the intersections, interstices, ironies and liminalities of African-American experience inside and outside of the United States.

Nigel Hatton is Assistant Professor of Literature in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts at the University of California, Merced. In addition to his position at UC Merced, he has taught classes at Central California Women's Facility, the largest women's prison in the world, and as an adjunct instructor with the Prison University Project at San Quentin State Prison, where he has facilitated literature, writing and journalism courses and consulted with staff for the prison newspaper, *The San Quentin News*. He received his Ph.D. in both Modern Thought & Literature and the Humanities, with a minor in political science, from Stanford University, and completed postdoctoral studies at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark. He also holds master's degrees in Latin American studies and journalism from the University of California, Berkeley. A former Du Bois fellow at Harvard University, his published work includes articles on human rights and cosmopolitanism, and on writers and thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jose Martí, Ivan Klíma and Louise Erdrich. Research and teaching interests include the interrelated histories of the development of classical, modern and contemporary fictional narrative and human rights discourses, and aesthetics as a response to and means for preventing and interrogating cultures of violence. He is also a member of the governance council for the Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California.

Literature:

You do not need to buy any literature. Prof. Hatton will upload all texts in WueCampus2 for you. Reading excerpts will be from the following sources:

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York; Jackson, Tenn.: New Press; Distributed by Perseus Distribution, 2010.

Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Dial Press, 1963. Print.

Civil Rights Congress (U.S.). *We Charge Genocide; the Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People*. New ed. New York: International Publishers, 1970; 1951.

Cohen, Joshua. *The Arc of the Moral Universe and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Modern Library ed. New York: Modern Library, 2003; 1903.

Wells-Barnett, Ida B., et al. *On Lynchings*. Dover ed. Mineola, New York, Inc.: Dover Publications, Inc., 2014; 1892.

West, Cornel, and Christa Buschendorf. *Black Prophetic Fire: In Dialogue with and Edited by Christa Buschendorf*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2014.

Films:

Fruitvale Station (2013), Ryan Coogler
Ordinary People (2009), Vladimir Perišić
Baldwin's Nigger (1968), Horace Ové

Testimony/Transcripts:

Lucia McBath, Hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights.

Sybrina Fulton, Before the Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights, of the United States Senate.

Leistungspunkteerwerb:

- 1) Active participation in all discussions
- 2) Reading of all material
- 3) You need to be in class most of the time, but you are allowed to miss two sessions.
- 3) Research paper (Kulturwiss: ca. 12 pages; Litwiss: ca. 15 pages; MLA style)
Deadline for paper: will be determined by Prof. Hatton at the beginning of the class

Timeline:

Monday, June 1 (16:15-17:45, room: Phil, H 19)
Tuesday, June 2 (16:15-17:45, room: Phil, H 22)
Monday, June 8 (16:15-17:45, room: Phil, H 19)
Wednesday, June 10 (16:15-17:45, room ZHSG, 1.004)
Thursday, June 11 (16:15-17:45, room: ZHSG, 2.003)
Monday, June 15 (16:15-17:45, room: Phil, H 19)
Tuesday, June 16 (16:15-17:45, room: Phil, H 22)
Thursday, June 18 (16:15-17:45, room: ZHSG, 2.003)
Tuesday, June 23 (16:15-17:45, room: Phil, H 22)
Wednesday, June 24 (16:15-17:45, room: ZHSG, 1.004)
Thursday, June 25 (16:15-17:45, room: ZHSG, 2.003)

Option for last session: the group decides together with Prof. Hatton on the two options:

Option 1: Thursday, June 25 (17:45-19:45, room: ZHSG, 2.003)

Option 2: Monday, June 29: 16:15-17:45 (room: Phil, H 19)