HIST 2724 (University of Pittsburgh)

Rethinking the 20th Century Black Atlantic: Circuits, Spheres, Social Movements

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This seminar traces the development of the African diaspora as an intentional, supranational collective in the century and a half after the end of the transatlantic slave trade. We explore the wide range of black internationalisms generated in the realms of popular culture, political radicalism, artistic production, and everyday life. Research across multiple disciplines has shown that men and women from the Caribbean, North America, Brazil, West Africa, and beyond remade politics and culture both within their nations and beyond their nations' borders. Where Paul Gilroy’s pioneering work, The Black Atlantic, illuminated the border-crossing ideas and initiatives of key black intellectuals, new scholarship has explored the ideas and actions of a far broader range of social actors, revealing the active participation of ordinary men and women from Accra to Bahia to Colón in the creation of the twentieth-century Black Atlantic. This seminar examines performance, ritual, literature, social movements, and social history in order to trace evolving notions of race and nation, ancestry and authenticity, belonging and rights.