WHAT’S INSIDE

LETTER FROM THE DEAN
SPOTLIGHT ON GALLATIN COURSES
CONTACTS FOR PARENTS
Dear Gallatin Parents,

Throughout this spring, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Gallatin School and present panels and events that help to tell the story of Gallatin’s first 50 years.

Founded in 1972 and named for Albert Gallatin, the founder of NYU, Gallatin was a part of the experimental college movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was initially called “The University without Walls” to reflect its core mission of combining interdisciplinary learning with civic engagement and internships in the city. Our annual Fashion Show will look at fashion from 1972 to 2022, and the Gallatin Writing Program will host a panel of Gallatin alumni writers representing each decade of the School’s existence. On April 29, we will host a panel discussion on Gallatin’s history and a celebration of Gallatin’s 50th—we will have alumni and faculty representing all the decades and especially exploring what the world was like in 1972 as compared to today. Encourage your students to look out for announcements about upcoming 50th anniversary events—they will be fun, festive, and interesting for all of us.

This February we continued the Gallatin tradition of celebrating Black History Month, starting with the opening of a historic exhibit in our Gallery, Transformation!, which looks at a century of Black theater, from the founding of Atlantic Grove Theater—the earliest theater in New York City for the performance of plays by Black actors—to the 1921 Broadway hit Shuffle Along, the first all-Black Broadway hit. While the exhibition will close at the end of February, a video tour of the exhibition is available on the website of The Gallatin Galleries that will allow all of you to enjoy it, too. Virtual events related to the exhibition were also recorded and are shared on the site.

As we round out the semester, students will be able to share in in-person events and activities such as the annual Gallatin Arts Festival, student affinity groups, and other end-of-semester offerings from the Gallatin Theater Troupe and the Dancers Choreographers Alliance.

As always, be sure to contact me, the other deans, and our advisers if you have concerns or questions.

Yours,

Susanne L. Wofford

For more information about upcoming events, scan the QR Code or go to gallatin.nyu.edu/events.

ON THE COVER: Tree Branches by Charles Reginald Aston, Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Tuggle, 2007
Duncan M. Yoon has taught at Gallatin since 2017. Yoon’s book, *China in 20th and 21st Century African Literature*, is under contract with Cambridge University Press. The manuscript received the American Comparative Literature Association’s (ACLA) Helen Tartar First Book Subvention Award in 2020. He is chair of the executive committee for the Modern Language Association’s forum African Literature to 1990. Pedagogically, he is interested in the intersections between digital technology and critical thought. Before coming to Gallatin, he was an assistant professor of postcolonial literature at the University of Alabama. He served as a Fulbright Scholar to South Korea in 2004 and was a Kluge Fellow at the Library of Congress in 2018.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

China’s controversial investment in Africa has caused reactions ranging from accusations of a “new colonialism” to celebrations of a collaborative “win-win” for development. In addition, immigration both by Africans to China and Chinese to Africa signals a fundamental shift in global power dynamics and the deepening of a new era of multipolar globalization. Through an analysis of journalistic and historical accounts, literature, economics, art, and film, this seminar will explore the multifaceted nature of Africa and China relations. We will ask what are the connections between Cold War history and the contemporary moment? How do different African actors at state and individual levels engage with the Chinese presence? And finally, how does this shift to multipolarity impact theories of globalization?

THE MAKING OF THE COURSE

“This course began as a regular interdisciplinary seminar, but I soon thought that it could also be a great first-year seminar because of how well it introduces the idea of interdisciplinarity. We engage texts from across the spectrum—from history and philosophy to sociology and political economy. I even have an entire unit devoted to artistic and literary representations of Africa-China relations. Over the years, I’ve continued to tweak the syllabus, bringing out themes that have become more important in my own research on the topic. The most recent version of the course features a whole section on how race and racialization functions in the dynamic. I have also realized that the course models what a good concentration might look like. I start with a big question (what are Africa-China relations?) and then work to answer this question through the different methods provided by different disciplines. For example, I ask the students, what can a novel tell us about Kenya-China relations that a text on political economy cannot? And vice versa? In this way, I get students accustomed to the different kinds of knowledge (symbolic, economic, political, historical) that can exist about any given topic—or really any concentration!”

—Maayel Sow (BA ’24)
Professor Kwami Coleman

Kwami Coleman is a pianist, composer, and musicologist specializing in improvised music. His research interests include experimental music history, jazz history, the history and music cultures of the African diaspora, the political economy of music, music technology, aesthetics, and cultural studies. Coleman’s current book project is Change: The “New Thing” and Modern Jazz. His 2017 album, Local Music, features original music written for trio and field recordings. His upcoming electronic recording project is titled POLY. Coleman was a founding member of the Afrolatin@ Forum, a nonprofit organization devoted to the study and increased visibility of Latinos of African descent in the United States, now housed in NYU’s Steinhardt School.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In 1903, at the dawn of the commercial music industry, sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois famously proclaimed that the foremost problem in 20th century American society was “the problem of the color line.” Du Bois’s prescience sets the stage for this course’s exploration of racial identity in recorded, commercially available music. We will examine how racial performance has intermingled with music consumption in the United States since blackface minstrelsy in the 1830s. Our goal is to understand how deeply embedded race—both ascribed and claimed—is in American music culture, reverberating throughout the last century in debates on artists’ authenticity, propriety, and popularity. This course is organized chronologically; each week is devoted to a particular era and its corresponding musical genres leading up to the present. With the rising importance of visual media since the mid-20th century, a historically informed understanding of the confluences of race and ethnicity in American music culture through music media and technologies will offer an enhanced understanding of the past and our contemporary, internet-driven musical landscape.

THE MAKING OF THE COURSE

“I teach ‘Hearing Difference: The Commercial Music Industry and American Racial Imaginary’ every fall. The title is pretty long, but I think it drives towards the core concern of the class, which is how racial representation and misrepresentation have shaped the way music in a constantly evolving commercial industry has been publicized, categorized, bought, and sold from the late 19th century onward. We begin in the late 19th century, specifically the 1890s, because that’s when the first cylinders—the sound recordings for the first sound- and thus music-reproducing machine, the phonograph—hit the commercial market in the United States. We spend the first few weeks reviewing the little-known history of racial categorization in the United States. For instance, being wealthy, white, male, and ‘native born’ qualified someone for full citizenship in 1790 in the US’s first national census, taken just a decade after the Revolutionary War.

Crossing into the booming industrial 20th century, we then spend subsequent weeks on musical genres that defined each
decade: the Race Records and ‘old-time’ music of the 1910s-20s (which includes the blues and ‘hillbilly music’), classical music in the 1930s, jazz in the 1940s, ‘rhumba’ in the 1940s-50s, rhythm-and-blues and rock-n-roll in the 1950s, soul music in the 1960s, disco in the 1970s, rap in the 1980s, and hip-hop and pop music in the 1990s-2000s. In each chronological unit, we use the performers’ identity—both ascribed and presumed—as a lens to view the music culture of the time. The course’s touchstone project is a final paper on an artist of the student’s choosing, where they investigate the role that race and other facets of identity have played in the presence and popularity of their chosen artist in the commercial music industry. The payoff, I hope, is that students walk away with a historically informed and more critically nuanced appreciation of the music that they encounter and listen to in this age of ultimate (digital) access.”

Professor Vasuki Nesiah teaches human rights and legal and social theory at Gallatin, where she is also faculty director of the Gallatin Global Fellowship in Human Rights. She has published on the history and politics of human rights, humanitarianism, international criminal law, reparations, global feminisms, and decolonization. Named a 2022 Jacob K. Javits Visiting Professor, Nesiah was also recognized with the Gallatin Distinguished Teacher Award in 2021 and with the 2020 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Faculty Award. Her current book projects include International Conflict Feminism (forthcoming from University of Pennsylvania Press) and Reading the Ruins: Colonialism, Slavery and International Law.

“International Law, Racial Capitalism and the Black Atlantic: Birthing ‘the Human’”

Professor Vasuki Nesiah

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“We are black, it is true, but tell us, gentlemen, you who are so judicious, what is the law that says that the black man must belong to and be the property of the white man?” With these words, Toussaint Louverture’s 1791 Haitian declaration judiciously centers the intricate interdependence of the written and unwritten law of race. The declaration insists on the contradiction at the heart of the notion of the free and rights-bearing “human” that was being heralded on both sides of the Black Atlantic in what some described as “the age of liberty.” This class will take up Toussaint’s question and focus on notions of the human that emerge in international law's imbrication with

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE SKEWED INTEGRATION OF RACE INTO THE MUSIC INDUSTRY HAS AFFECTED ITS EVOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS HOW THERE ARE STILL DISPARITIES PRESENT IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS TODAY.”

—Alicia Gilchrist (BA ‘22)
racial capitalism in the early-modern Atlantic world. Using key moments in the history of international law to anchor our conversation, we will probe the contours of the global order that unfolds through the legal architecture of colonialism, slavery, and trade.

**THE MAKING OF THE COURSE**

"International law is often seen as a progressive and emancipatory force advancing human rights and humanitarianism. This course complicates this story by grappling with the fraught provenance of the notion of the ‘human’ in the early history of international law. This history is intertwined with the history of settler colonialism, the international slave trade, and capitalism. We begin the semester by reading Pope Nicholas V, whose mid-15th-century papal bulls granted European powers legal authority and normative sanction to invade, conquer, dispossess, and enslave; we then move on through the early history of the discipline with figures such as Francisco de Vitoria, the Salamanca theologian and legal scholar, and Hugo Grotius, Dutch scholar and lawyer with the Dutch East India Company. Throughout the course, we also look at how dominant legal orders were challenged by liberation movements in that historical period (with particular focus on the 1804 Haitian revolution). We also spend time with heterodox approaches to legal history (scholars such as Anthony Anghie, Lauren Benton, and Cheryl Harris) to interrogate how dominant legal traditions gave meaning to concepts such as ‘property,’ ‘sovereignty,’ and ‘civilization,’ and what this tells us about the relationship between power and legal knowledge. This includes creatively and attentively mining the archives of international law—while also understanding the silences and mystifications of that archive—to consider interpretations that might open the doors to an alternative analysis of international law and the ongoing legacies of a world order forged in the crucible of colonialism, slavery, and capitalism. In that sense, this is a course not only about international law, but also about how to read law, history, and the ‘human.’”

"VASUKI’S COURSE WAS HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL IN FORMING MY CONCENTRATION AND GETTING ME TO THINK IN DEPTH ABOUT THE CAPITALIST ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE WAYS IN WHICH THE ‘HUMAN’ IS MADE INTO A PRODUCTIVE CATEGORY."

—Daren DaCosta (BA ’22)
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