

CX273-30 Africa and the Making of Classical Literature

20/21

Department

Classics & Ancient History

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Elena Giusti

Credit value

30

Module duration

23 weeks

Assessment

50% coursework, 50% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module considers the import of north Africa in the shaping of Western Classical Literature in the Mediterranean, and investigates the simultaneous erasure of Africa from the Western Classical canon - an erasure which originated in the ancient Greek and Roman texts and was further crystallised in their subsequent critical history. Over the course of the year, students will analyse and discuss both Greek and Roman portraits of Africa and Africans (with an emphasis on Berbers, Egyptians and Ethiopians) and the various ways that the relationship between centre and periphery affects the works of north-African authors writing in Greek and Latin. The course will also explore and discuss the history of the equation of the Classical world with modern (and colonialist) Europe, and the more recent attempts to 'decolonise' the Western Classics, together with the reactions to them (such as the famous 'Black Athena Debate' of the 80s). A final section of the module considers the effects that preconceptions and assumptions about the Graeco-Roman heritage have on the engagement with classical literature by people of African descent, both in Africa and in the Western World. We shall explore some critical positions of black classicism (such as *Classica Africana*) and investigate the reception of Greek and Roman literature in selected authors from the African diaspora.

In 2020-2021 the module is available as a Latin Language option.

Module aims

To consider and evaluate the import of north Africa in the shaping of western classical literature in the Mediterranean, and investigate the simultaneous erasure of Africa from the Western Classical canon and from the history of western classical literature. To introduce students to literary representations of North Africa in western classical literature, and to works of classical literature written by North African authors. To help students engage more critically with the scholarship on western classical literature and its conscious or unconscious biases.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

This module considers the import of north Africa in the shaping of Western Classical Literature in the Mediterranean, and investigates the simultaneous erasure of Africa from the Western Classical canon – an erasure which originated in the ancient Greek and Roman texts and was further crystallised in their subsequent critical history. Over the course of the year, students will analyse and discuss both Greek and Roman representations of Africa and Africans (with an emphasis on Berbers, Egyptians and Ethiopians) and the various ways that the relationship between centre and periphery affects the works of north-African authors writing in Greek and Latin. The course will also explore and discuss the history of the equation of the Classical world with modern (and colonialist) Europe, and the more recent attempts to ‘decolonise’ the Western Classics, together with the reactions to them (such as the famous ‘Black Athena Debate’ of the 80s). A final section of the module considers the effects that preconceptions and assumptions about the Graeco-Roman heritage have on the engagement with classical literature by people of African descent, both in Africa and in the Western World. We shall explore some critical positions of black classicism (such as *Classica Africana*) and investigate the reception of Greek and Roman literature in selected African and black authors. Could be available as either a Latin-text or Greek-text option.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- A broad understanding of the role played by north Africa and north Africans in the making of Classical Literature;
- Ability to discuss issues of racism and ethnicity in antiquity;
- A broad understanding of the role played by literary texts in issues of identity formation;
- A broad understanding of the role played by both colonialist and post-colonialist discourses in our critical engagement with the Classical World;
- Developed their skills in close reading of texts (in the original for Q800/Q802/QQ36 students);
- Developed their Latin linguistic skills (for Q800/Q802/QQ36 students);
- Developed their skills in the critical analysis of both primary and secondary texts;
- Developed their ability to structure arguments coherently.

Indicative reading list

Primary Texts In Translation

Greek

Herodotus, *The Histories* (selections of Book 2)

Pindar, selections of *Pythian Odes*

Aeschylus, *Suppliants*

Euripides, *Helen*

Theocritus, *Idyll 15*

Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo*, *Coma Berenices* (fr. 110 Pf), *Hymn to Zeus*

Heliodorus, selections of *Aethiopica*

Latin

Selections from Plautus, Poenulus, Virgil, *Aeneid 1*, Lucan, *Civil War*, Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* and Augustine, *Confessions*

*Set texts for the module as a Latin language option:

Autumn Term: Plautus, *Poenulus* 1-128, 950-1422 (600 lines)

Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.335-756 (421 lines)

Spring Term: Apuleius, selected passages from *Metamorphoses* and *Apologia* (20 OCT pp.)

Augustine, selected passages from *Confessions* and *The City of God* (20 OCT pp.)

English

Wheatley, Phillis (1773) *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*

Cullen, Countess (1925) *Color*, especially *Yet Do I Marvel*

Ellison, Ralph (1952) *Invisible Man*

Hopkins, Pauline Reed, Ishmael (1972) *Mumbo Jumbo* Morrison, Toni (1987) *Beloved* --- (1988)

'Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in Classical Literature' Walcott,

Derek (1990) Omeros Padilla Peralta, D. (2015) *Undocumented: A Dominican Boy's Odyssey from a Homeless Shelter to the Ivy League*, London Secondary Texts General (illustrative) Ahmad, A.

(1992) *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London Asante, M.K. and Karenga, M. (2006)

Handbook of Black Studies, Thousand Oaks and London Babha, H. (1994) *The Location of*

Culture, London Derricourt, R. M. (2015) *Antiquity Imagined: The Remarkable Legacy of Egypt*

and the Ancient Near East, London. Eliav-Feldon, M., Isaac, B. and Ziegler, J. (2009) *The Origins*

of Racism in the West, Cambridge and New York Gruen, E. S. (2010) *Rethinking the Other in*

Antiquity, Princeton Isaac, B.J. (2004) *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton

McCoskey, D. E. (2012) *Race: Antiquity and its Legacy*, London and New York Said, E. (1978)

Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient, London Snowden, F.M. (1970) *Blacks in*

Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Graeco-Roman Experience, Cambridge Mass --- (1983) *Before Colour*

Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks, Cambridge Mass Spivak, G. C. (1988) 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, London, 21-78

Young, R. (1995) *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London --- (2004)

White Mythologies: Writing History and the West, London --- (2015) *Empire, Colony, Postcolony*,

Chichester African Greece, or Greek Africa (illustrative) Hartog, F. (1988) *The Mirror of Herodotus:*

The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History, Berkeley Hornblower, S. (1983) 'Cyrene,

Africa and Egypt in the fifth century' in S. Hornblower *The Greek World: 479-323 BC*, Abingdon

and New York Stephens, S.A. (2003) *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*,

Berkeley Vasunia, P. (2001) *The Gift of the Nile: Hellenizing Egypt from Aeschylus to Alexander*, Berkeley
 African Rome, or Roman Africa (illustrative) Adler, E. (2011) *Valorizing the Barbarians: Enemy Speeches in Roman Historiography*, Austin
 Giusti (2017) *Carthage in Virgil's Aeneid: Staging the Enemy under Augustus*, Cambridge
 Kuttner, A. (2013) 'Representing Hellenistic Numidia, in Africa and at Rome', in J.R.W. Prag and J.C. Quinn (2013) *The Hellenistic West: Rethinking the Ancient Mediterranean*, Cambridge and New York, 216-72
 Lee, B.T., Finkelpearl, E. and Graverini, L. (2014) *Apuleius and Africa*, New York and London
 Merrills, A. (2017) *Roman Geographies of the Nile: from the late Republic to the Early Empire*, Cambridge.
 Tracy, J. (2014) *Lucan's Egyptian Civil War*, Cambridge
 Reception (illustrative)
 Adler, E. (2016) *Classics, the Culture Wars, and Beyond*, Ann Arbor
 Barnard, J.L. (2017) *Empire of Ruin: Black Classicism and American Imperial Culture*, Oxford
 Bernal, M. (1987) *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, i: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*, New Brunswick, NJ --- (1991) *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, ii: The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, London --- (2001) *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to his Critics*, ed. David Chioni Moore, Durham, NC
 Goff, B. (ed.) (2005) *Classics and Colonialism*, London
 Goff, B. and Simpson (2007) *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and dramas of the African diaspora*, Oxford
 Greenwood, E. (2009) 'Re-rooting the classical tradition: new directions in black classicism', in *Classical Receptions Journal* 1.1, 87-103 --- (2010) *Afro-Greeks: dialogues between Anglophone Caribbean literature and classics in the twentieth century*, Oxford.
 Lambert, M. (2011) *The Classics and South African Identities*, London and New York
 Lefkowitz, M.R. and MacLean Rogers, G. (eds.) (1996) *Black Athena Revisited*
 Lefkowitz, M.R. (1997) *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History*
 Malamud, M. (2016) *African Americans and the Classics: Antiquity, Abolition and Activism*, London and New York
 Marchand, S. and Grafton, A. (1997) 'Martin Bernal and His Critics', *Arion* 5.2., 1-35
 Orrells, D., Bhabra, G.K. and Roynon, T. (eds.) (2011) *African Athena: New Agendas*, Oxford.
 Rankine, P.D. (2006) *Ulysses in Black: Ralph Ellison, Classicism, and African American Literature*, Madison
 Roynon, T. (2014) *Toni Morrison and the Classical Tradition*, Oxford
 Walters, T.L. (2007) *African American literature and the classicist tradition: Black Women Writers from Wheatley to Morrison*, New York
 Wetmore, K.J. (2003) *Black Dionysus: Greek Tragedy and African American Theatre*, Jefferson NC
 van Binsbergen, W. (2011) (ed.) *Black Athena comes of age*, Berlin
 Articles, Blogs, Editorials: Appiah, K.A. (2016) 'There is no such thing as western civilization', in *The Guardian*:
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/09/western-civilisation-appiah-reith-lecture>
 Daniels, M. (2017) 'Black Athena, 30 Years On: Why Bernal Still Matters to Classics', in *Eidolon*:
<https://eidolon.pub/black-athena-30-years-on-5a78253028cc>
 Umachandran, M. (2017) 'Fragile, Handle with Care: on White Classicists', in *Eidolon*:
<https://eidolon.pub/fragile-handle-with-care-66848145cf29>

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Subject specific skills

Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this module students should expect to have:
- A broad understanding of the role played by north Africa and north Africans in the making of Classical Literature;
- Ability to discuss issues of racism and ethnicity in antiquity;

- A broad understanding of the role played by literary texts in issues of identity formation;
- A broad understanding of the role played by both colonialist and post-colonialist discourses in our critical engagement with the Classical World;
- Developed their skills in close reading of texts (in the original for Q800/Q802/QQ36 students);
- Developed their Latin linguistic skills (for Q800/Q802/QQ36 students);
- Developed their skills in the critical analysis of both primary and secondary texts;
- Developed their ability to structure arguments coherently.

Transferable skills

- critical thinking
- problem solving
- active lifelong learning
- communication
- information literacy
- ICT literacy
- citizenship
- ethical values
- intercultural learning and diversity awareness
- professionalism

Study

Study time

Type	Required	Optional
Lectures	21 sessions of 1 hour (7%)	
Seminars	21 sessions of 1 hour (7%)	
Tutorials	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)	
Practical classes	(0%)	21 sessions of 1 hour
Private study	256 hours (85%)	
Total	300 hours	

Private study description

private study and revision

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group C1

	Weighting	Study time
Second Essay	25%	
A 2,500-3000 word essay. Students taking the module as a Latin-text or Greek-text option will have the choice to submit either an essay or a practical criticism as second assessment.		
First essay	25%	
A 2,500-3000 word essay.		
Online Examination	50%	
A 2-hour exam.		

- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Feedback on assessment

Individual tutorials, Tabula feedback marking sheets.

[Past exam papers for CX273](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-Q800 BA in Classics

This module is Core option list B for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-Q802 Undergraduate Classics (Latin) with Study in Europe

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-VV18 Undergraduate Ancient History and Classical Archaeology with Study in Europe
- Year 2 of UCXA-Q802 Undergraduate Classics (Latin) with Study in Europe

- Year 2 of UCXA-QQ37 Undergraduate Classics and English

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-Q800 BA in Classics
- Year 2 of UCXA-VV16 Undergraduate Ancient History and Classical Archaeology
- Year 2 of UCXA-Q820 Undergraduate Classical Civilisation
- Year 2 of UCXA-Q821 Undergraduate Classical Civilisation with Study in Europe

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-Q82P Undergraduate Classical Civilisation