

Christopher Johnson

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<http://blackvistas.com/index.html>

Education

New York University in Manhattan, New York
Ph.D. in American Studies received in 1999

Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, graduate program in History of American Civilization
Academic year 1982-83

Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, Music, Cultural Anthropology and Urban Studies
B.A. received in 1977

Teaching Interests

American Studies
Cultural Studies
African American Music

Conference Papers

Paper presentation, African-American Music in World Culture: Art as Refuge and Strength in the Struggle for Freedom, Boston University, "The African Drum in the Jazz Age: Metaphor and Nostalgia in Early Twentieth Century Black Culture"
March 2014

Paper presentation, Collegium for African American Research, The University of Paris, Charles V, Paris, France
"Black-White Interracial Marriage as Post Racial Nexus"
April 2011

Paper presentation, Association for Cultural Studies Conference, The University of Hong Kong, Lingnan
"Barack Obama and Liberation Identity"
July 2010

Paper presentation, Afromodernisms 1: Re-encounters with the French and Anglo-Atlantic Worlds, 1907-61, The University of Liverpool
"Jazz, Abstraction and Primitivism"
April 2010

Paper presentation, Resurging Imperialisms Conference, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada
"Into the Mirror: Illustration, Description and Meaning in Colonial American Travel Writing by Europeans" November 2008

Paper presentation, Association for Cultural Studies Conference, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica
"Classic Jazz on the Internet: Performance and Meaning"
July 2008

Invited Talks

“100 Years of the Drum,” The House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany, Panel discussion
April 2018

“Grounation,” The Institute of Jamaica, The Jamaica Music Museum, Kingston “Drums Rising: Symbol and Myth in African American Culture
February 2015

TEDx Hudson, “Drums Rising: Symbol and Myth in African American Culture,” filmed presentation in Hudson, New York
September 2014

Race & Ethnicity Workshop Series, Eugene Lang College, “Race, Faith and the Prophetic Image of Barack Obama”
Wednesday, February 9th, 2011

Race & Ethnicity Teach-In, Eugene Lang College, “Race, Art and Identity”
Tuesday, November 2nd, 2010

Research

The British Library. “European Colonial Era Travel Writers on America.” A survey of selected rare primary texts.
August 2005

Fulbright Senior Scholar, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster, Germany. Project titled "Seeing African America. The European Vision of Black Culture in the Colonial Era." A view of European travel writing during the American colonial era with a focus on accounts and illustrations related to African American music and dance performance practices, native American culture and the use of cocoa. Visits to the Koninklijke Bibliotheek — National Library of the Netherlands in Den Haag and the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.
Academic Year 2002-2003

Research Fellow, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research at Harvard University. Project titled “Reconciling an Enigma: Interdisciplinary Views of African American Culture in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century through History, Literature and the Visual Arts.” An investigation of the relationship between the interest in African American culture by whites since the colonial era and a similar regard for black culture of African origin by African Americans in the early twentieth-century. Research in the Houghton (rare books), Tozzer (botany) and Andover (theological) libraries viewing the travel accounts of Alexander Barclay, A.C. Carmichael, Jean Baptiste Debret, Bryan Edwards, Jean Baptiste Labat, Edward Long, Hans Sloane, William Smith and William Young, among others.
Academic Year 2000-2001

Studied the lives of turn-of-the-century black musicians. Reviewed autobiographies held in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, of the New York Public Library. Extracted relevant photographs of pre-jazz "syncopated orchestras" from the photo archives of the Schomburg. Integrated this information with a preexisting study of African retentions found in New World musics.
February 1984 to January 1985

Research assistant for "The Integration of the Afro-American Folk Arts Through Music." A study conducted by professors Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright in the African-American studies department at Harvard University. The study focused on finding primary documentary sources on the African-American arts in early America. Read and wrote abstracts on sources found in nineteenth-century American periodicals and newspapers.
October 1979 to July 1981

Publications

“Surrogates: Juba and Rhythmic Practices.” in FORECAAST. (Forum for European Contributions to African American Studies) Volume 9. Lit Verlag, Hamburg. 2003.

“Ways of Seeing” an online essay contribution for “Birth and Rebirth of a Nation, a Colloquium and Film Screening,” The Vera List Center, New School University, September 26, 2009.

Journal Review

Peer reviewer for the journal *Race & Ethnicity* of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University
Spring Semester 2011

Teaching

Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA)
Dissertation advisor and independent study director
February 2013 to present

Independent scholar
July 2011 to January 2013

Full-time faculty in the liberal arts at Eugene Lang College a division of New School University. Member of the Culture and Media concentration faculty.
July 2004 to June 2011

Full-time faculty in the liberal arts at the New School University Jazz and Contemporary Music Program. American history, American literature and Jazz and the Culture of the African American experience. Student liberal arts advisor and tutoring coordinator
September 1997 to June 2004

Part Time Employment and Graduate Student at New York University 1986 to 1997

Instructor at the Hollingsworth Summer School for advanced students at Columbia Teachers College. Taught music history in eight-week summer program for primary and secondary students.
Summer 1986

Instructor and curriculum consultant in New York public schools for "Learning Through Expanded Arts Programs." Taught American music history and led teacher workshops on integrating the arts into academic subjects. Designed the course "The Elements of Music" an introduction to the families of musical instruments using indigenous African instruments.
September 1984 to June 1986

Courses Created (Offered through Eugene Lang College Culture and Media)Postcolonial Imagination

This course considers the relation between vision and reality in early European culture. During the age of exploration, Europeans struggled with the challenge of describing the new. Their conclusions were based on the imagined, the very myths that fueled travel. Bulgarian scholar Tzvetan Todorov finds that the European vision was altered to suit their needs, and that an image of the "other" was arrived at only at the price of the suppression of reality. We will examine examples of European art and illustration from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century to consider the role of the imagination in the forming of cultural ideas.

Black Vistas: The Visual and Material Culture of Jazz

This course is a presentation of Jazz as a twentieth century artistic phenomena of global import. Photographs of performers, audio clips and film clips are shared and discussed in order to consider the evolving image of the performing artist in American society. Readings include biography, fiction, African music, the literature of race and image, and folk culture.

Topics in African American Film

This course considers the image of African Americans in film within a social historical context. We will discuss the themes of music and dance performance, the black romantic narrative, racial conflict, blaxploitation, black documentary, black diaspora film, and independent film dramas. Readings include "Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*" by Steen Shannon, "Daughters of the Dust and the Black Independent Cinema Movement" by Toni Cade Bambara, and "'Untitled': D'Angelo and the Visualization of the Black Male Body" by Keith Harris.

Origins in Global Cultures: Values and the Universal

A comparison and discussion of “human-centered” creativity from antiquity to the present. A focus on the “cultural roots” of four regions of the world, Western Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. History, literature, the visual arts, architecture and music will be considered in terms of (1) their “universal appeal” to us in the modern world, and (2) their “reflection of the values” of the culture that created them.

Culture and the Self: Identity and Subjectivity

This senior seminar will present approaches to identity and subjectivity. Themes will include author and audience in African American visual culture, personal history in Islamic culture, and clothing as representation in material culture. By using subjecthood as a base, course participants will be encouraged to devise individual and group projects.

Rhythm Nation: Pop Culture Narrative

This course will consider the evolution of personal and social narrative in our time. Alan Nadel has defined containment as our cold war-based national narrative. He concludes that such national narratives intimidate the personal and Nadel finds a sexual narrative of courtship and rivalry in the international. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has shown the richness of personal narration and its relationship to oral and communal discourse. For Gates rhetorical strategies in African American culture are metaphorical and often make reference to a double consciousness.

Grants

Recipient of a New School University Faculty Development Fund Grant to travel to London to carry out research at the British Library
Summer 2005

Fulbright Senior Scholar award, teaching and research, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster, Germany, teaching courses in American history and African American culture, research project titled "Seeing African America. The European Vision of Black Culture in the Colonial Era"
Academic Year 2002-2003

Recipient of a New School University Project Development Award for \$2,000 to attend "Crossroutes: the Meaning of Race for the 21st Century" a Conference held in Sardinia, Italy
Spring 2001

Recipient of a New School University Faculty Research Grant for \$5,000 to carry out research as a Fellow at the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University
Spring 2000

Recipient of a Technology Initiative Fund (TIF) grant for \$2,500 for the creation of a history class web site
The Center for Educational Technology, New School University
Spring 1999

Professional Activities

“The Digital Scholar” a presentation at the Apple Store SoHo highlighting the use of New Media in Higher Education
Fall 2003

In Germany during the 2002-2003 academic year:

“Livin’ Large,” The University of Leipzig, July 2003

“German and American Contrasts,” Volkshochschule Die Insel, Marl, June 2003

“Livin’ Large: Identity in American Culture,” The University of Rostock, May 2003

“The Cult of the Young,” Gymnasium Selm, April 2003

“The Drum as Myth, the Drum as Symbol, Seeing Across Cultures in American Studies,” The James F. Byrnes Institut, Stuttgart, February 2003

“Class and Age: The Cult of the Young in American Society,” Volkshochschule Die Insel, Marl, January 2003

“Syncopated Orchestras. Elements of African American Instrumental Music after 1900,” Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster, October 2002

Presentation at the first national conference of Apple Distinguished Educators, Cupertino, California
Spring 2002

Learning to Look, institute on the use of images in history, the American Social History Project
City University of New York Graduate Center, New York
Summer 2001

The International Association of Jazz Educator’s (IAJE) conference in New York City, presented a seminar titled
“New Media Resources in Jazz History”
Spring 2001

Presentation on the use of new media for the undergraduate course Jazz and the Culture of the African American Experience. Discussion of web site features of film and audio clips in QuickTime and course readings in PDF format
Apple Computer, New York City, fall 2000

Apple Distinguished Educator. Sponsored by the Apple Computer Company, this program recognizes faculty with an identified expertise in educational technology. Participants are invited by Apple to participate in a relationship program focused on educational excellence and leadership. During their two-year term, chosen educators collaborate nationally to (1) create projects, and (2) participate in public events promoting new media in higher education
Spring 2000

Public talk titled “The Drum as Myth, the Drum as Symbol: Seeing Across Cultures in American Studies,” sponsored by the University Diversity Initiative and the Jazz and Contemporary Music Program
New School University, spring 2000

Three workshops on internet resources in American Studies, for the Center for Transregional Democratic Studies, of the Graduate Faculty, for their American Experience Institute, which hosted American Studies professors from nineteen different countries
New School University, summer 1999

Panel discussion moderator in the “Seeing Jazz and Talking About It” symposium, cosponsored by “America’s Jazz Heritage” of the Smithsonian Institution and the Jazz Program
Tishman Auditorium, New School University, spring 1998

Graduate School Academic Honors

Recipient of the Penfield Fellowship for Studies in Diplomacy, International Affairs and Belles Lettres
New York University 1986-87 school year

Recipient of the Louis Lerner Memorial Scholarship for Study in History of American Civilization New York University 1984-85 school year

University Committees

Served as a member of the following groups

Eugene Lang College Diversity Committee
University Faculty Advisory Committee
University Liberal Arts Planning Committee
University Library Committee
Jazz Program Executive Committee
Teaching Awards Committee
University Provost Search Committee