This course will introduce students to the distinctive histories, cultures and identities that share a connection to Africa as a place of origin. From ancient times to the 21st century, people have both lived in—and left—Africa individually or collectively, for reasons ranging from the Transatlantic slave trade to modern experiences of voluntary or forced migration. Progressing chronologically from the early modern period (narrating slavery, the Haitian Revolution) to the twentieth-century (Panafriicanism, the Harlem Renaissance) to last twenty years (recent migrants, cosmopolitanism), this course will examine singular experiences of diasporic subjectivity around the world, as accounted for in a range of different sources. These will include critical theory, fiction, music and the visual arts, as well as other media where diasporic identities are shaped, discussed and circulated. Particular attention will be paid to the ways blackness as a category necessarily intersects with (among many others) issues of space, language, citizenship, gender and sexuality, memory and politics. While focused on the Atlantic world, this course will also underscore the multidirectional scope of African mobility within the African continent and across the globe.

We will read authors such as W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, James Baldwin, Frantz Fanon, Barack Obama, Maryse Condé, Junot Diaz, Ta Nehisi Coates, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Course material will also include several films (Sembene Ousmane’s Thiaroye, Raoul Peck’s I am not your Nigger, and Ryan Coogler’s Black Panther).