

## AAS 3500

### A Tour of the Book: *Homegoing* and the Challenge of Diasporas

In **A Tour of the Book: *Homegoing* and the Challenge of Diasporas** students will interact with some of the specific sociohistorical, cultural, and political contexts discussed in Yaa Gyasi's multi-generational novel, *Homegoing*. The novel follows "the parallel paths of two sisters "and their descendants through eight generations: from the Gold Coast of Ghana to the plantations of Mississippi, from the American Civil War to Jazz Age Harlem," illuminating "slavery's troubled legacy both for those who were taken from Africa, and those who stayed behind" both for the enslavers and enslaved alike. In the course, students will rigorously engage with the text, traveling to the scenes and sites referenced in the book. While exploring the continuing effects of what many scholars as the "afterlives of slavery and colonialism," students will record their experiences daily in a travel journal, examining the ways in which the historical past of slavery writes itself back into the present moment.

By the end of the course, students should have acquired a better understanding of terms such as "home" and "diasporas," and the ways in which they are mobilized in the construction of identities. They will learn from the course materials and from their experiences at the sites explored, not only to enhance their analytical skills, but also to challenge previously held assumptions about race, slavery, Africa and its myriad diasporas. An intercultural exchange, students will have the opportunity to interact with students and faculty from the University of Ghana, as well as locals at the sites to be visited.

#### **Course Requirements**

**Attendance:** Students are required to attend class, participate actively in discussions both in class and during on-site visits. Tardiness of any kind will not be tolerated, given that time is of the essence. The timeframe does not allow for students to absent themselves from class, unless in the unlikely event of illness during which students immediately notify the professor or the TA, certainly before the scheduled meeting for the day. Attendance to class and participation in on-site visits are mandatory.

**Journal Keeping:** Students are expected to keep a journal in which they will record notes on topics assigned daily, and the discussions held both in the classroom and during site visits. Notes documented in the journal, which should be at least **two pages** (double-spaced) long, will provide students with material for their final papers.

**Visits:** Students and instructors will visit specific locations in the field. These sites include those mentioned in the primary text, *Homegoing*, as well as **supplementary texts** from which excerpts will be assigned.

These on-site visits are significant because they will provide students with context-specific information and knowledge about the transitions that have occurred in these sites, and the ways in which memory functions among the sites' current inhabitants. Keeping the journal will come in handy, as these visits will also occasionally require that students interact with locals to get a sense of how they make sense of their present milieus.

**Paper:** A five-page paper on a topic of the student's choosing is due no later than Sunday, January 13, 2018. The foundations of the paper must be derived from the assigned readings, discussions of

the readings, journaling experiences of and encounters with sites, covering interactions with locals, and the transitions in their experiences as we moved in and between these sites, and between the sites as written in the texts and as they appear in the present day. Students must display analytical mastery, narrative depth, ethnographic dexterity, and historical complexity to the issues they select as topics. They may want to show the ways in which the afterlives of slavery and colonialism continue to shape how blackness is constructed and contest both at home and the diasporas.

**Grading:** Participation in Class Discussions: 30% (This includes attendance, informed discussion contributions and commentaries, and a critical and thorough analysis of the readings). Journal Keeping: 30% (This must cover assigned topics, site visits, and interactions with locals at these sites). Final Paper 40%.

**Course Website:** Information and materials pertaining to the course will be available on the Course's UVA Collab Website. Students should familiarize themselves with the syllabus, assigned readings, and important information on Ghana and the sites that will be visited before departure.

### Required Readings

Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing*, Alfred Knopf, 2016 (available at the UVA Bookstore)  
Excerpts from the following books (available on Collab)

*Stephanie Smallwood. Saltwater Slavery*  
*Saidiya Hartman. Lose your Mother*  
*Sowande Mustakeem. Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*  
*James Campbell. Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*  
Additional texts, including poems and articles, are also available on COLLAB

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## COURSE AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE

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### Sunday, December 30

Arrival in Accra – **DAY OF REST**

### Monday, December 31

Group Meeting, Orientation, and Dinner (Time TBA)  
Institute of African Studies' Yiri Lodge

**Tour:** *Kwame Nkrumah Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.*  
**Readings:**

Wainaina. "How to Write About Africa" and "How to Write About Africa II"  
Polgreen. "Ghana's Uneasy Embrace of Slavery's Diaspora"

## Tuesday, January 1

### **CLASS SESSION: THE VEXED HISTORIES OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE (9:30am-1:30pm)** (Kwame Nkrumah Institute of African Studies)

#### **Readings:**

Smallwood. *from Saltwater Slavery,*  
"The Gold Coast and the Atlantic Market in People"  
Campbell. *from Middle Passage, "Windward Coast"*  
Hayden. "Middle Passage"  
Major. "The Slave Trade: View from the Middle Passage"  
Handler. "The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record"  
<http://www.slaveryimages.org/> (Optional)



*"The Door of No Return"*

## Wednesday, January 2

### **Travel to Cape Coast**

**Tour:** *Cape Coast Township and Cape Coast Castle*

## Thursday, January 3

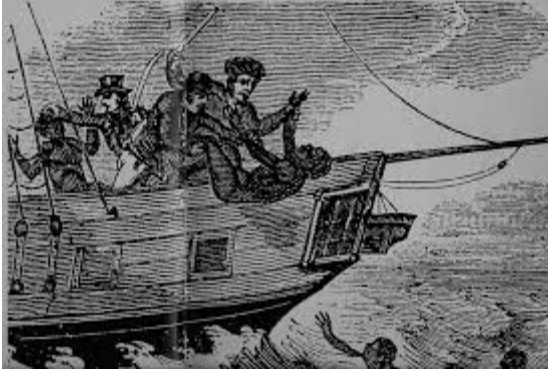
**Tour:** *Elmina Township and Elmina Castle*  
*Elmina Castle and the Door of No Return*

**Readings:**

Gyasi. *Homegoing*

St. Clair. "The Sea," from *The Door of No Return*

Mustakeem. from *Slavery at Sea: "Middle Passage Studies and the Birth of Slavery at Sea,"*



**Friday, January 4**

**Depart from Cape Coast to Assin Manso and Kumasi**

**Saturday, January 5**

**Tour:** *Kumasi and Manhyia Palace*

**Sunday, January 6**

**Depart from Kumasi to Accra**

**Monday, January 7**

**Class Session:** *Kwame Nkrumah Institute of African Studies*

**Readings:**

Gyasi *Homegoing*

Hartman "The Path of Strangers" from *Lose Your Mother*

Cullen "What is Africa to Me?"

**Dance and Drumming Session with School of Performing Arts**

**Tuesday, January 8**

**Tour:** *James and Ussher Forts/Christiansborg Castle Historic slave and colonial trading sites in Accra*

**Readings:**

Gyasi                      *Homegoing*

**Wednesday, January 9**

**Tour:** *W. E. B. DuBois and George Padmore Centers*

**Readings:**

Gyasi.                      *Homegoing*  
Hartman.                “Afrotopia” from *Lose Your Mother*  
Mustakeem.            “The Anatomy of Suffering”

**Thursday, January 10**

**Tour:** *National Center for Arts and Culture, Accra*  
*Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum*

**Friday, January 11**

**Departure from Accra to Charlottesville**

**Sunday, January 13: Final Assignment due**