

**Searching for a Rainbow:
The Transnational Experiences of African Americans in
Denmark**

(Summer) May - June 2018

4 Weeks

Location: Copenhagen

Related disciplines: Ethnic Studies, History, Gender Studies, Music

The course meets from 10am – 12pm with additional activities in the afternoon and on weekends

Afro-American Studies 271 – Selected Topics in Afro-American Culture

Course Description: Introductory level course on specific topics in African American culture.

Course Equivalent: History 274 – History Study Abroad: Transnational/Global History

Meets with a proposed new course (approval pending from L&S)
Scandinavian Studies 277 – Topics in Nordic & US Multiculturalism



Dexter Gordon and Ben Webster in Copenhagen

Faculty: Ethelene Whitmire, Professor at the University of Wisconsin – Madison (affiliated with Afro-American Studies; Gender & Women’s Studies; and German, Nordic and Slavic Studies). She is a 2016-2017 Fulbright Scholar in Denmark and her new book project, *Searching for Utopia: African Americans in 20th Century Denmark*, is funded by the Fulbright Program, the American-Scandinavian Foundation/ScanDesign and the Lois Roth Endowment.

Reflecting on his experiences living in Copenhagen, jazz musician Dexter Gordon said, *“Since I’ve been over here, I felt that I could breathe, you know, and just be more or less a human being white or black, green or yellow, whatever.”*¹

Course Description: This course examines the transnational experiences of African Americans who lived, performed, studied and visited Paris and Copenhagen during the 20th century. Educators, painters, social workers, writers, singers, jazz musicians among many others were drawn to Europe. While many have written about African Americans in France, their experiences in Denmark have remained unexplored. We will compare and contrast the experiences of African Americans in these European nations and answer the questions: Why did African Americans go to Denmark? and What were their experiences while there? This course includes a walking tour of “Black” Copenhagen, documentaries and feature films, music, art, literature, personal essays written by the expatriates and scholarly literature about the transnational experiences of African Americans. To complement the lectures, there will be opportunities to be immersed in Danish culture and history through numerous excursions and trips around Copenhagen and beyond.

Learning Outcomes - Ethnic Studies Learning Outcomes

1. **Be Aware of History’s Impact on the Present** Ethnic Studies courses highlight how certain histories have been valued and devalued, and how these differences have promulgated disparities in contemporary American society.
2. **Be Able to Recognize and Question Assumptions** Ethnic Studies courses promote recognition and application of critical thinking skills, specifically with respect to teaching students to harbor a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims, whether in the form of media, political, or popular representations, primarily as these relate to race and ethnicity. As part of this process, the ESR should challenge students to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics.
3. **Be Conscious of "Self" and "Other"** Awareness of self is inextricably linked with awareness of and empathy towards the perspectives of others. In constructing a space for this kind of discussion in their classrooms, Ethnic Studies courses give students an opportunity to think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as the connections they might have to people “outside” their focused social circle.
4. **Be Able to Participate Effectively in a Multicultural Society** Ethnic Studies courses should be relevant to students’ “lives outside the classroom”, and pursuing the objectives above should not only lead to student behavioral change, but to action in the real world. The ESR should ultimately engender in students the ability to participate in a multicultural society more effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully. This participation may be as mundane as simply being able to discuss issues related to race with a colleague or friend, or to recognize inequities in interpersonal, institutional, or other contexts.

¹ Lind, Jack. “Americans in Europe, A Discussion,” *Down Beat* July 2, 1964, Vol. 31, No. 20, 64-73.

Additional learning objectives for students taking the course under Scandinavian Studies 277:

In addition to the above objectives, will be expected to (a) demonstrate an understanding of Nordic culture, literature, and language, (b) conduct independent research into these topics, and (c) incorporate this knowledge into their essays, presentations, and class discussion.

Required Texts:

Lidegaard, Bo. *A Short History of Denmark in the 20th Century*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Gyldendal, 2009. In order to understand why African Americans went to Denmark and their experiences while there it is important to understand Danish history and culture.

Larsen, Nella. 2002. *Quicksand*. New York: Penguin Books. The famous Harlem Renaissance novel by an African American/Danish woman. The protagonist Helga Crane, Danish and African American, spends 1/3 of the novel in Copenhagen with her relatives.

(Background reading before the trip) Wiking, Meik. *The Little Book of Hygge: Danish Secrets to Happy Living*. New York: William Morrow, 2017. In order to understand current culture in Denmark in the 21st century. *Wiking will be a possible guest speaker for the course.

The Academic Program and Suggested Itinerary

Week 1 – Introduction in Copenhagen

Day 1

Introductions and introduction to the course and an overview of my research project that introduces the African Americans in 20th Century Denmark—for students to select one for their paper project.

Discussion of *The Little Book of Hygge*

Lunch at a traditional place serving Danish smørrebrød, for example, Det Lille Apotek—Copenhagen's oldest restaurant from 1720. <http://detlilleapotek.dk/uk/home/>

A free city walking tour of Copenhagen or a boat/canal tour or a hop on/hop off bus tour including a stop at the Little Mermaid.

Day 2

Lidegaard, Bo. *A Short History of Denmark in the 20th Century*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Gyldendal, 2009. Prologue 1849-1901 Chapter 1. Foundation of Democracy. Chapter 2. The Great Defeat 1864 and Chapter 3. New Hope 1864-1901.

Visit to the National Museum of Denmark. There is a small exhibit about the former Danish West Indies and a new larger exhibit opening in the fall 2017 - <http://en.natmus.dk/>

Day 3

Totten, Gary. *African American Travel Narratives From Abroad: Mobility and Cultural Work in the Age of Jim Crow* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2015) Chapter 2. Southernizing Travel in the Black Atlantic: Booker T. Washington's The Man Farthest Down. Including information about Washington's trip to Denmark.

A classic dinner of stegt flæsk, the unofficial Danish national dish (alternative food is available for non-pork eaters) at Christianshavns Færgescafé - <https://faergecafeen.dk/en/>

Day 4

Larsen, Nella. 2002. *Quicksand*. New York: Penguin Books.

Hutchinson, George. *In Search of Nella Larsen: a Biography of the Color Line*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006. Chapter 5. Coming of Age in Copenhagen: 1908-1912, pp. 64-74.

Rikke Andreassen and Kathrine Vitus, editors. *Affectivity and Race: Studies from Nordic Contexts*. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. Chapter 5. Nordic Colour-Blindness and Nella Larsen by Rikke Andreassen pp. 95-109.

Larsen, Nella. 2002. *Quicksand*. New York: Penguin Books. (second half of the novella)

Michael McEachrane, editor. *Afro-Nordic Landscapes: Equality and Race in Northern Europe*. New York: Routledge, 2014. Chapter 10. *Den Sorte Nella Larsen* and Denmark by Martyn Bone, pp. 208-263.

Possible guest speaker associate professor Martyn Bone of the University of Copenhagen's Center for Transnational American Studies in the Department of English, Germanic and Romance.

An evening in Tivoli – “Tivoli Gardens is a famous amusement park and pleasure garden in Copenhagen, Denmark. The park opened on 15 August 1843 and is the second-oldest operating amusement park in the world.” <http://www.tivoli.dk/>

Day 5

Green, Nancy L. "Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept." *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (2009): 307-28.

Kunz, Sarah. "Privileged Mobilities: Locating the Expatriate in Migration Scholarship." *Geography Compass* 10, no. 3 (2016): 89-101.

Film: *Oh Happy Day* (2004) by Helle Joof, a Danish film about “A Baptist preacher from Harlem gets stranded in a provincial Danish town, after a bus accident involving his touring gospel choir. Alone amidst suspicious Danes, he teaches the local church choir to sing gospel music and touches the life of one bored housewife in particular.” *The director Helle Joof will be a possible guest speaker for the course.

Friday Evenings the Statens Museum for Kunst (National Gallery of Denmark) has Friday night music, food, drinks and special events and exhibitions and you can also view the permanent collections including Danish art. <http://www.smk.dk/en/>

Weekend #1 - Saturday

A trip to the Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen home and museum and gardens in Rungsted Kyst, Denmark. African American pianist and professor Eugene Haynes befriended Blixen during the last decade of her life and frequently spent time here in a town just outside of Copenhagen: <http://blixen.dk/?lang=en>

The town of Klampenborg is on the same train line and we can see where African American jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald lived during the early 1960s facing the beach and visit the Deer Park/Dyrehaven (a nature reserve) and Bakken—the oldest amusement park in the world located in the park.

<http://www.visitcopenhagen.dk/da/copenhagen/dyrehaven-gdk414367>

<https://www.bakken.dk/english/195-bakken-the-worlds-oldest-amusement-park>

Weekend #2 – Sunday

A walking tour of Copenhagen called Another Copenhagen about the Danish West Indies and sites in Frederiksted and Christianshavn - <http://www.anothercopenhagen.dk/>

Week 2

Day 1

Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod, editors. *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

“Introduction” by Jacqueline McLeod, pp. xix- . And “European Dimensions of the African Diaspora: The Definition of Black Racial Identity,” by Allison Blakely, pp. 87-104.

Heike Raphael-Hernandez, editor. *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*. New York: Routledge, 2004. “Foreword: Migrancy, Culture, and a New Map of Europe” by Paul Gilroy, pp. xi-xxii. And “Introduction: Making the African American Experience Primary” by Heike Raphael-Hernandez, pp. 1-10.

A walking tour of Black Copenhagen (a map was created by the University of Wisconsin – Madison’s Cartography Lab). Includes seeing the changing of the guards at Amalienborg Palace where fictional character Helga Crane watched the ceremony, Thyra J. Edwards watched the New Year’s day ceremony in 1934 and where Booker T.

Washington met with the King of Denmark.
<http://www.kongernessamling.dk/en/amalienborg/>

Day 2

Dunbar, Ernest. *The Black Expatriates: A Study of American Negroes in Exile*. New York: Dutton, 1968. "Introduction," pp. 11-19.

Jazz in Exile (1982), a documentary about the exodus of African American jazz musicians to Europe.

A visit to the City Museum of Copenhagen (scheduled to re-open in spring 2018).
Purpose: "The Museum of Copenhagen wishes to kindle a desire for knowledge of the city, its past, present and future, by stimulating public curiosity and delight in discussing matters concerning the capital. The Museum aims hereby to present Copenhagen as a modern metropolis with a living, dynamic, relationship to its cultural heritage."
<http://cphmuseum.kk.dk/en/indhold/home>

Day 3

Michael McEachrane, editor. *Afro-Nordic Landscapes: Equality and Race in Northern Europe*. New York: Routledge, 2014. Foreward by Paul Gilroy, pp. xi-xvii.

Richard Wright's short story "Big Black Good Man" about an African American man in Copenhagen. In Wright, Richard. *Eight Men*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press: Distributed by Persea Books Inc., 1987.

Tour of the Arbejdermuseet (Worker's Museum) – several labor union organizers went to Denmark in the 1930s to learn about Denmark's social programs. Lunch in their unique restaurant, Café & Øl-halle "1892", "The restaurant in the Arbejdermuseet basement is Copenhagen's only protected cellar pub. The historic premises have been restored so that they stand as in 1892, and the restaurant is wearing its original name."

Day 4

Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish (eds). *A Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African-American Travel Writing*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998. "Introduction" pp. xiii-xvii.

Coverly, Roy D. "Race Question Not in Existence in Denmark." *The Chicago Defender* (National edition) (1921-1967): 4. Dec 21 1935. An expatriate wrote about his experiences in Denmark in the 1930s.

Roy DeCoverly, "Beauty, Beer and Beechwoods" *Challenge*, Volume 1, Issue 3, pp. 38-43, May 1935. A travel article in a Harlem Renaissance journal about an African American man's experiences in Copenhagen.

A fieldtrip to the quaint seaside village of Dragør, Denmark where African American concert pianist spent several summers. A short bus or bike ride from Copenhagen.
<http://www.visitdenmark.com/denmark/day-trip-dragor-gdk917384>

Day 5

Lidegaard, Bo. *A Short History of Denmark in the 20th Century*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Gyldendal, 2009. "Section II. Defending Democracy 1929-1945."

An evening the Royal Danish Theater, the Royal Ballet or the Royal Opera.
<https://kglteater.dk/en/>

Weekend #2 - Saturday

Fieldtrip to Helsingør/Elsinore, Denmark (about a 40-minute train ride from Copenhagen) and the International People's College attended by African Americans in the 1930s to study the Danish folke school and cooperative movements.
<http://www.ipc.dk/>

Tour of Kronborg Castle in Helsingør—the setting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*--
<http://kongeligeslotte.dk/da/slotte-og-haver/kronborg-slot.html>

There is also a popular 20-minute ferry ride to Helsingborg, Sweden for shopping and dining from Helsingør, Denmark:
<http://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/scandlines-helsingor-helsingborg-gdk435748>

Weekend #2 – Sunday

Dinner in the homes of Danish people through <https://www.meetthedanes.com/>

Week 3

Day 1

Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod, editors. *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. "Jazz and the Cold War: Black Culture as an Instrument of American Foreign Policy," by Lisa E. Davenport, pp. 282-318.

Lidegaard, Bo. *A Short History of Denmark in the 20th Century*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Gyldendal, 2009. "III. Denmark and the Cold War 1945-1989," sections 1, 2, and 3.

Evening - Attend a performance at the Jazzhaus Montmartre where the African American expatriate jazz musicians regularly performed in the 1960s and 1970s.

<http://www.jazzhusmontmartre.dk/>

Day 2

Malone, Leonard W. "The Negro in Europe. Part 1." *Pittsburgh Courier* (1955-1966), City Edition ed.: 2. Feb 10 1962. ProQuest. Web. 25 Mar. 2015. An article by an expatriate journalist in Denmark.

Malone, Leonard W. "The Negro in Europe. Part 2" *Pittsburgh Courier* (1955-1966), City Edition ed.: 1. Feb 17 1962. ProQuest. Web. 25 Mar. 2015. An article by an expatriate journalist in Denmark.

Malone, Leonard W. "The Negro Reports from Denmark." *The Crisis* August-September 1961, 451-454.

A tour of Rosenborg Castle - <http://www.kongernessamling.dk/en/rosenborg/> and the Natural History Museum across the street from the castle: "The Botanical Garden, the Botanical Museum & Library, the Geological Museum and the Zoological Museum have merged to become the Natural History Museum of Denmark. This museum is now the national museum for natural history in Denmark." <http://snm.ku.dk/english/>

Lunch at the local food market Torvehallerne - <https://torvehallernekbh.dk/>

Day 3

Weisbord, Robert G. "Scandinavia: A Racial Utopia?" *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 2, No. 4 (Jun., 1972), pp. 471-488.

"The impossible dream: A cat's view of 'Cope'" by Akbar DePriest and Arlynn Nellhaus, *New York Times* November 9, 1975. A jazz musician described the lives of the jazz musicians living in Copenhagen in the early 1970s.

A tour of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek - <http://www.glyptoteket.com/>

"The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek is an art museum in Copenhagen, Denmark. The collection is built around the personal collection of Carl Jacobsen, the son of the founder of the Carlsberg Breweries."

Day 4

Film: *Cool Cats* (2015) a Danish documentary about jazz musicians Ben Webster and Dexter Gordon's lives in Copenhagen in the 1960s. *Possible guest speaker—director Janus Køster-Rasmussen.

or *Dexter Gordon: More Than You Know* (1996) a documentary about Dexter Gordon written by African American expatriate Leonard Malone.

Tour of Christiania - <http://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/culture/alternative-christiania> One of Copenhagen's most popular and notorious tourist attraction "Christiania, also known as Freetown Christiania, is a self-proclaimed autonomous neighborhood of about 850 residents, covering 34 hectares in the borough of Christianshavn in the Danish capital Copenhagen."

Day 5 - The last class will include presentations about selected person and a reflection on students' experiences in Denmark.

Celebration lunch

Grading Scale:

A	93-100%
AB	86-92%
B	80-85%
BC	75-79%
C	68-74%
D	60-67%
F	Below 60%

Assignments:

- 40% Final essay 10-15 pages about an African American in Denmark answering specific questions about their history, why they went to Denmark and their experiences in Denmark **or** Students taking the course under Scandinavian Studies 277 will be required to complete a final essay of 10-15 pages, which demonstrated a understanding of Nordic culture, literature, and language. They will be expected to conduct independent research into these subjects and incorporate them into other class assignments. In particular, these students presentations should reflect a depths of knowledge that will aid other students understanding of Denmark and Nordic regions. They will, finally, be expected to meet outside of class with the instructor to discuss their independent research.
- 10% A short presentation about the selected person
- 25% A short, 3-4 page reflection essay about living in Copenhagen and traveling in Denmark. Students will reflect on their observations informed by their identity described by Beverly Tatum as the Complexity of Identity—race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, and ability (mental and physical).

25% Class participation – A passing grade requires that a student contribute nearly every day and that their comments demonstrate a comprehension of the course materials. The highest marks will go to students whose comments demonstrate insight and engagement with the course materials and whose comments stimulate discussion from the class as a whole. A student who goes more than half of the semester without contributing to discussion cannot receive a passing grade for participation.