

northwestern university
DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

Quarter/Year	Course Number	Day/Time	Instructor
Spring 2020	ART-HIST 390	F 1-3:50 PM	Copeland/Aranke
Course Title			Degree/Distro Fulfillment
Afro-Pessimist Aesthetics			390/395; 1800-present; non-Euro-American



Current debates in Black Studies have taken shape around interventions colloquially referred to as 'Afropessimism.' Often associated with theorists Frank B. Wilderson III and Jared Sexton, the term refers to a series of political orientations that help us understand the paradigmatic antiblack violence that structures everyday Black life. These theoretical interventions have entered the popular culture, as artists, critics, and cultural producers

across various contexts have turned to Afropessimism as both a framework for artistic production and a means of critical engagement with it. This class, co-taught with Sampada Aranke (School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Art History, Theory, and Criticism), will consider the possibilities of an 'Afropessimist Aesthetics' in the wake of such interventions. We will read works by scholars including but not limited to Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Frank B. Wilderson III, Fred Moten, Krista Thompson, and Adrienne Edwards in addition to relevant texts authored by the course instructors. Artists to be considered include Arthur Jafa, Wagenchi Mutu, Lorna Simpson, Renée Greene, Glenn Ligon, Melvin Edwards, David Hammons, and Barbara Chase-Riboud. Course meetings will alternate between NU and SAIC.

Required Textbooks	Assessments
All readings will be available online via Canvas.	Several papers and robust participation.