

## **Weekly Schedule –**

The Seminar will usually meet on three or four mornings each week, for five consecutive weeks. This schedule is designed to afford participants as much time as they can utilize for the personal research projects they will bring to Charlottesville, while also meeting sufficiently often as a group that they encounter enriching new materials and perspectives relevant to their research, and particularly as they engage one another across the boundaries of their respective regional fields and academic disciplines. No weekend or evening sessions are planned.

Week 1: “Organization: African Understandings” – After an opening session given over to personal introductions, organizational details, and general orientation to the seminar, the group will spend an afternoon becoming acquainted with the University of Virginia’s [library facilities](#) at their disposal. On the following morning, the director will move into substantive matters by introducing the non-Africanists to the methodological challenges of understanding primary evidence available to understand people in Africa who seldom wrote, with a sketch of historical dynamics there before the seventeenth century. In the afternoon, the group will return to the UVA Grounds for introductions to the [Robertson Media Center](#) and *Web- and other technology-based programs*. On Wednesday the seminar participants will take the lead in confronting one another’s respective regional fields, with a morning session devoted to considering how Africanists might “translate Africa” into terms relevant and accessible to their colleagues working on other parts of the Atlantic world, and vice versa – how Americanists might “translate world/Atlantic history into Africa”. On Thursday morning the director will extend the historical survey to “West Africa in the Atlantic era”, the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries – the years of growing global integration that are of primary concern to the seminar. Friday will be left unscheduled to allow participants to confer with the director regarding the individual research they plan to conduct during the weeks to follow and to explore the resources that they have found of potential interest to their own projects.

Week 2: “More African Meanings” – The second week of the seminar will open with a morning review of central Africa, the other major region of the continent where Africans were embarked for the Americas, but under distinctive circumstances and from differing backgrounds. That afternoon, and the following day, the director will consult further with individual participants about their emerging plans for the remainder of the seminar, considering the promising resources that they will be discovering at UVA and their initial personal impressions from the preceding week’s trans-Atlantic

encounters. On the next morning, Wednesday, the first of six guests, all leading specialists in selected aspects of the field, will visit the Seminar to consider “Remembering Slavery and the Slave Trade in Africa and in the Diaspora” (Prof. [Sandra Greene](#), Cornell University). She will share a hosted lunch with participants and remain available for individual consultations during the afternoon. Participants will have Thursday entirely free, except as they may wish to confer with the director or (at their own initiative) or other UVA faculty who may be available in Charlottesville at that high-summer season. On Friday, a second visiting scholar will consider “Art and History in Africa” (Prof. [Babatunde Lawal](#), Virginia Commonwealth University); a hosted lunch and individual conferences will follow, as with all the specialists visiting the seminar.

Week 3: “Embarkation, Exile” – The third week takes up the “Middle Passage”, beginning with the director’s broad introduction to the political and economic conjunctures in Europe, Africa, and the New World that facilitated the birth of the Atlantic economy and how growing European financial strength in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries drew more and more parts of Africa into selling captives. Participants will then consider a visiting scholar’s detailed and gripping visual presentation of the voyage of one French slaver in 1731-32 – from Vannes to Dahomey and Martinique – in the context of these broad historical patterns and as one possible model for integrating the several regional fields relevant to their projects (Prof. [Robert Harms](#)). On Tuesday morning we will introduce a massive [on-line database of some 35,000 individual slaving voyages](#) to explore the potential of this rich and detailed resource to provide context for the human experiences of enslavement and journeys across the Atlantic that the narrative sources reveal, in spite of its quantified anonymity. After another day left free for individual research, the seminar will take up the crucial individual human experiences of people brought in slavery to the New World on Thursday, with Professor [Stephanie Smallwood](#) of the University of Washington and author of a prize-winning [study on the experience of the Middle Passage](#). Friday is free for research and/or consultations with the director.

Week 4: “Africa in American Memory and Culture”: The seminar will then take up American meanings of “Africa”, “the Middle Passage”, and enslavement, by way of considering both memories and the current politics of knowledge that any scholar working on any of these subjects, from any perspective around the Atlantic, must take prominently into account. A visiting literary critic and veteran of the original “Roots” Institute (Prof. [Michelle Collins-Sibley](#)) will lead a morning’s discussion of the famous (and recently problematized) narrative of Equiano (a.k.a. “Gustavus Vassa”)

as literature. After lunch, she will reflect further on other – including contemporary – representations of Africa. After another day left open for research, the week’s meetings resume with the director beginning to sum up by considering the search for meanings in both Africa and the Americas beyond the modern, western focus on “slaving”, particularly at the level of collective representations not of “slavery” but rather of betrayal, isolation, and reconstituting communities in the Americas.

Week 5: “Research and Trans-Regional Synergies”: With the challenges of knowing Africans and taking into account contemporary American memories of Africa, slaving, and slavery thus introduced, participants will spend the seminar’s final week offering initial versions of their integrations of the materials that they have encountered in the seminar into their own research projects – in whatever format (draft manuscript, working prospectus, oral/visual presentation, media, and so on) they find most productive, at whatever stage their work will have reached. These will almost certainly be “works in progress”. A guest discussant, Professor [Ekema Agbaw](#), a veteran of the 2005 “Roots” seminar and critic in 20078, will join us for two days.

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The NEH expects participants to attend all scheduled sessions of the seminar and to engage fully with it during the five weeks that they will spend in Charlottesville. Although the syllabus will offer considerable amounts of reading, its proceedings will not depend on formal day-to-day considerations of these materials or on participant presentations other than those that they may wish to volunteer as we proceed. ROOTS is not a “class”. Rather, the responsibilities of seminar participants will center on developing the individual research projects that they will have described in their applications, contributing their own expertise informally to colleagues from other regional fields (and academic disciplines), and presenting interim reflections during the seminar’s concluding week on what they have learned.

At the end of the Seminar, participants will be asked to submit evaluations to the NEH in standard electronic format, in which they consider their experiences in the Seminar, review their work during the summer, and assess its value to their personal and professional development; these assessments become part of the project’s permanent grant file. Past “Roots” seminar participants have collaborated in various ways, including panels at international scholarly meetings and special issues of journals. The full value of the seminar experience will, of

course, emerge only over many years, in the course of its participants' ongoing research and teaching and their sharing of the pan-Atlantic perspectives they will have developed with colleagues and students across regional fields and across academic disciplines that the seminar is intended to facilitate.