A highly unusual exhibit will be opening at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris in March 2019, and is likely to draw much attention in France and beyond. The exhibit, “The Black Modèle from Géricault to Matisse,” aims to present the changing ways with which painters in France depicted and placed Black persons in fine art from the French revolution to the 1930s. My presentation will focus on the genesis of this unusual exhibit in a country where color blindness and the denial of race itself are an integral part of Republican discourse. I will discuss the reasons why an official and prestigious museum came to organize such a theme, while chronicling the many reactions to it against the larger backdrop of current race/difference discourse in France. Lastly, I will discuss how cultural and political actors in the African diaspora both within France and abroad will be key in making this exhibit and larger conversation accessible to populations and publics in ways that are highly innovative, but also affirming of identities and forms of expertise that are often marginalized.

Pap Ndiaye
Professor of History, Sciences Po

Pap Ndiaye is University Professor of History at Sciences Po, where he specializes in the history of Black minorities in the US and France. He has published several books, including Nylon and Bombs (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), Les Noirs américains (Gallimard 2009), Histoire de Chicago (Fayard 2013) and La Condition noire (Calmann-Lévy 2008 and Gallimard 2009), considered as the pioneer of « Black studies » in France. He is a member of the scientific committee of the « Modèle noir » exhibit at the Musée d’Orsay to open in March of 2019.

Monday, February 25th, 3:30-5:00 PM
Building 50-51A

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