

**STUDIES IN CRITICAL THEORY:
LITERATURE AND THEORY OF THE CARIBBEAN**

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ENGL 369—01A, fall 2010

time: odd days, 2:40—3:50 pm

place: Quad 365

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COURSE

Some of the world's most important literature and literary theory comes from the Caribbean, including, for instance, the foundational theorist for many anti-colonial struggles across the globe Aimé Césaire and the Nobel prize winning poet Derek Walcott. This course is designed to give you a broad introduction to the history of the Caribbean's politics, economics, literature, literary criticism, and philosophy. The syllabus will emphasize the second half of the twentieth century and the present, but we will traverse several centuries beginning with Christopher Columbus's accidental encounter with the Carib tribes of Native Americans after which the Caribbean is named. Considering that the "literature and theory of the Caribbean" includes many centuries, ethnicities, languages, and nationalities, we are obviously limited in what we are able to cover in one semester. Therefore, the goal is to provide you with a historical sensibility and with some critical tools for any future reading and writing you might decide to do on your own.

Although this is an advanced course in theory, I do not expect you to have taken the introduction to theory (English 243) or any English classes. I will teach as if all this material is new to everyone, no matter what your background or your level (because my guess is that it is new even for those of you who have taken English 243 or English 383.) Nevertheless, please be forewarned that because it is an advanced course the reading load will be significant and some of the material will be challenging. Rest assured, I am aware of the challenge, and so I am willing to help you as much as I can both inside and outside of class so long as you are willing to make an effort.

TEXTS IN BOOKSTORE

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*

Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

Elizabeth Nunez, *Prospero's Daughter*

Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds., *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*

Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*

Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Tiphonie Yanique, *How to Escape from a Leper Colony*

EVALUATION

Four Essays (15% each).....	60%
Team Presentation	20%
Participation, Worksheets, and Attendance	20%

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Unit One Essay (3-5 pages)

Between Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (first performed 1611 at the beginning of Britain's colonial efforts) and Césaire's *A Tempest* (published 1969 shortly after civil rights and independence movements), both of which imagine a colonized individual talking back to the colonizer, there is Francis Williams's poem *Carmen* (composed in 1759 at the peak of the slave trade) that is more ambiguous about its rhetorical position. Consider the historical context for these three works (i.e., the economic, social, and cultural *milieu*) as you compare and contrast the dialectical relationship between colonized and colonizer as they are presented in the three works.

Unit Two Essay (3-5 pages)

Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (published 1950) and Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* (published 2006) both imagine the overthrow of colonialism in the Caribbean, but one does so prospectively, the other retrospectively. Compare and contrast their approaches, and consider the historically specific ideological matrices within which these two authors are writing. Consider, as you do so, the issues and strategies left out of each, such as the issue of race's conceptual relationship to gender or the issue of freedom's relationship to violence.

Unit Three Essay (5-7 pages)

How would you narrate an intellectual history of the Caribbean? What if you were the editor of a book or the teacher of a class on Caribbean literature? Using the textual evidence available to you, write a clear and conceptually insightful introduction to the cultural changes in the twentieth century. Obviously, the amount of textual evidence covered in this unit is substantial so it would be impossible to discuss all of it. You must make decisions about what to include and what to exclude, what to emphasize and what to merely mention. All the while, your writing must strike a balance between clear, assertive generalizations and two different approaches to textual evidence—quantity of exemplary texts and quality of your close reading of a few selected texts.

Unit Four Essay (3-5 pages)

This final unit brings the class up to date and looks forward to the future of Caribbean writing. Glissant's theory is relatively recent (published in French in 1990 and in English in 1997) and responds to the past half century of European and postcolonial theory. Edwidge Danticat and Tiphonie Yanique are two of the Caribbean's young talents writing today. Finally, Stephanie Black's famous documentary film *Life and Debt* (2001) expands upon novelist Jamaica Kincaid's essay *A Small Place* (1988) to explain the postcolonial dilemma's of Caribbean countries today. Do these works seem different from the earlier works of theory and literature? Come up with your own thesis about the politics of literature and theory today.

Team Presentation (10-15 minutes)

Each team of two people will focus on one chapter of Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* and one short story by Yanique or Danticat. Your presentation should offer aggressive and provocative arguments. It should also work in two directions at the same time—one direction, using Glissant's theory to think about the story, and the other direction, using the story to think about Glissant's theory. How you and your partner prepare your presentation (e.g., lecture, powerpoint, staged dialogue, circus performance, etc.) is up to you, but you are allowed no more than 15 minutes. At the end of your presentation, you must assign the class two questions. All members of the rest of the class must attempt to answer your questions, but before they do, they are allowed five minutes to ask the presenters questions.

Participation, Worksheets, and Attendance

I expect you to come to class everyday having done the reading and ready to participate. I also expect you to have fun. A third of your attendance and participation grade is your attendance. You are allowed three absences. Unless you have a documented excuse, I will reduce your attendance and participation grade by 20% for each absence in excess of those three. The second third of your grade is completion of worksheets and any pop quizzes or other activities. I do not accept late worksheets or allow students to make up in-class activities. The last third of this grade is your participation in discussion. Most importantly, I expect you to be prepared to discuss the reading every day. Good participation is not just talking, but also includes listening respectfully to your classmates and engaging in genuine conversation with them.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK

Written work must follow standard MLA guidelines for college work.

Typed work must be double-spaced with one- inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman font.

POLICIES

Any act of plagiarism can result in an F for the course and can go on your permanent academic record. Please see The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University's official policy on plagiarism here: <http://www.csbsju.edu/catalog/2003-2005/Academic_Programs/Rights_and_Responsibilities/002.htm>.

All students have the right of non-discriminatory access to the programs at the colleges. If you have a disability and require special consideration, you must inform me as soon as possible.

I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time during the semester and will inform you of all changes in a timely manner.

CALENDAR

Aug. 25 (Wed) First Day of Class, Introductions

UNIT ONE: TEMPEST VS. TEMPEST

- Aug. 27 (Fri) Tiphanie Yanique, “Where Tourists Don’t Go”
Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, Introduction and ch. 1-2
- Aug. 31 (Tue) William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, preface and act 1
William Strachey, “Storms... Bermuda” in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p.110-115
From Columbus to Castro, ch. 3-7
- Sept. 2 (Thu) *Tempest*, acts 2-4
- Sept. 6 LABOR DAY
- Sept. 7 (Tue) *Tempest*, act 5
Montaigne, “Cannibals of Brazil” in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 107-109
“Watunna: an Orinoco Creation Cycle” (handout)
Peter Hulme, “Prospero and Caliban” in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 233-249
- Sept. 9 (Thu) *From Castro to Columbus*, ch. 8-13
McFarlane, “The Fleet of the Empire,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 49-50
Les Nubians, “Sugar Cane” (music and lyrics on-line)
- Sept. 13 (Mon) Vincent Carretta, “Who Was Francis Williams?” *EAL* 38:2 (2003)– Project Muse
Steven Thomas, “Doctoring Ideology,” *EAS* 4:1 (2006)– Project Muse
- Sept. 15 (Wed) Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, Introduction, Prologue, and acts 1-2
- Sept. 17 (Fri) *A Tempest*, act 3
George Lamming, “A Monster...Slave” in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 148-168
- Sept. 21 (Tue) **unit one essay due plus in-class activity**

UNIT TWO: OVERTHROWING COLONIALISM

- Sept. 23 (Thu) Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, introduction and interview
From Columbus to Castro, ch. 14-15
- Sept. 27 (Mon) **No class—Peace Studies Conference**, Gorecki 204A & B
Discourse on Colonialism, p. 31-53
Tropica, “Busha’s Song,” *Routledge Reader*, p.44
Albinia Hutton, “A Plea,” *Routledge Reader*, p.54-55
Worksheet

- Sept. 29 (Wed) *Discourse on Colonialism*, p. 54-78 (most importantly p. 54 and 74-78)
From Columbus to Castro, ch. 16-20
- Oct. 1 (Fri) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 1-102
 Albinia Hutton, "The Empire's Flag," *Routledge Reader*, p. 53-4
- Oct. 5 (Tue) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 103-222
- Oct. 7—Oct.10 FALL BREAK
- Oct. 11 (Mon) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 223-316
- Oct. 13 (Wed) Tropica, "Nana," *Routledge Reader*, p. 42-3
 Claude McKay, "The Apple-Woman's Complaint," *Routledge Reader*, p. 67-8
 Suniti Namjoshi, "Snapshots of Caliban" in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 342-3
- Oct. 15 (Fri) **unit two essay due plus in-class activity**

UNIT THREE: CONSTRUCTING A LITERARY HISTORY

- Oct. 19 (Tue) *Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, "General Introduction" p. 1-26
From Castro to Columbus, ch. 20-26
 José Martí, "Our America" (on-line)
- Oct. 21 (Thu) "1900-29 Introduction," *Routledge Reader*, p. 27-41
 "Non-Fiction," *Routledge Reader*, p. 91-106
 Tom Redcam, "O, Little Green Island..." *Routledge Reader*, p. 46
 Albinia Hutton, "Empire's Flag," *Routledge Reader*, p. 53-4
 Claude McCay, "My Native Land My Home" and "In Bondage" p. 64 and 69
- Oct. 25 (Mon) C. L. R. James, "Triumph," *Routledge Reader*, p. 84-90
 C. L. R. James, "Discovering Literature," *Routledge Reader*, p. 163-166
- Oct. 27 (Wed) "1930-49 Introduction," *Routledge Reader*, p. 107-127
 Albert Gomez, "Through a Maze of Color," *Routledge Reader*, p. 166-71
 J.E.C. McFarlane, "The Challenge of Our Time," *Routledge Reader*, p. 174-6
 Una Marson, "We Want Books..." *Routledge Reader*, p. 185-6
 Una Marson's poetry, from "In Jamaica" to "Cinema Eyes," p. 131-140
 Louise Bennett, "Beeny Bud," *Routledge Reader*, p. 149-50
- Oct. 29 (Fri) *From Columbus to Castro*, ch. 27
 "1950-65 Introduction," *Routledge Reader*, p. 206-221
 George Lamming, "The Occasion for Speaking," *Routledge Reader*, p. 253-260
 Karl Sealey, "My Father before Me," *Routledge Reader*, p. 243-248
 Martin Carter, poems, *Routledge Reader*, p. 222-227
 Jean Rhys, "The Day They Burnt the Books," *Routledge Reader*, p. 237-242

- Nov. 2 (Tue) *From Columbus to Castro*, ch. 28
 “1966-1979 Introduction,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 282-297
 Kamau Braithwaite, “Jazz... Novel,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 336-343
 Kamau Braithwaite, “Timehri,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 344-350
 Derek Walcott, “The Muse of History,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 354-358
 Anthony McNeill, “Residue,” *Routledge Reader*, p.300
- Nov. 4 (Thu) *From Columbus to Castro*, ch. 29
 “1980-1989 Introduction,” *Routledge Reader*, p.361-373
 David Dabydeen, “On Not Being Milton...,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 410-415
 Linton Kwesi Johnson, “Reggae fi Dada,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 375-378
 Harry Narain, “A Letter to the Prime Minister,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 407-409
- Nov. 8 (Mon) Rajkumari Singh, “I am a Coolie,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 351-353
 Christine Craig, “Elsa’s Version,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 301
 Ramabai Espinet, “The Invisible Woman...,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 425-430
 Grace Nichols, “One Continent/To Another,” *Routledge Reader*, p.388-389
 Jamaica Kincaid, from *Annie John*, *Routledge Reader*, p. 399-406
- Nov. 10 (Wed) “1990s Introduction,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 438-455
 Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond Miranda’s Meanings...,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 476-482
 Derek Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments...,” *Routledge Reader*, p.503-507
 Benjamin Zephaniah, “A Modern Slave Song,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 461
 Lawrence Scott, “Mercy,” *Routledge Reader*, p. 469-475
 Lemuel Johnson, “Calypso for Caliban,” in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 343-6
- Nov. 12 (Fri) catch-up day
- Nov. 16 (Tue) **unit three essay due plus in-class activity**

UNIT FOUR: THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE AND THEORY TODAY

- Nov. 18 (Thu) Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 1—44
 Edwidge Danticat, “Children of the Sea” from *Krik? Krak!*
 Team Presentation

Extra reading and viewing of Edwidge Danticat’s response to the Haitian earthquake this year:
 “A Little While,” *The New Yorker* (on-line)
 “Haiti Devastated by Largest Earthquake...,” *Democracy Now* (on-line broadcast)

- Nov. 22 (Mon) *Poetics of Relation*, p. 45—88
 Edwidge Danticat, “A Wall of Fire Rising” and “Epilogue” from *Krik? Krak!*
 Team Presentation

Nov. 24—28 THANKSGIVING

- Nov. 29 (Mon) *Poetics of Relation*, p. 89—130
 Tiphonie Yanique, “How to Escape from a Leper Colony”
 Team Presentation
 in-class, begin watching movie, *Life and Debt*

- Dec. 1 (Wed) *Poetics of Relation*, p. 131—182
Tiphonie Yanique, “The Bridge Stories” and “Street Man”
Team Presentation
continue watching in-class movie, *Life and Debt*
- Dec. 3 (Fri) *Poetics of Relation*, p. 183—210
Tiphonie Yanique, “The Saving Work” and “Canoe Sickness”
Team Presentation
continue watching in-class movie, *Life and Debt*
- Dec. 7 (Tue) catch-up day
- Dec. 5 (Thu) **unit four essay due plus in-class activity**

RECOMMENDED OUTSIDE READING

Novels:

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*
V. S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas*
Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock*
Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*
Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*
Maryse Condé, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*
Maryse Condé, *Segu*
Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John*
Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge*
Alejo Carpentier, *Explosion in a Cathedral*
Reinaldo Arenas, *Hallucinations*
Reinaldo Arenas, *Graveyard of the Angels*

Poetry:

Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Arrivants*
Derek Wolcott, *Collected Poems, 1948-1984*
Derek Wolcott, *Omeros*

Essays and Memoir:

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*
Caryl Phillips, *Atlantic Sound*
Reinaldo Arenas, *Before Night Falls*
M. Nourbese Philip, *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*
John Gilmore, *Faces of the Caribbean*

History:

C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*
Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*
Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica*

Theory:

Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*
C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*
Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays*
Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
Shalini Puri, *The Caribbean Postcolonial*