

Introduction to Caribbean Literature

African-American & African Studies: 21:014:302

English: 21:350:256

Monday & Wednesday / 10:00am-11:20am / Conklin 346

Instructor: Keishla Rivera-Lopez

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Office Hours: 11:30-12:30 MW @ Conklin 326

Course Description

The Hispanophone, Anglophone, and Francophone legacies historically connect the entire Caribbean through the projects of modernity and empire; and in the present former colonies have strong migration flows to their former colonial power. This need to migrate, feelings of non-belonging, experiences of oppression and discrimination, and cultural hybridity are realities Caribbean migrants share. The writing in Caribbean literature reflects how Caribeños created new cultures, languages, and identities through their survival and resistance. This course examines prolific and sometimes understudied writers and their contributions to Caribbean literature and diasporic literature. While this is an introductory course, students will also learn how intersectional oppressions affect people's daily livelihoods and how the social constructions of race and gender, for example, are necessary points of inquiry. In this course students will learn how colonialism and modernity still affect the Caribbean and how people in various islands of the Caribbean and its diaspora (in the U.S.A. and England, for example) negotiate empire, identity, language, culture, and notions of home. This course also examines how diaspora influences Caribbean livelihoods and experiences which is reflected in writing. These experiences shed light on what it means to be a product of diaspora, how the legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and modernity affect Caribbean nations and people, and how migration is natural—although sometimes forced. Lastly, students will develop an understanding as to how the Caribbean nations are similar in many ways but also unique and dissimilar.

Course Objectives

- Identify and discuss important literary figures and texts from the Caribbean and its diaspora.
- Understand, identify, and analyze different definitions of Caribbean identity and culture.
- Understand Caribbean history, culture, and identities and how they are represented in literary canons using academic texts, cultural texts, and other sources.
- Distinguish the strengths, weaknesses, and point of view in sources and texts of the course.
 - Identify the main argument and focus of an author
- Analyze, compare, contrast themes and arguments across readings in different historical contexts and genres.
 - Develop writing skills by blogging and writing papers.
 - Develop critical thinking and close reading skills.

NOTE: Syllabus subject to change. I will email you in regard to any syllabus changes.

Course Requirements

All students are required to adhere to the Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct and Policy on Academic Integrity. Students are not allowed to plagiarize or submit work that is not their own. More information about the university policy on academic

integrity: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/> Furthermore, cyber-bullying, disrespect, and any other negative behaviors will not be tolerated in our online classroom. More information on the Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct: <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/disciplinary-processes/university-code-of-student-conduct/#1495569259725-1f451194-472b>

Required Texts:

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*
Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*
Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa, *Daughters of the Stone*

*All other texts will be available on Blackboard or through the Rutgers University Library Resources.

Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend all classes. If you are going to be absent, you must email the instructor within 24 hours. Students missing class to observe a religious holiday must send an email to the instructor and will not be penalized for their absence. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade. Class participation helps generate class discussion and enable you to ask questions or comment on class or reading material that interests you.

Discussion Board Posts: Biweekly discussion board posts are due 10am (before class) in the discussion board section of blackboard under the designated week. A minimum of 2-3 paragraphs of analysis and/or reflection is required per post. Think of this as a blog where you are sharing (on a weekly basis) what you've read and what provoked your interests from the reading. You must connect or compare at least **two** texts/materials from the week. These posts are designed to help you think and write critically and analytically about the texts you are reading to prepare you for course essays. You will not get full credit if you do not adhere to the requirements.

Exams: There will be two exams in this course – your Midterm and your Final. The Midterm date is **October 23, 2019** during class time and the final date is **December 23, 2019** at 11:45am- 2:45pm. They will require you to answer short essay prompts, identify and define key terms from the course, and answer short questions. I will dedicate a day to midterm and final reviews in class where you can bring up and questions or concerns.

Oral Presentation: Each student will be required to create and present a project based on a book by a Caribbean writer. The presentation must be between 3-5 minutes long and is due **April 25, 2019** on Blackboard. The prompt for the presentation will be posted on Blackboard.

Extra Credit: There are events and lectures on campus and in the city of Newark (such as Express Newark and the Newark Public Library) that engage with the Caribbean in some fashion. I will share events on campus with you throughout the semester. You must write a 2-page response paper explaining how the information from the event connects with what you're learning in this course. You may find an event on your own, but I must approve it beforehand.

Note: All assignments lose half a letter grade for every day they are late.

Grade Breakdown:

Discussion Board Posts: 20%
Class Participation: 10%
Oral Presentation: 20%

Midterm Exam: 25%
Final Exam: 25%

Rutgers University Student Resources:

- Tutoring Services: <http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc>
- Writing Center: <https://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter>
- Counseling Services: <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu>
- Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students>

Students with Disabilities

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus' disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219, by phone at 973-353-5375 or by email at odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu.

9/4: Introductions + Syllabus Review

Rewriting History, Home, and Memory

9/9: Derek Walcott Nobel [Prize] Lecture- "The Antilles: Fragments of Memory"
<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1992/walcott/lecture/>

9/11: *A Small Place*, Pages 1-37

9/16: *A Small Place*, Pages 41-81
Discussion Board Post Due

9/18: DOS, pages 1-59

9/23: DOS, pages 63-126

9/25: DOS, pages 129-194

9/30: DOS, pages 197-241
Discussion Board Post Due

10/2: DOS, pages 245-280

Race, Language, Gender and Belonging

10/7: DOS, pages 281-317

10/9: "How to Date a Browngirl...", Junot Diaz
"The Youngest Doll," Rosario Ferré

10/14: Poems from Michelle Cliff's *Claiming an Identity They Taught me to Despise*
Excerpt from Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*
Discussion Board Post Due

10/16: "The Boy Without a Flag," Abraham Rodriguez Jr.
Poems from Gustavo Perez Firmat's *Bilingual Blues*

10/21: Midterm Review

10/23: Midterm

Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Identity

10/28: "Discourse on Colonialism," Aimé Césaire
Discussion Board Post Due

10/30: *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pages 1-27 (Intro & Ch 1)

11/4: *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pages 61-108 (Ch 4 & 5)

11/6: *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pages 163-182 (Ch 7 & 8)

Diaspora, Diasporic Identity, Migration, Exile

11/11 & 11/13: Classes Cancelled – Assignment on Blackboard
Discussion Board Post Due

11/18: "Monstro," Junot Diaz

11/20: Nuyorican Poetry Selections: "Puerto Rican Obituary," Pedro Pietri, "AmeRican," "My Graduation Speech," Tato Laviera etc.
Poems from *Songs of the Simple Truth: The Complete Poems of Julia de Burgos*

11/25: "They Came in Ships," Mahadai Das
"A Far Cry from Africa," Derek Walcott
Excerpt from V.S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street*

11/27: Campus Schedule Change- No Class / Friday Classes
Discussion Board Post Due

12/2: Chiqui Vicioso Poems
Excerpt from Derek Walcott's *What the Twilight Says*

Review + Wrap Up

12/4: Presentations

12/9: Presentations

12/11: Final Review

Final Exam Date: December 23, 2019 @ 11:45am- 2:45pm