REVISITING CARIBBEAN CLASSICS

Instructor: Professor Belinda Edmondson  
Class time: W 5:30 pm – 8:10 pm  
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1 pm – 2 pm or by appointment  
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Course Description:

This course will explore some of the major themes that have animated influential colonial-era and post-independence Anglophone Caribbean fiction, focusing particularly on gendered representations of national identity. Texts will range from early twentieth-century literature to post-colonial representations of the colonial period. We will examine influential early genres such as the so-called “peasant” and “yard” novels of the early 20th century. Our particular concern will be to re-historicize early texts by placing them in their original context; to that end we will examine definitive critical texts that reveal how enduring assumptions about Caribbean literature were initially produced.

We will utilize a range of sources: histories, newspapers, novels, poetry, essays and music. Topics for discussion will include the vernacular tradition as well as other aesthetic models, racial “ventriloquism”, black power movements, the role of the intellectual, and feminist critiques of nationalism.

Course Requirements

There are five requirements for the course:

(1) All students will be expected to present an original short analysis, anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes in length, on one of the course readings. The presentation must be typed and ready to hand in on the date of presentation. These are not graded, but are considered when assessing a final grade for the course. A presentation that is ranked “superior” may push your final grade higher, but otherwise it will not negatively affect your grade.

(2) All students must prepare a summary of one of the assigned critical essays and share it with classmates via email or Blackboard by the assigned date. You may combine your summary with your presentation and key term, if you wish.

(2) All students must prepare a definition of one key term for class to share with classmates. A list of important key terms is listed below.

(3) All students must complete a final paper, around 12-15 pages (or 3000-6750 words) in length, that addresses several of the readings. You may not discuss a primary text not on the class list unless you have first obtained my permission. The paper topic will be of your choosing, and it is expected that you will utilize several secondary sources for your analysis.
(4) All students must provide a one-page abstract summarizing the subject and argument of their final paper two weeks before the due date for their final paper; and

(5) All students must provide a rough draft or outline, at least two pages in length, on their final paper, one week before the final paper is due.

Failure to hand in a final paper results in automatic failure of the course. Failure to complete a presentation or a summary results in a full letter reduction of your final grade (from an A to a B, for example). Failure to complete either the abstract or the rough draft results in a half-grade reduction of your final grade (from an A to a B+, for example). Failure to complete both results in a full-letter grade reduction. Please let me know in advance if you have an emergency or other extenuating circumstances where you require an extension to complete your work.

All books are available at New Jersey Bookstore on University Avenue, across from Conklin Hall. All other readings will either be on Blackboard or linked directly to the syllabus below.

**Key Terms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intertextuality</th>
<th>Racial ventriloquism</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hybridity aesthetics</td>
<td>Primitivism</td>
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<td>Yard Novel</td>
<td>Mimicry</td>
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<td>Cultural Schizophrenia</td>
<td>Creole</td>
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<td>Man-of-Words tradition</td>
<td>Dialectical tradition</td>
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**Novels, Plays, Films:** *Banana Bottom*, Claude McKay; *Minty Alley*, C.L.R. James; *Annie John*, Jamaica Kincaid; *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys; *Miguel Street*, V.S. Naipaul; *The Dragon Can’t Dance*, Earl Lovelace.


2/4: Talk by Rosamond King: “The Most Homophobic Place on Earth? Caribbean Myths and Realities” (class meets in Dana Room, 4th Floor Library). Read “Bullers and Battymen”, “If I Could Write This in Fire, I Would Write This in Fire”.


2/25: Minty Alley. “Representing the Folk”

3/4: Miguel Street. “Jasmine”

3/11: Wide Sargasso Sea

3/18: SPRING BREAK

3/25: Wide Sargasso Sea cont’d, “Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise”.

4/1: The Dragon Can’t Dance. “Power?”


4/15: Annie John


4/22: catch-up. outline due. Meet with Research Librarian Natalie Borisovets 5:30-6 pm in library.

4/29: 1 or 2 page draft due. paper workshop

5/6: PAPERS DUE. UPLOAD TO SAFEASSIGN BY 5:30 PM.