

Bates College (Fall 2007)

Anthropology / African American Studies / American Cultural Studies

INDS 251

History, Agency, and Representation in the Making of the Caribbean

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.

The modern Caribbean was the first colonial outpost of imperial Europe. Caribbean plantation societies—developed with the expertise and labor of coerced African and Asian workers—helped lay the foundation for European and North American prosperity. Large numbers of Caribbean immigrants and travelers have lived, worked, and visited in Europe and North America from colonial times to the present and have significantly influenced modes of thought, politics, music, food, and other aspects of metropolitan life. For these and other reasons, when we study the Caribbean we also undertake a journey into *learning about ourselves* in the so-called Western, developed world. One abiding and puzzling paradox, however, is that the Caribbean's contributions to and integral relationship with the modern West are often ignored or displaced in the imagination of North Americans and Europeans.

Central Goals and Objectives of the Course

1. To expose students through a variety of media and academic disciplines (film, fiction, music, life-history, ethnography, geography etc.) to the rich diversity of Caribbean cultures and to introduce them to the geography of the region, the main currents of modern Caribbean history, and some of the analytical frameworks that have been used to understand the region's social and cultural life.
2. To explore, in a preliminary way, the role the Caribbean played in the development of modern capitalism, as well as the region's wider and continuing impact on culture and consciousness in the United States and Europe.
3. To provide a framework within which to better understand *on its own terms*, the diversity, and the cultural and social distinctiveness of this region of transplanted peoples. How have Caribbean peoples responded to the formative and on-going processes of colonization and imperialism? The concept of *resistance* serves as a shorthand way of anchoring much of this discussion.
4. To reflect on just why our own interdependence on the Caribbean is so often ignored. For this reason, we will return again and again in the course to questions of *representation* (i.e. symbolic representation) and the role of representation in shaping how we think. How have our ideas about the Caribbean been formed? How do we *imagine* this region and its peoples; how does the Caribbean feature in our everyday lives

and consciousness? What images and rhetorical devices are used to create the ideas that circulate about the Caribbean in our own society? What are the consequences of these representations, conceptions, and misconceptions?

Our aim, then, is to address these larger questions: *How has the Caribbean been conceived of by North Americans and Europeans, and how have Caribbean peoples thought about themselves?*

Note that you may be expected to attend lectures and other events on campus as part of your work for this course.

Assignments and Grades

- Regular attendance and class participation (20%). Occasional quizzes and a map assignment (due Sept. 13) will be included in your class participation grade. You are also expected to take notes on readings, films, and class lectures/discussions.
- Team research and presentation (20%) either on Caribbean slavery (based on a close reading of an important monograph on the subject), or a presentation on some aspect of New England or North American society whose development was based on profits from trading with Caribbean slave plantations (presentations October 16).
- Two 3 – 5 page analytical papers based on assigned readings and films (marked by an asterisk* in the schedule below). One of these two papers must be on either Creole Economics or The Convict and the Colonel. Papers are generally due at 4:00 p.m. on the day on which the readings or films are discussed in class (30%).
- Final exam (30%).

Note that late papers will not be accepted without a Dean's excuse.

Books Available for Purchase

Katherine Browne, Creole Economics: Caribbean Cunning Under the French Flag.

Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place.

Richard Price, The Convict and the Colonel.

Bonham Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492 – 1992.

Mimi Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean.

Other required readings are posted on Lyceum and can be downloaded as you need them.

It is important that you read read these assigned texts carefully (in some cases it may be necessary to do so more than once) take notes, and write down the questions they generate for you. You should read ahead by starting on the longer of the assigned books from early in the semester so as to be able to complete and have a chance to go over them by the time they come up on the syllabus.

Additional Sources: For your general interest, I encourage you to seek out additional print sources, and to make use of internet links to relevant e-sites, including Caribbean newspapers, radio stations, and the like.

Schedule of Classes

I Conceptualizing, Framing, Representing, & Consuming the “Caribbean”

- Sept. 6 Introduction
- Sept. 11 Bonham Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992, chapters.1 & 2
Film screening: Life and Debt (Stephanie Black)*
- Sept. 13 Derek Walcott, The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory*
Map assignment due
- Sept. 18 Letter of Columbus to Various Persons...,” from The Four Voyages
(available on Lyceum)
Film screening: How Stella Got Her Groove Back *
- Sept. 20 Mimi Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean, (Introduction & chapter 1: pp 1-35)*
- Sept. 25 Mimi Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean, (chapter 2: pp 36 - 70)*
- Sept. 27 Syllabus flex time

II Work and Culture: Slavery, Plantations, Peasantries

- Oct. 2 Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place*
- Oct. 4 Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World, chapter 3
G.B. Hagelberg, “Sugar in the Caribbean: Turning Sunshine into Money”
(on Lyceum)
- Oct. 9 Film Screening: Sugar Cane Alley (Euzhan Palcy)*
- Oct. 11 Sidney Mintz, “From Plantations to Peasantries in the Caribbean,” from Caribbean Contours (Lyceum)*
Juan Flores, “Bumbun and the Beginnings of Plena Music,” from Flores, Divided Borders (Lyceum)
- Oct. 16 Student team presentations on Caribbean plantation slavery and its impact on North America

Fall Recess**III Contestations and Forms of Resistance****Contestations around Making a Living**

Oct. 23 Katherine Browne, Creole Economics, (chapters 1, 2, & 3: pp 3-80) entire book*

Oct. 25 Browne, Creole Economics, (chapters 4 & 5: pp 82-150)

The Cultural Politics of Artistic Representation

Oct. 30 Richard Price, The Convict and the Colonel, (Prologue and Parts I & II: pp viii-119) entire book*

Nov. 1 Richard Price, The Convict and the Colonel, (Part III: pp 120-219)

Nov. 6 Nadi Edwards, "States of Emergency: Reggae Representations of the Jamaican Nation State" (on Lyceum)*
Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World chapters 4, 5, & 6.
Film screening: The Harder They Come. (Perry Henzell & Trevor Rhone)*

The Cultural Politics of "Race," and Ethnicity

Nov. 8 Don Robotham, "The Development of a Black Ethnicity in Jamaica" (on Lyceum)*

Nov. 13 V.S. Naipaul, "The Baker's Story" (on Lyceum)
Victor Chang, "Light in the Shop" (on Lyceum)*

The Cultural Politics of Language

Nov. 15 Velma Pollard, "Sound and Power: The Language of the Rastafari" (Lyceum)*

The Cultural Politics of Moving Bodies

Nov. 27 Edwidge Danticat, "Children of the Sea," from Krik? Krak! (on Lyceum)*
Lorna Goodison, "Bella Makes Life," from Baby Mother and the King of Swords (on Lyceum)
Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World, chapter 7.
Film screening: H2 Worker (Stephanie Black)*

Nov. 29 Syllabus flex time

Dec. 4 Wrap-up

Final exams due Dec 6 @ 4:00 p.m.