

Bates College
Imagining the Caribbean
INDS 251 (Fall 2014)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00 – 4:00, or by appointment

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

When we study the Caribbean we also undertake a journey into *learning about ourselves*. The modern Caribbean was the first colonial outpost of imperial Europe. Moreover, the plantation societies that were developed in the region with the labor and expertise of coerced African and Asian workers laid 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 significantly influenced modes of thought, politics, music, food, and other aspects of metropolitan life. Yet despite five centuries of interdependence with and integration into the Western world, the Caribbean continues to be economically marginalized and viewed as “Other” by North Americans and Europeans. This course provides an introduction to the Caribbean’s central role in the growth of the modern world, and it examines the material and symbolic processes through which the region has been marginalized and its formative role obscured. The course discusses Caribbean plantation slavery and its impact on the development of social life as well as the multifaceted response of the enslaved and their descendants in resisting enslavement and dehumanization and devising modes of thought and cultural expression to give voice to their humanity. We ask, on one hand, *how has the Caribbean been conceived of by North Americans and Europeans* and, on the other; *how have Caribbean peoples thought about themselves?*

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- demonstrate familiarity with the rich cultural and environmental diversity of the Caribbean;
- explain the concepts of “discourse” and “symbolic representation” and apply them to an analysis of mainstream images and portrayals of the Caribbean and its peoples;
- describe the role the Caribbean played in the development of modern capitalism and the ways in which colonialism restricted the region’s own economic growth and prosperity;
- explain the effects of the plantation system and the growth of an independent land-owning peasantry after emancipation on the development of society and culture in the region;
- illustrate the nature and complexity of social relations under slavery;
- discuss with examples the myriad ways in which Caribbean peoples responded to and resisted enslavement and dehumanization;
- explain the value of concepts of “creolization” and “transculturation” in accounting for processes of cultural formation in the Caribbean;

- demonstrate the roots and sociocultural expressions of the region's outward-looking, border-transcending orientation;
- explain and critically assess arguments for reparations for slavery.

Books Ordered

Hilary Beckles, Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide

Lorna Goodison, From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island

Jennie Smith, When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti

Other required readings are posted on Lyceum to be downloaded as 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 websites, including: Google maps, Caribbean newspapers, blogs, radio stations, and the like.

Film screenings: Since most of the films for the class are longer than the 80 minutes of available class time, you are required to watch them outside of class. In the first week we will schedule viewing times that are most convenient for everyone and I will ask one or two students to be responsible for checking out and returning the films for each screening. If for some reason you cannot make it to one of the scheduled screenings, you are responsible for watching the film before the next class meeting.

Preparing for and Structure of Class Meetings: Even though I will lecture at times, I expect you to engage with and reflect independently on the assigned texts and to come prepared to raise questions and to discuss them in class. Bring hard copies of the readings to class with you on the day they are due to be discussed. It is important that you 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. For most of the readings and films, I've posted on Lyceum or will send by email questions to help you focus on central issues in the text. Be sure to print off these questions along with the readings, think about them as you read, and bring them with you to class. I urge you to start on the book-length texts early so as to be able to complete them in time.

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

Assignments and Grades:

Written paper assignments must be well structured and carefully checked and edited before being turned in. They should have a clear introductory thesis statement, a systematically developed discussion or argument, and a conclusion. All written assignments should be typed double-spaced (1 inch margins, 12-point font, stapled & with page numbers inserted) and handed in in hard-copy by the due date. If the paper is based on a question that I have assigned, insert the

question as the heading to the paper. Otherwise, you should give it a clear, descriptive title that engages the reader and highlights the paper's central argument.

Grades will be based on:

- Regular attendance and class participation (20%). Class presentations, map assignment, occasional quizzes and writing prompts will be included in your class participation grade. You are also expected to take notes on readings, films, and class lectures/discussions.
- A 5-page analytical paper (20%) on one of the following films:
Life and Debt
How Stella Got Her Groove Back
Sugar Cane Alley
The Harder They Come
H2 Worker.
- A 5-page analytical paper (20%) on one of the following books:
Smith: *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti*
Beckles: *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide*
Goodison: *From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island*
- Mid-term exam (20%)
- Final exam (20%)

Academic Integrity (adopted from Bates College academic integrity policy guidelines)

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning, scholarship, and indeed all dimensions of academic life. At its simplest, this means that the work you submit must be your own unless collaboration is specifically allowed, that you use only those resources allowed; that you express yourself in your own words unless you are quoting, and that you properly acknowledge and cite the ideas, information, and other work that you used or that contributed to your understanding.

Your academic work is governed by *The Bates College Statement on Academic Integrity*, found here at:

<http://www.bates.edu/entering/policy/judicial-affairs/code-of-student-conduct/academic-misconduct/>, and by any additional standards I set in this syllabus or in individual assignments.

The *Statement on Academic Integrity* provides a fuller discussion of academic integrity and definitions of plagiarism, misuse of sources, and cheating. You are responsible for reading the *Statement* carefully and abiding by its terms.

Violations of academic integrity are serious and can result in severe consequences at both the course and college levels. Depending on the circumstances of the violation, I will assign a failing grade for the assignment and/or the course, require work to be redone, and/or impose other consequences; in addition, I will refer the matter to the Dean of Students for possible institutional action. Procedures for suspected violations are explained here: <http://www.bates.edu/entering/policy/judicial-affairs/>.

If you have any questions or concerns about what is expected or permissible in this course or about academic integrity in general, please contact me.

Schedule of Classes

Part I:

The Caribbean and the Making of the Modern ‘West’: Conceptualizing, Representing, & Consuming the “Caribbean”

Key Questions: What is the “Caribbean?” In what sense can this geographically and culturally diverse region be treated as a unified whole? How do North Americans think about the Caribbean? 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?

9/3 Introduction

9/5 Derek Walcott, Fragments of Epic Memory (Lyceum)

Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place pp 3 – 19 (Lyceum)

Film screening: Life and Debt

9/10 Sidney Mintz, “The Caribbean Region”
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024204>

9/12 Mimi Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean, Introduction & chapter 1: pp 1-35 (Lyceum)

“Letter of Columbus to Various Persons...” from The Four Voyages (Lyceum)

Film screening: How Stella Got Her Groove Back

9/17 Krista Thompson, An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque. Introduction & Chapter 1: pp 1 – 91 (Lyceum)

9/19 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event” (Lyceum)

Part II: Slavery, Plantations, Peasantries

Key Questions: How can we discover the texture of human relationships under the inhuman system of plantation slavery? What were social relations like, for example, between the enslaved and the men and women who owned them; or between slaves themselves? How was the slave plantation organized as a system of production? What were its social and its economic impacts both in the Caribbean and in other regions of the Atlantic world economy? Given the totalitarian control of slave masters and colonial officials, how did African slaves resist that control? How did they exercise initiative and assert their self-worth? How did they manage to build and sustain relationships and community? How did they secure their freedom? What is the social significance of Caribbean small farming peasantries? How did these former slaves further develop and strengthen their communities after emancipation?

9/24 Trevor Burnard, “Adaptation, Accommodation, and Resistance: Thistlewood’s Slave Women and Their Responses to Enslavement,” chapter 7, pp 209 – 240 in, Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World (Lyceum)

9/26 Eric Williams, “Capitalism and Slavery” (Lyceum)
Hilary Beckles, Britain’s Black Debt, chapters 7 & 8, pp 82 – 120
“Slavery, the Slave Trade and Brown University,” pp 7 – 31 in Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice

Film Screening: Sugar Cane Alley

10/1 Dale Tomich, Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World Economy, 1830-1848, chapter 7: pp 214-248 (Lyceum)

The Agency and Thought of Rural Caribbean Peoples

10/3 Sidney Mintz, “From Plantations to Peasantries in the Caribbean,” pp 127 – 141 & 150 – 152 (Lyceum)

Jennie Smith, When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti, chapters 1 - 3, pp 1 - 68

10/8 Jennie Smith, When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti, chapters 4 - 6, pp 69 - 140

10/10 Jennie Smith, When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti, chapters 7 & 8, pp 141 - 149

Mid-term exam due Tuesday, October 15th at 12:00 noon

October Recess

(Remember to start reading the books by Goodison and Beckles)

Part III: Caribbean Self-Fashioning and the Histories of Our Present

Music & Popular Culture: Nationally and Transnationally

Film screening: The Harder They Come

10/22 Nadi Edwards, “States of Emergency: Reggae Representations of the Jamaican Nation State” (Lyceum)

Sonjah Stanley-Niaah, “Kingston’s Dancehall: A Story of Space and Celebration” (Lyceum)

10/24 Marvin Sterling, “Music and Orality: Authenticity in Japanese Sound System Culture,” chapter 2, pp 61 – 99 in, Babylon East: Performing Dancehall, Roots Reggae, and Rastafari in Japan (Lyceum)

Cultural Roots & Cultural Transformations

10/29 Fernando Ortiz, “‘Transculturation’ and Cuba” (Lyceum)

Sidney Mintz & Richard Price, The Birth of African-American Culture, pp 1 – 41 (Lyceum)

10/31 Lorna Goodison, From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island, Preface & Part 1: pp 1 - 110

11/5 Goodison, From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island, Part 2: pp 111-160

11/7 Goodison, From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island, Part 3: pp 161 - 285

Reckoning (with) Atrocities Past

11/12 Hilary Beckles, Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide, Introduction & chapters 1 – 6, pp 1 - 81

11/14 Hilary Beckles, Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide, chapters 9 – 11, pp 121 - 159

11/19 Hilary Beckles, Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide, chapters 12 – 15, pp 163 - 229

Borders & Borderlands of the Caribbean Imagination

11/21 Victor Chang, “Light in the Shop”(Lyceum)

V.S. Naipaul, “The Baker’s Story” (Lyceum)

Thanksgiving Recess

Film screening: H2 Worker

12/3 Edwidge Danticat, “Children of the Sea,” from Krik? Krak! (Lyceum)

Alissa Trotz, “Bustling across the Canada-US Border: Gender and the Remapping of the Caribbean across Place”

12/5 Wrap-up

Final Exam