

Bates College

Imagining the Caribbean INDS 251 (Winter 2012)

Charles V. Carnegie

e-mail ccarnegi / phone: 6079

157 Pettengill Hall

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:40 – 4:30 & Fridays, 4:00 – 5:00 or by appointment

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?*

Film screenings: Since several of the films for the class are longer than the 80 minutes of class time we have available, you are required to watch them outside of class. I have scheduled viewing times on Sunday afternoons and will ask one or two students to be responsible for checking out and returning the film each time. If for some reason you cannot make it to one of the scheduled screening times, you are responsible for watching the film before the class meets on Monday.

Discussion: 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 discuss them in class.

Note that you may also be expected to attend 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 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. 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 on one of the following films: *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *Sugar Cane Alley*, *The Harder They Come*, or *H2 Worker*.
- A 5-page analytical paper on The Convict and the Colonel or From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island.
- Mid-term exam.
- Final exam.

Books Ordered

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

Richard Price, The Convict and the Colonel.

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

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

Bring readings to class with you. 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. You should read ahead by starting on the longer of the assigned books early 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 internet sites, including: Google maps, Caribbean newspapers, radio stations, and the like.

Schedule of Classes

I The Caribbean and the Making of the Modern ‘West’:

Conceptualizing, Representing, & Consuming the “Caribbean”

Jan 9 Introduction

Jan 11 Derek Walcott, Fragments of Epic Memory (Lyceum)

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

Sunday, Jan 15 Film screening: Life and Debt

Jan 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Students are required to attend either the Keynote talk by Professor Julian Agyeman, or the film screening and discussion of *Blood in the Mobile*. For one of these presentations I would like you to prepare a one-page, two-paragraph, response paper that: (i) summarizes the talk or film and, (ii) reflects on or discusses the interconnectedness (whether historical or in the present day) between our actions in the United States and environmental problems elsewhere and our customary unawareness of these interconnections.

Jan 18 Bonham Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992.
Chapters.1 & 2

Map assignment due 5:00 p.m. Friday, Jan 20th

Sunday, Jan 22 Film screening: How Stella Got Her Groove Back

Jan 23 Krista Thompson, An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque. Introduction & Chapter 1: pp 1 – 91 (Lyceum)

Jan 25 Mimi Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean, Introduction & chapter 1: pp 1-35 (Lyceum)

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

Capitalism and Slavery

Jan 30 Eric Williams, “Capitalism and Slavery” (Lyceum)

CLR James, “French Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery” (Lyceum)

II Slavery, Plantations, Peasantries: Work, ‘Culture’, & the Question of ‘Resistance’

Feb 1 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)

Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World. Chapter 3

Sunday, Feb 5 Film Screening: Sugar Cane Alley

Feb 6 Dale Tomich, Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World Economy, 1830-1848, chapter 7: pp 214-248 (Lyceum)

Feb 8 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event” (Lyceum)

Feb 13 Sidney Mintz, “From Plantations to Peasantries in the Caribbean,” pp 127 – 141 & 150 – 152 (Lyceum)

Feb 15 Mid-term exam due in class

Winter Recess

(The Convict and the Colonel is a challenging book so be sure to set aside plenty of time over the break to read it.)

III Caribbean Self-Fashioning

Concealed Histories & Artistic Parody

Feb 27 Richard Price, The Convict and the Colonel, pp ix - 117

Feb 29 Price, The Convict and the Colonel, pp 170 - 219

Agency:

Music & the ‘Popular’ Nationally and Transnationally

Sunday, March 4 Film screening: The Harder They Come

Mar 5 Nadi Edwards, “States of Emergency: Reggae Representations of the Jamaican Nation State” (Lyceum)

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

Mar 7 Guest Lecture by Professor Marvin Sterling, University of Indiana

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)

Thursday, Mar 8 Public Lecture by Professor Marvin Sterling (attendance required)

Cultural Roots & Cultural Transformations

Mar 12 Fernando Ortiz, “‘Transculturation’ and Cuba” (Lyceum)

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

Mar 14 Lorna Goodison, From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island, Preface & Part I: pp 1 - 110

Mar 19 Goodison, From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island, Part 2: pp 111 - 160

(Richardson, The Caribbean in the Wider World. Chapters 4, 5, & 6)

Mar 21 Goodison, From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island, Part 3: pp 161 - 285

Making and Reproducing Racial and Ethnic Selves

Sunday, Mar 25 Film screening: Mirrors of the Heart

Mar 26 Don Robotham, “The Development of a Black Ethnicity in Jamaica” (Lyceum)

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

Mar 28 Rahul Bhattacharya, The Sly Company of People Who Care, pp 97 – 166 (Lyceum)

Charles Carnegie, “South-South Liming” (Lyceum)

Spatial Imaginaries, Borders & Moving Bodies

Sunday, April 1 Film screening: H2 Worker

Apr 2 Edwidge Danticat, “Children of the Sea,” from Krik? Krak! (Lyceum)

Junot Diaz, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao (selections to be assigned)

Apr 4 Wrap-up

Final Exam