

ENGL 5321/CRN 26989: Literature of the Americas
"Queering the Imperial Archive:
Caribbean Literature on Conquest, Capitalism, and Climate Change in the Americas"
Dr. Marion Christina Rohrleitner
T 6-8.50pm
HUD 213

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Course description:

In 1987, the Cuban American poet and critic Gustavo Pérez Firmat asked, "Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?" In a series of essays and lectures, he emphatically responded in the affirmative, suggesting literature of the Americas was "multilingual, but unicultural" as a result of the diverse region's shared experience with European conquest, genocide, colonization, forced conversion, ruthless exploitation of human and natural resources, and the establishment of racialized hierarchies at the foundation of colonial societies. In 2004, then ASA President Shelley Fisher Fishkin asserted a "transnational turn" in American Studies, highlighting the outstanding importance of a comparative, hemispheric approach to literatures produced in the Americas. Both scholars emphasized the need to turn away from studying only a unidirectional European influence on literature of the Americas and instead turn to transculturation (i.e. the mutual influencing of cultures) and to inter- and intra-American exchanges. Caribbean literature, geographically and conceptually at the crossroads of European and American histories, thus offers an exceptionally rich ground for exploring the still emerging field of hemispheric American Studies.

In this graduate level course we will discuss a wide range of Caribbean literatures, both in the English original and in translation, from postcolonial and queer perspectives to explore how Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic writers confront and critically respond to Eurocentric and/or US-centric accounts of historical events and current socio-economic, racial and gendered relationships between the Caribbean, its former colonizers in Europe, and the United States. We will pay particular attention to the use of experimental forms as an effort to reclaim narrative control over histories of conquest and colonization as well as over current, neoliberal forms of exploitation and issues surrounding climate change from a distinctly Caribbean perspective. Over the course of the semester, we will discuss key concepts, theoretical approaches, and scholarship in Caribbean literatures, postcolonial theory, queer theory, and hemispheric studies, and your final research project will make original contributions to these important fields within American Studies.

We will ask compelling questions about Caribbean literature from hemispheric and queer perspectives:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of literature as a critique of colonialism and neocolonialism in the region?
- Which thematic and formal innovations do Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic writers contribute to literature of the Americas?
- Why do some historical events take center stage in the historical imaginary of the Americas, and why are other marginalized, distorted, silenced, and forgotten?
- How is Caribbean historical fiction connected to the "neo-slave narrative" in the United States?
- What is the role of language, language choice, and translation in Caribbean literature?

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- Which historical events and figures are reimagined in Caribbean literature, and how do these creative reconfigurations contribute to writing a history from “below”?
- Which literary forms, and which forms of delivery, are most effective in conveying the Caribbean experience?
- What are the contributions of Caribbean literature to postcolonial theory? What, in turn, can postcolonial theory do to illuminate Caribbean literature?
- How do contemporary Caribbean writers (and artists) confront neocolonialism and heteronormativity?

Required texts (available online and at some local bookstores)

Julia Alvarez. *In the Name of Salomé*. Plume, 2001, ISBN-10: 0452282438

Robert Antoni. *As Flies to Whatless Boys*. Akashic Books, 2013. ISBN-10: 9781617751561

Aimé Césaire. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Monthly Review Press, 2001. ISBN-10: 1583670254

Aimé Césaire. *A Tempest*. Theatre Communications Group/TGC Translations, 2002, ISBN-10: 1559362103

Patrick Chamoiseau. *Slave Old Man*. Transl. Linda Coverdale. The New Press. ISBN-10: 1620972956. (Hard cover is cheaper than paperback!)

Michelle Cliff. *Free Enterprise*. City Lights Publishers, 2004, ISBN-10: 0872864375

Fred D'Aguiar. *Feeding the Ghosts*. Waveland Press, 2015, ISBN-10: 1478631945.

Rosario Ferré. *Sweet Diamond Dust and Other Stories*. Plume, 1996. ISBN-10: 0452277485

Sesshu Foster. *Atomic Aztex*. City Lights, 2005. ISBN-10: 0872864405

Jamaica Kincaid. *A Small Place*, 2000, ISBN-10: 0374527075

Rita Indiana. *Tentacle*. Transl. Achy Obejas. *And Other Stories*, 2019. ISBN-10: 1911508342

Marlon James. *The Book of Night Women*. Riverhead Books, 2010. ISBN-10: 1594484368

M. NourbeSe Philip. *Zong!* Wesleyan University Press, ISBN-10: 0819571695

Jean Rhys. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. W. W. Norton & Company; Reissue edition, 2016. ISBN-10: 0393352560

Évelyne Trouillot. *The Infamous Rosalie*. Transl. Marjorie Attignol Salvodon, University of Nebraska Press, 2013. ISBN-10: 0803240260

N. B: Please note that I **require hardcopies** of these books to ensure active participation in class discussion and to avoid issues with citation later on. **Additional required texts** (poems, secondary sources, clips, scholarly articles, etc) will be made available in pdf or word.docx format on Blackboard at least one week before we discuss these texts in class.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation 20%

In a graduate course, students are expected to carry and shape conversations in class as much as the instructor. As a result, regular attendance and active participation are absolutely essential for your success not only in this course, but in your career as a graduate student in general. Being in attendance alone does not give you any credit— it is a mere basic requirement and expected; only active participation will give you credit. Active participation includes coming to each class on time and prepared with concrete and informed questions and comments about the assigned texts, volunteering questions and comments to both the instructor and your classmates during and after my lectures and your peers' presentations, as well as actively engaging with scholarly debates in class discussions, for example by making reference to current scholarship and familiarizing yourselves with critical terminology.

As part of your participation grade you are required to submit 10 (out of 12) short (250-400 words) response paragraphs via blackboard over the course of the semester. These responses should engage with one very specific aspect of the readings due every Tuesday; ideally, you should make concrete references to the primary and secondary texts assigned that week and comment on the larger questions that tie the class together. At times I will assign a specific question, at other times I will ask you to come up with your own. These response papers (RPs) are meant to serve as discussion triggers for our class the following day. The quality of these papers will feed into your participation grade. You are required to submit a total of 10 RPs; each can earn a maximum of 10 points. This way, your written contributions to class discussion will count as much as your oral contributions during class time. These responses are due by noon on Tuesday – absolutely no extensions are possible because I will need to read these comments before class. I will provide brief feedback on your response papers by Friday. Copy and paste these response papers into the provided space rather than attaching a word.docx. Include at least one direct citation from the primary or secondary texts you are discussing via parenthetical documentation. I will not accept, grade, or comment on late papers or on papers that do not meet the basic formal requirements of length, formatting, and proofreading.

Since we meet once a week, each student may **miss one class** without repercussions or explanations. Two absences will result in a loss of 50 points. As you know, anything less than an A is not really acceptable for graduate work, and even a B poses a potential problem if you wish to be accepted into a Ph.D. program. More than two absences will result in me dropping you from the class, regardless of the circumstances. You simply cannot get credit for or succeed in a graduate class if you are not fully present throughout the semester. If you anticipate any problems due to extenuating circumstances (such as illness etc.) do contact me at your earliest convenience so we can find a workable solution.

I also strongly encourage you to actively participate in the intellectual life of the university, especially as it relates to content discussed in our class. This semester, you will have a plethora of opportunities: for example, our Annual Literature lecture features Dr Marlene L. Daut, currently the most prominent 19th century Haitianist working in the United States, we have three candidates for an Assistant/Associate Professor position in African American Literatures coming to campus, and the Departments of History, Theatre and Dance, and Creative Writing offer a wide range of events relevant to our class. You have the opportunity to earn up to 30 points extra credit if you attend and write up to three one-page reflections on the events you attended.

Book Review 20%

One important aspect of academic work consists in staying up to date with recent scholarship and publications in the field. The writing of book reviews is an excellent exercise in displaying one's familiarity with current research and scholarly debates and also offers an opportunity for publication. Each graduate student is therefore required **to research scholarly journals** which publish book reviews in the fields of Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic literatures and decide on one publication as a model for your own review. I will provide a list of relevant journals and publications in the second week of the semester.

Next, students will research fairly recently (ideally within the last 5-7 years) published **scholarly books** on the texts and issues we discuss in this course, read a current scholarly publication on such a subject, and write a book review in the style, length, and format of the selected journal. If you wish to review a creative piece, you may do so if you give me a good rationale for your decision ahead of time. You will submit a short, one-paragraph proposal (150-200 words) of the book review, which includes a full citation of the text you wish to review, a short rationale why you decided on this particular text, and a citation of the journal after whose book reviews you wish to model your own – also give me a reason why to decided on this specific journal format. You will submit this document to me via email by noon on Friday, **March 13**, and I will provide you with feedback within two days. This way you have Spring Break to complete your review.

You will then submit your completed book review as a word.docx attachment via blackboard by noon on Monday, **March 24**. Your book review needs to be accompanied by a sample book review from the publication of your choice, e.g. if you decide to write a book review in the style of *American Quarterly* or *Callaloo*, add a link to a recent (published in the previous two academic years) book review you found in this particular scholarly journal. Length and format of your reviews depend on the journal of your choice. Ideally these book reviews will actually be submitted for publication. Absolutely no extensions will be given.

Individual Conference Presentations 20%

Conference presentations are another important aspect of a scholar's job regardless whether you are tenured, on the tenure track, or a graduate student applying to a PhD program or on the job market. Conferences are an excellent opportunity to network and to present one's most recent research agenda to an informed audience. In this class you will get the opportunity to practice the skills necessary for successful conference presentations. I expect you to look for actual conference calls at the CFP by the UPenn site (<http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu>) and choose one to which you would like to submit your abstract and that works with the focus of our class.

The **Friday before your presentation** you will submit your abstract (200 words) to me via blackboard by noon so I can give you feedback and final suggestions. Like at an actual conference, you will have 15-20 minutes (maximum!) to present your argument and will then respond to questions from the plenary. Your presentation should discuss one very concrete and well-defined aspect of the assigned text(s) for that week, and draw on existing scholarship. Ideally identify a conflict in the debate on the text of your choice and add your perspective. Your presentation may be on the same text you work on for your research paper. Be professional, yet creative, in your presentations, and make effective use of technology, such as power point, film clips, music, etc when appropriate. The average conference paper is 6-8 pages (double-spaced) – feel free to read from your paper or speak freely. In either case, be sure to practice and stay focused on your specific argument. Come prepared with a handout (not longer than one page!), concrete questions for the class, and be prepared to answer questions from the audience. Make sure to set up a meeting with me at the latest two working days (i.e. Thursday or Friday) before your presentation – note that I have an active conference and traveling schedule this semester so be sure to set up an appointment ahead of time. Failing to set up an appointment and send an abstract will result in deduction of 50 points from this assignment.

Research Paper 40%

Your final research paper is in many ways the culmination of your work in this course. It should reflect your knowledge of the primary text(s) you discuss, as well as your familiarity with current scholarship and terminology and major debates in the field. Your paper must have an original argument and needs to enter into an already existing scholarly conversation. You will be graded not only on the quality of the end product, but also on your progress during the process of writing from proposal to final paper.

By noon on Friday, **April 24**, you will submit a **project proposal** (200-300 words) and a one page (double spaced) annotated bibliography as a word.docx attachment on blackboard. This proposal should demonstrate that you have been doing your research and have already begun to formulate your thesis. I will return comments on these proposals to you online by the following Monday. Your proposal is worth a maximum 50 points. Instead of a final exam I will ask you to bring three hardcopies of the first 5-8 pages of your final draft to our last class on **May 5**, and we will workshop them again before your final submission in conference panel format.

Your final paper is due on Sunday, **May 10**, and needs to be submitted to me via blackboard as a word.docx attachment by 6pm. The paper has to be 15-20 pages long (**excluding** the works cited list), follow MLA format, feature parenthetical documentation, and a proper works cited list (consisting of at least 5 scholarly sources, in addition to primary sources). Be aware that writing in a concise manner is more demanding and important than being verbose and jargony. Absolutely no extensions will be given.

Grade breakdown

Attendance and participation: 200 points	A= 900-100	or 90-100%
Individual presentation: 200 points	B= 800-899	or 80-89.9%
Book review: 200 points	C= 700-799	or 70-79.9%
Research paper: 400 points (50+350)	D= 600-699	or 60-69.6%
TOTAL: 1000 points	F = 0-599	or 0-59.9%

Email: Be sure to activate your UTEP webmail and blackboard accounts within the first week of the semester. Check your email **daily**. Please contact me on webmail (mrohrleitner@utep.edu) with urgent requests or concerns. If you do not have internet access at home, plan ahead and check your blackboard when on campus. Responding to emails sent by your professor in a timely manner (usually within 24 hours during the work week and 48 hours during the weekend and holidays) is good professional practice and will be part of your participation grade.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is an offense against academic honesty and any instance of plagiarism will immediately be handed over to the Dean of Students without exception, who will decide on your penalty. Be aware that I take all instances of plagiarism very seriously. Each plagiarized assignment will automatically receive 0 points. I do not accept revisions or late submissions, or assignments that do not meet the minimum length requirement of original work, therefore you will fail each plagiarized assignment. Every time you use someone else's ideas or words in your papers you must reference the source. This is true for both direct quotes and paraphrasing. The same rules that apply to print sources also apply to web-based sources. You may safely assume that if you find a source on the internet, so will I. If you have any questions or uncertainties, contact me well before your paper is due. I also strongly encourage you to consult the following useful website for further information: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/2/>

Students with disabilities: I will gladly make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally before or after class in the first two weeks to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can also be reached in the following ways:

Web: <http://www.utep.edu/cass>

Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

Fax: (915) 747-8712

E-Mail: cass@utep.edu

Syllabus

- January 21** Introductions, The Caribbean and hemispheric studies
* Édouard Glissant. "Creolization in the Making of the Americas"
* Antonio Benítez-Rojo. From *The Repeating Island*
* Aurora Levins Morales. "Child of the Americas"
* Kamau Brathwaite. "Calypso"
- January 28** **Caribbean Studies and Postcolonial Theory**
Aimé Césaire. *Discourse on Colonialism*.
Jamaica Kincaid. *A Small Place*.
* Sylvia Wynter. "1492: A New World View"
* Grace Nichols. "Price We Pay for the Sun"
* Louise Bennett. "Colonization in Reverse"
- January 30 Tracy K. Smith (22nd US poet laureate), 6.30p-8pm, Union 308 E
- February 4** **The Empire Writes Back I: Martinique**
Aimé Césaire. *A Tempest*
* Kamau Brathwaite, "Nation Language"
* Derek Walcott. "A Far Cry from Africa"
* M. NourbeSe Philip. "Discourse on the Logic of Language"
* Roberto Fernández Retamar. "Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in the Americas"
RP#1
- February 11** **The Empire Writes Back II: Antigua and Dominica**
Jean Rhys. *Wide Sargasso Sea*
* Grace Nichols. "Hurricane Hits England"
* Jacques Derrida. From *Archive Fever*
* Trevor Hope. "Revisiting the Imperial Archive"
Presentation 1
RP#2
- February 18** **The Empire Writes Back III: Trinidad and Tobago**
Robert Antoni. *As Flies to Whatless Boys*.
* Elena Machado Sáez. From *Market Aesthetics*
* Diana Taylor. from *The Archive and the Repertoire*
Presentation 2
RP#3
- February 25** **Exhibiting Slavery I: Martinique**
Patrick Chamoiseau. *Slave Old Man*
* Frantz Fanon. From *Black Skin, White Masks*
* Vivian Nun Halloran. From *Exhibiting Slavery*
Presentation 3
RP#4

Feb 28 - Mar 1 Sal Castro Conference, UC Santa Barbara

- March 3** **Exhibiting Slavery II: Guyana**
Fred D'Aguiar. *Feeding the Ghosts*
M. NourbeSe Philip. *Zong!*
* Ian Baucom. From *Specters of the Atlantic*
Presentation 4
RP#5
- March 10** **Thieving Sugar I: Jamaica**
Marlon James. *The Book of Night Women*
* Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley. From *Thieving Sugar*
* Saldyia Hartman. From *Scenes of Subjection*
* Markus Nehl. "A Vicious Circle of Violence: Revisiting Jamaican Slavery in
Marlon James' *The Book of Night Women*"
Presentation 5
RP#6
- March 16-22** *Spring Break*
- March 24** **Thieving Sugar II: Haiti**
Évelyne Trouillot. *The Infamous Rosalie*
* Marlene L. Daut. From *Tropics of Haiti*
* Rafe Dalleo. From *Haiti and the Americas*
* Rolph-Michel Trouillot. From *Silencing the Past*
Presentation 6
RP#7
- March 31** **Thieving Sugar III: Jamaica and the US**
Michelle Cliff. *Free Enterprise*.
*Erica L. Johnson. "Ghostwriting Transnational Histories in Michelle Cliff's
Free Enterprise"
*Donette Francis. From *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship*
Presentation 7
RP#8
- April 1-6 MELUS conference in New Orleans
- April 7** **What's Past is Prologue I: Dominican Republic, Cuba, US**
Julia Alvarez. *In the Name of Salomé*.
*Lorgia García Peña. From *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nations
and Archives of Contradictions*
* Elena Machado Sáez. From *Market Aesthetics*
* Silvio Torres Saillant. "The Tribulations of Blackness"
Presentation 8
RP#9
- April 9 Annual Literature Lecture: Professor Marlene L Daut (U of Virginia)
April 10 Workshop

- April 14** **What's Past is Prologue II: Puerto Rico**
Rosario Ferré. *Sweet Diamond Dust and Other Stories*.
*Janice A. Jaffe. "Translation and Prostitution: Rosario Ferré's *Maldito Amor* and *Sweet Diamond Dust*"
* Angela Naimou. "Sugar's Legacies" Romance, Revolution, and Wageless Life in the Fiction of Edwidge Danticat and Rosario Ferré"
Presentation 9
RP#10
- April 21** **Post-Apocalypse and Punk Aesthetics I: Mexico/Aztlán**
Sesshu Foster. *Atomic Aztex*
*Ramón Saldívar. "The Other Side of History, the Other Side of Fiction"
* Dipesh Chakrabarty. "The Climate of History"
Presentation 10
RP#11
- April 28** **Post-Apocalypse and Punk Aesthetics II: Dominican Republic**
Rita Indiana. *Tentacle*
*Rob Nixon. From *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*
Presentation 11
RP#12
- May 5** **Conference panels:** Workshopping first drafts
- May 10** Submit final research papers as word. docx attachments on Blackboard by 6pm

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