
Womensst 393C Caribbean Women Writing Resistance, Professor Alex Deschamps
Fall 2004
Identity & Politics

Tue & Thu: 02:30–03:45 pm
Bartlett 127

Office: Bartlett 7B » Tue & Thu 11:30 am–12:30 pm and by appointment

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Course Description

The intent of this course is to use literature, fiction, the novel, poetry, performance, music, and art, as vehicles to reading and analyzing how Caribbean women write and speak culture, resistance, identity and politics. Selected readings will demonstrate how these wide range of writings can be a powerful means of communication for education, influence, resistance, and protest. These writings will be used inter-alia (1) to discuss alternative forms of resistance against women's status in the Caribbean, (2) to engage with the cause of advancing women's rights and to continue the struggle towards equity, (3) to theorize and validate the work of Caribbean women writers. This alternative means of education fits into the Caribbean feminist agenda of Development in which women play a central role in that process. Selected works will be drawn from women in the Caribbean Diaspora, Anglophone, Francophone, and Latin America. Writers and authors will include, among others, Merle Hodge, Merle Collins, Paule Marshall, Edwidge Danticat, Olive Senior, Maryse Conde, Jean Rhys, Carol Boyce Davies, Jamaica Kincaid, Michelle Cliff, Lorna Goodson, Phyllis Shand Alfrey, Marlene Nourbese Phillip, Opal Palmer Adisa, Audre Lorde, Elizabeth Nunez.

Caribbean women have a long legacy of resistance, activism, and political contributions to their society. Their activism began during enslavement and continues today using various modes of interventions including Oraliture and Writing Resistance and Identity. Students will get the opportunity to examine how Anglophone, Franchophone, and Hispanophone women novelists, poets, and fiction writers speak to the above themes in all of their different similarities. We will also pay close attention to Caribbean Diasporic issues of identity, hybridity, language, culture, neo-colonialism, and the gendered effect of globalization on economic and political issues.

Some questions to think about are: How are these women's texts received and validated in the academy? What is the place of the oral in the written feminine text? How do Caribbean people understand and practice the creole language in the shadow of the Master Language of standard British Colonial English? Can this use of the creole and patois be a form of resistance? Do these writers in fact recreate the master texts? How can we interpret the complex and exciting complicated dynamics of these writings which are aesthetically rich and creative in giving us an entry into the poetics and politics of Caribbean women's writings.

Course Assignments, Requirements, and Examinations

- ◆ Attendance, participation, and in-class work – 20%. Regular attendance is an absolute. After *three unexcused* absences your grade will begin to be marked down by one letter grade. Excused attendances do not exonerate you from the course expectations and requirements. Reading assignments must be *completed by the class period for which they were assigned*. You must be prepared to participate in class discussions, assignments, and exercises.
- ◆ Three response/critical/reflexive Papers, 2-3 pages – 15%. These papers should reflect your thinking, analysis, reflections, and learnings about readings, discussions, and video screenings.

They will provide the opportunity for you to voice and articulate the relevance of the material to contributions of feminism, Caribbean Literature, and issues of Identity, Gender, Race, Nation, and Diaspora. Due dates are Tuesday, September 21st, Tuesday, October 05th, and Tuesday, October 19th, 2004. Dates are also in the course calendar.

- ◆ Mid-term examination – 25%. This will be a take home examination. No late papers will be accepted. The due date is Thursday, October 28th, 2004.
- ◆ Group Project & Presentation, including 2-3 page individual learning paper – 15%. Details, options, and guidelines will be given and discussed.
- ◆ Research Assignment, 8-10 pages – 25%, due Tuesday November 23rd, 2004. Details, options, and guidelines will be given and discussed.
- ◆ All written assignments must be typed double spaced within the specified limit, using 12 point font. Late papers will be graded down.

Academic Honesty and Other Undergraduate Policies

My assumption is that students are generally honest. You are responsible for knowing and following the University of Massachusetts Academic Guidelines. *Please read and familiarize yourselves with the University Policy Statement on Academic Honesty, Course Requirements, Attendance, Religious Observances, and other relevant policies, in the Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities Booklet or at website http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/rights/default.htm.* Necessary action, in compliance with official guidelines, will be taken against students who commit academic dishonesty. Plagiarism of any kind will be detrimental to your tenure at the University. Avoid using written papers from the internet. Caucus with me about resources for learning needs.

Books

[Required Texts]: Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez, *Women Writing Resistance: Essays on Latin America & the Caribbean*. ISBN: 0-896087085, South End Press.

Brinda J. Metha, *Diasporic Dis(Locations): Indo-Caribbean Women's Writers Negotiate the "Kala Pani"*. ISBN: 9766401578, University of the West Indies Press (Distribution Center-University of Oklahoma Press), 2004.

Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados*. ISBN: 0813515114, Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Moira Ferguson, *Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*. University of Michigan Press, 1993.

[Recommended]: Kathleen M. Balutansky & Marie-Agnes Sourueau, *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature and Identity*. ISBN: 976640060, University of the West Indies Press (Distribution Center-University of Oklahoma Press), 1998.

Available at Food For Thought Book-shop, and on reserve in the library. An additional bibliography and handouts will be distributed as needed throughout the semester.

Course Calendar

Thu September 09	<u>Introduction To Course</u> Exercises, Geo Politics of the Caribbean, Preamble to the Caribbean Diaspora, Contextualizing Caribbean Feminism
Tue September 14	<u>Slavery, History, and Revolt (1)</u> Readings: [Text]–Hilary Beckles, <i>Natural Rebels</i> , pp. 1-89.
Thu September 16	<u>Slavery, History and Revolt (2)</u> Readings: [Text]–Hilary Beckles, <i>Natural Rebels</i> , pp. 90-177.
Tue September 21	<u>Gender, Sexuality, and Diaspora Identity – The Difference Place Makes</u> Readings: [Handout/E-reserves]–Excerpts from Jamaica Kincaid’s <i>A Small Place</i> . [Handout/E-reserves]–Angeletta KM Gourdine, <i>The Difference Place Makes</i> , Chapters 1 & 3. **Critical Response/Reflexive/Analysis Paper 1 due.**
Thu September 23	<u>Contestations of Colonization, Gender, Race, Culture, and Identities (1)</u> Film Screening: Wide Sargasso Sea Readings: [Handout/E-Reserves]–Excerpts from <i>Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities</i> edited by Christine Barrow.
Tue September 28	<u>Contestations of Colonization, Gender, Race, Culture, and Identities (2)</u> Film Screening: Wide Sargasso Sea (continued). Student Round Table Discussion.
Thu September 30	<u>Writing the Self – Narrative as History, Theory, and Sites of Activism</u> Readings: [Text]–Maira Ferguson, <i>The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave related by Herself</i> .
Tue October 05	<u>Theorizing the Writing of Self</u> Student Exercises, reflections, writings Readings: [Text]–Maira Ferguson, <i>The History of Mary Prince</i> (cont’d). **Critical Response/Reflexive/Analysis Paper 2 due.**
Thu October 07	<u>Women’s Access to Authorship – Re-Envisioning History</u> Readings [Text]–Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <i>Women Writing Resistance</i> , Part 1.
Tue October 12	<u>Women’s Access to Authorship – The Politics of Language and Identity</u> Readings: [Text]–Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <i>Women Writing Resistance</i> , Part 2.
Thu October 14	<u>Women’s Access to Authorship – Strategies of Resistance</u> Readings: [Text]–Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <i>Women Writing Resistance</i> , Part 3.

Tue October 19	<u>Women's Access to Authorship – Assimilation, Acculturation and Hybridity</u>
Readings:	[Handout/E-Reserves]–Selections from Jamaica Kincaid, <i>Talk Stories</i> . **Critical Response/Reflexive/Analysis Paper 3 due.**
Thu October 21	<u>Oraliture, Language, Storytelling and Resistance in Caribbean Women's Writing</u> Guest Lecture; Carol Bailey, Ph.D Candidate, University of the West Indies, Jamaica.
Readings:	Readings to be determined and distributed.
Tue October 26	<u>Caribbean Creolization (1)</u>
Readings:	[Handout/E-Reserves]–Balutansky & Sourieau, <i>Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity</i> , Selections from Part One.
Thu October 28	<u>Caribbean Creolization (2)</u>
Readings:	[Handout/E-Reserves]–Balutansky & Sourieau, <i>Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity</i> , Selections from Part Two. **Mid-term Examination Due in Class**
Tue November 02	<u>Diasporic Identities (1)</u>
Readings:	[Text]–Brinda Mehta, <i>Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani</i> . Chapters 1-3.
Thu November 04	<u>Diasporic Identities (2)</u>
Readings:	[Text]–Brinda Mehta, <i>Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani</i> . Chapters 4-6.
Tue November 09	<u>Diasporic Identities (3)</u>
Readings:	[Handout/E-Reserves]–Selections from Miriam DeCosta-Willis, <i>Daughters of the Diaspora – Afro-Hispanic Writers</i> .
Thu November 11	No Class – Columbus Day Holiday
Tue November 16	<u>Literary Productions: Language, Politics, Economics, Gender and Race</u>
Readings:	Calypso, Poetry, West Indian reading Primers, Spoken Word, Traditional Oral stories, Talk Stories.
Thu November 18	<u>Dress as Resistance, Dress as Accommodation</u>
Readings:	[Handout/E-Reserves]–Steve O. Buckridge, <i>The Language of Dress – Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890</i> .
Mon November 22	<u>Speaking Themselves into Existence: Culture, Expression, and Identity</u> Video Screening: Carnival in the Caribbean.

Tue November 23	<u>Caribbean Student Panel</u> *** <i>Research Assignment Due</i> ***
November 24-28	Thanksgiving Recess
Tue November 30	<u>Student Projects</u> Readings: Student Papers
Thu December 02	<u>Student Projects</u> Readings: Student Papers
Tue December 07	<u>Student Projects</u> Readings: Student Papers
Thu December 09	<u>Jubilation a la Caribbean</u> ** <i>Individual Learning Project Paper Due</i> **