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**WOMENSST 393C**  
**Fall 2008**  
**Schedule #: 77990**

**Caribbean Women Writing**  
**Resistance Identity & Politics**  
**Tue & Thu: 1:00 – 2:15 pm**  
**Herter Hall Room 111**

**Professor Alex Deschamps**  
**Bartlett 7B**

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Office & Hours: Bartlett 7B » Thursdays 2:30 – 3:30 pm & 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.

The course will also examine how Caribbean women's writing has broken the literary mold by foregrounding the trope of sex and sexuality, along with the relational categories of race, class, and gender to construct more critical, scholarly examination and understanding of these dimensions of Caribbean Women's Literature and a Caribbean reality. Selected works will be drawn from women in the Caribbean Diaspora, Anglophone, Francophone, and Latin America. Students will have the opportunity to research and discuss the work of a range of writers including, among others, Merle Hodge, Merle Collins, Paule Marshall, Edwidge Dandicat, 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, Grace Nichols, Julia Alvarez.

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 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 *two* 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. Make notes, think about what you would like to discuss in class, and be prepared to do occasional in-class assignments.
- 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 Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, Thursday October 09<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008.* Dates are also in the course calendar.
- Mid-term examination – 25%. This will be a take home examination. No late papers will be accepted for this examination. The *due date is Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008.*
- Group Project & Presentation, including 2-3 page individual learning paper – 15%. Details, options, and guidelines will be given and discussed. Individual learning papers are *due on Thursday December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008.*
- Research Assignment, 8-10 pages – 25%, *due Tuesday November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008.* 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. No late papers will be accepted unless there has been some prior discussion.

#### ***Critical Analysis and Helpful hints for writing***

Critical analysis means that you must apply thoughtful reasoning to the arguments presented in this course through readings, lectures and discussion. It means not only finding what you agree with, what's new, what's the basis for the assumptions, but also what the limitations are and what other questions you have, and so forth. When you write a critical analysis, all of your statements need to be backed up with reasons or examples, and you must keep your fellow classmate and readers in mind. Are you giving the reader enough information? Ask the following:

- What is/are the main point(s) of the readings - both individually and collectively? Why does the author raise these particular points for discussion? How does she/he hope to answer them? Do you think she/he succeeded? Why or why not? Be aware of how the author uses key terms and her/his definitions for them.
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in any given ideology, theory or model for change presented? How are the important new ideas presented? What does this text, essay/artwork/film, contribute to our understanding of the issues of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other key factors shaping the lives of women and our gendered lives?
- What is the author's perspective (s) and underlying assumptions about her/his subject, her/his audience, people or culture in general? How are these issues pertinent or not pertinent in all of our/your lives and others? – Race, identity, gender, age, socio-economic class, sexuality, educational status, other social and cultural markers.....? What are the assumptions? Do you find any of them to be essentializing? What are the theoretical interdisciplinaritys?

- What is your perspective on the subject raised for discussion? Does this influence your view of what the author argues? Where or how have you developed your opinions on this subject - and do you see them changing in any way? Do you agree/disagree with the ideas being developed? How/why? What comparisons can you make, if any, between this piece and other readings we have considered? What themes did you find challenging and interesting? What would you like to discuss in class?
- Is there anything missing from the piece? Remember...Always ask yourself *why*. What is at stake for the author? For you? What points are you are trying to make in response to the issues raised? What are the linkages to other literary works that you have read?

***Where to go when you need help with organizing your ideas and writing:***

All writing must be proof-read, grammatically correct and well-organized. Sources must be properly cited, preferably using MLA or APA style. There are many online resources for checking citation styles. The Writing Center in the Learning Commons at the Campus Library offers assistance with writing skills. You should always have rough drafts well before the due date of the assignment. The Learning Commons is a Resource that you should utilize whether it is for information, study time, or for doing group assignments.

**Final Grading Scale**

A (94-100)	A- (90-93)	B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	D+ (67-69)	D (60-66)
F (59 or below)				

**Books**

[Required Texts]:	Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez, <i>Women Writing Resistance: Essays on Latin America &amp; the Caribbean</i> . ISBN: 0-896087085, South End Press
	Evelyn O’Callaghan, <i>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939: “A Hot Place, Belonging to Us”</i> . Routledge, 2004. ISBN: 041528835.
	Belinda Edmonson, <i>Caribbean Romances: The Politics of Regional Representation</i> . Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999.

Available at Food For Thought Book-shop, North Pleasant Street, Amherst and also on reserve in the library. An E-Reserve list will be available and an additional bibliography will be provided.

**Course Calendar**

Tue September 02 <sup>nd</sup>	<b><u>Introduction to Course</u></b> Exercises, Expectations, Syllabus, Preamble to the Caribbean Diaspora.
Thu September 04 <sup>th</sup> Handouts	<b><u>Contextualizing Caribbean Feminism</u></b> Geo-Politics of the Caribbean, Contextualizing Caribbean Feminism and Development.
Tue September 09 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Gender, Sexuality and Diaspora Identity</u></b> [Handout/E-Reserves] Gourdine, Angela KM. Chapter 5, pp. 80-102 in <u>The Difference Place Makes</u> , 2002. Ohio State University Press. [Handout/E-Reserves] DeCosta-Willis, Miriam. <u>Daughters of the Diaspora – Afra Hispanic Writers</u> , 2003, pp. 26-41 & 43-67. Ian Randle Publishers: Kingston, Jamaica.
Thu September 11 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Writing the Self – Narrative as History, Theory, and Sites of Activism</u></b> [Handout/E-Reserves] Ferguson, Moira. <u>The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave</u> , 2004, pp. 55-94. University of Michigan Press. [Handout] Garcelle Champagne. 2008 Commonwealth College Honors Thesis
Tue September 16 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Women’s Access to Authorship – Re-Envisioning History</u></b> [Text] Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 1
Thu September 18 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Women’s Access to Authorship – The Politics of Language and Identity</u></b> [Text] Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 2
Tue September 23 <sup>rd</sup> Readings	<b><u>Women’s Access to Authorship – Strategies of Resistance</u></b> [Text] Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 3
Thu September 25 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Student Roundtable Papers</u></b> ***Critical Analysis/Reflexive Paper 1 due in class***
Tue September 30 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Contextualizing the Term West Indian Women/Women of the Caribbean</u></b> [Text] O’Callaghan, <u>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939</u> , Introduction and chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-57
Thu October 02 <sup>nd</sup> Readings	<b><u>Early Narratives &amp; Problems of “Categorization”</u></b> [Text] O’Callaghan, <u>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939</u> , chapters 3 & 4, pp. 58-117
Tue October 07 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>The West Indies as Trope &amp; Theoretical Considerations</u></b> [Text] O’Callaghan, <u>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939</u> , chapters 5, & 6 pp. 118-173
Thu October 09 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Student Roundtable Papers</u></b> ***Critical Analysis/Reflexive paper 2 due in class***

Tue October 14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>***No Class - Monday's Schedule re Columbus Day Holiday***</b>
Thu October 16 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Video Screening: Wide Sargasso Sea (1)</u></b> Biographical sketches of Jean Rhys and Charlotte Bronte
Tue October 21 <sup>st</sup> Readings	<b><u>Video Screening: Wide Sargasso Sea</u></b> Discussions and linkages to contemporary literary/Screen analysis
Thu October 23 <sup>rd</sup> Readings	<b><u>Student Roundtable - Mid-Term Examinations</u></b> <b>***Mid term Examinations due in class***</b>
Tue October 28 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Caribbean Creolization: Language, Literature and Identity</u></b> [Handout/E-Reserves] Harris, Wilson. <i>Creoleness the Crossroads of a Civilization?</i> in Balutansky, K & Sourieau, Marie Agnes, pp. 23-35 <u>Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity</u> . 1998. University Press of Florida.  [Handout/E-Reserves] Collins, Merle. <i>Writing and Creole Language Politics: Voice and Story</i> in Balutansky, K & Sourieau, Marie Agnes, pp. 87-93 <u>Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity</u> . 1998. University Press of Florida.
Thu October 30 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>The Politics of Regional Representation (1)</u></b> [Text] Edmondson, Belinda, <u>Caribbean Romances</u> , Introduction and chapters. 1, 2, & 3.
Tue November 04 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>The Politics of Regional Representation (2)</u></b> [Text] Edmondson, Belinda, <u>Caribbean Romances</u> , chapters 4, 5, & 6.
Thu November 06 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>The Politics of Regional Representation (3)</u></b> [Text] Edmondson, Belinda, <u>Caribbean Romances</u> , chapters 7, 8, & 9.
Tue November 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>***No Class – Veteran's Day Holiday (Schedule on Wednesday)***</b>
Wed November 12 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Framing Indo Caribbean Women Writers</u></b> [Handout/E-Reserves] Mehta, Brenda. <u>Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani</u> , 2004, pp. 1-27 & 132-154. University of the West Indies Press.
Thu November 13 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Student Roundtable Papers</u></b> <b>***Critical Analysis Paper 3 due in class***</b>
Tue November 18 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Dress as Resistance, Dress as Accommodation</u></b> [Handout/E-Reserves] Buckridge, Steve, <u>The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890</u> , 2004. The University of the West Indies Press. Chapter 2, pp. 67-110 & chapter 3, pp. 111-173
Thu November 20 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<b><u>Oraliture: Language, Politics, Gender, Race, Sexuality</u></b> Calypso, Poetry, Spoken Word, Traditional Oral Stories, Talk Stories

Tue November 25 <sup>th</sup> Readings	<u><b>Performing Culture: Expression and Identity</b></u> Video Screening: Carnival in the Caribbean Student Discussions *** <i>Research Assignment Due</i> ***
November 26 <sup>th</sup> –30 <sup>th</sup>	*** <b>Thanksgiving Break Recess</b> ***
Tue December 02 <sup>nd</sup>	<u><b>Student Projects</b></u> Student Papers
Thu December 04 <sup>th</sup>	<u><b>Student Projects</b></u> Student Papers
Tue December 09 <sup>th</sup>	<u><b>Student Projects</b></u> Student Papers
Thu December 11 <sup>th</sup>	<u><b>Jubilation a la Caribbean</b></u> *** <i>Individual Learning Project Paper Due</i> ***