
WGSS 393C
Fall 2016
Schedule #:72612

Caribbean Women Writing
Resistance Identity & Politics
Tue & Thu: 11:30 am – 12:45 pm
Bart 205

Professor Alex Deschamps
Bartlett 7B

Office & Hours: Bartlett 7B » **Tuesdays 1:30 – 3:00 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 the wide range of writings can be a powerful means of communication for education, influence, resistance, and protest. These writings will be used inter-alia (i) to discuss alternative forms of resistance against women's status in the Caribbean, (ii) to engage with the cause of advancing women's rights and to continue the struggle towards equity, (iii) 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 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, 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, sexuality, hybridity, language, culture, neo-colonialism, and the gendered effect of globalization on economic and political issues.

Some questions to think about are: How are Caribbean 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 occasional in-class work – 20%. This will include the roundtable participation and presentation (4 points). 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.
- Two response/critical/reflexive Papers, (3-5 pages) – 20%. 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, Sexuality, Gender, Race, Nation, and Diaspora. *Due dates are Tuesday September 27 and Thursday October 13, 2016.* Dates are also in the course calendar.
- Mid-term examination – 25%. This will be a take home examination. Absolutely no late papers will be accepted for this examination. The *due date is Tuesday, October 25th, 2016.*
- Response/analytical paper to the text, Here Comes The Sun by Nicole Dennis-Benn – 10%. *Due on Tuesday November 8, 2016.* Details, options, and guidelines will be given and discussed.
- Research Assignment, 10-15 pages – 25%, *due Thursday December 13, 2016.* Details, options, and guidelines will be distributed in the second week of the semester. This will be the basis for the final roundtable discussions.
- All written assignments must be typed double spaced within the specified limit, using 12 point font. No late papers will be accepted unless there are valid reasons and prior conversation.
- We will schedule an out of class viewing of the film *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

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 may have. When you write a critical analysis, all of your statements need to be authenticated with reasons or examples, and you must keep your fellow classmate and readers in mind.

- Main point(s) of the readings - both individually and collectively. Why and how does the author raise particular points for discussion? Be aware of how authors use key terms and definitions.
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in any given ideology, theory, debates, or model for change presented? How are the important new ideas presented? What does this text, essay, artwork, or film, contribute to our understanding of the key factors shaping the lives of the Caribbean women in context and our/your own gendered lives? What and how are the perspectives and underlying assumptions presented about the people or culture in general? What are the assumptions of the social and cultural markers? Do you find any of them to be essentializing? What are the theoretical interdisciplinarity?
- What are your perspectives on the topics and themes 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 various 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 article, essay, or text? Remember that everything cannot always be covered in one article, essay, or reading. What is at stake for the author? For you? What points are you trying to make in response to the issues raised? What are the linkages to other literary works that you have read?
- 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. Visit the Learning Commons Library Resources. .

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 & the Caribbean</i> . 2004. ISBN: 0-896087085, South End Press
	Nicole Dennis-Benn, <i>Here Comes the Sun – A Novel</i> . ISBN: 978-1-63149-176-4. 2016. WWW. Norton.Com.

Texts are available at Food For Thought Book Shop, North Pleasant Street, Amherst. An E-Reserve list will be available and an additional bibliography will be provided.

COURSE CALENDAR

Tue September 06	<u>Introduction to Course</u> Exercises, Expectations, Syllabus, Preamble to the Caribbean Diaspora.
Thu September 08 Readings:	<u>Contextualizing Caribbean Feminism</u> [Handout] Geo-Politics of the Caribbean, Contextualizing Caribbean Feminism and Development. [Handout] <i>Paradise Revealed: Readings in Caribbean Literature. Two Questions</i> . Erika J. Waters, Ph.D. 2009. www.rtbob.net/caribbean-literature. [Handout] Momsen Janet, <i>The Double Paradox</i> in <u>Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Thought</u> . Patricia Mohammed, 2002. University of the West Indies Press, pp. 44-55.
Tue September 13 Readings:	<u>Gender, Sexuality and Diaspora Identity</u> [Reserves] Gourdine, Angela KM. Chapter 5, pp. 80-102 in <u>The Difference Place Makes</u> , 2002. Ohio State University Press. [Reserves] DeCosta-Willis, Miriam. <u>Daughters of the Diaspora: Afra Hispanic Writers</u> , 2003, pp. 26-41 & 43-67. Ian Randle Publishers: Kingston, Jamaica. [Reserves] Michelle Rowley. <i>Reconceptualizing Voice: The Role of Matrifocality in Shaping Theories and Caribbean Voices</i> in <u>Gendered Realities</u> by Patricia Mohammed, 2002. University of the West Indies Press, 22-43.
Thu September 15 Readings:	<u>Historical Themes of Postcolonialism, Imperialism, and Independence</u> [Reserves] Helen Scott, <i>Caribbean Women Writers and Postcolonial Imperialism</i> in <u>Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence</u> , 2006. Ashgate Publishing Ltd. Introduction pp. 1-23. [Reserves] Barbara Shaw Perry, <i>Cultural Identity, Resistance & Writing Postcolonial Writing from the African-Caribbean/British Borderlands: Joan Riley's The Unbelonging</i> . Society for Caribbean Studies Annual Conference Papers edited by Sandra Courtman. Vol. 1, 2000. ISSN 1471-2024.
Tue September 20 Readings:	<u>Writing the Self – Narrative as History, Theory, Agency and Activism</u> [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
Thu September 22 Readings:	<u>Caribbean Feminism Sexuality, and Post Colonial Limitations</u> [Reserves] Vera M. Kutzinski. <i>Improprieties: Feminism, Queerness, and Caribbean Literature</i> , 2001. Macalester International, Vol.10, article 18. [On line] Responses to Kutzinski's articles by Anne Gomez-Huff (2001) and Michelle Wright (2001). Macalester International, Vol 10 article 19 and 20.
Tue September 27	<u>Student Roundtable Papers</u> ***Critical Analysis/Reflexive Paper 1 due in class***

Thu September 29 Readings:	<u>Women's Access to Authorship: Re-envisioning History</u> [Text] Browdy De Hernandez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 1
Tue October 04 Readings:	<u>Women's Access to Authorship: The Politics of Language and Identity</u> [Text] Browdy De Hernandez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 2
Thu October 06 Readings:	<u>Women's Access to Authorship: Strategies of Resistance</u> [Text] Browdy De Hernandez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 3
Tue October 11	<i>No Class. Monday's schedule will be observed</i>
Thu October 13 Readings:	<u>Review and Questions – Student Papers</u> ***Critical Analysis/Reflexive paper 2 due in class***
Tue October 18 Readings:	<u>Caribbean Creolization: Language, Literature and Identity</u> [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. [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 20	<u>Framing Indo-Caribbean Women Writers</u> [Reserves] Mehta, Brenda. <i>Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani</i> , 2004, pp. 1-27 & 132-154. University of the West Indies Press. [Reserves] Verene A. Shepherd, <i>Constructing Visibility: Indian Women in the Jamaican Segment of the Indian Diaspora</i> , <u>Gendered Realities</u> , Patricia Mohammed, 2002. Univ. of the West Indies Press, 107-127.
Tue October 25	***Mid-Term Examinations due in class***
Thu October 27 Readings:	<u>Contextualizing Fiction and Theory 1</u> [Text] Dennis-Benn, <i>Here Comes the Sun</i> , pp 9-180
Tue November 01 Readings:	<u>Contextualization Fiction and Theory 2</u> [Text] Dennis-Benn, <i>Here Comes the Sun</i> , pp 181-345
Thu November 03	<u>Round Table Discussion and Writing Exercises: Fiction and Theory</u> [Text] Dennis-Benn, <i>Here Comes the Sun</i>
Tue November 08 Readings:	<u>Art, Empire, Race, Gender, Sexuality</u> . Video Screening: <i>The Art of Darkness</i> ***Here Comes the Sun assignment due in class***
Thu November 10	<u>Performing Culture: Oraliture, Politics, Gender, Race, Sexuality</u> Calypso, Poetry, Spoken Word, Traditional Oral Stories, Talk Stories
Tue November 15	***No Class – Veteran's Day Holiday (Schedule on Wednesday)***

Thu November 17	<u>Dress as Resistance, Dress as Accommodation, Culture and Protest</u> [Reserves] Buckridge, Steve. <i>The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890</i> , 2004. The University of the West Indies Press. Chapter 2, pp. 67-110 & chapter 3, pp. 111-173
November 20-27	***Thanksgiving Recess***
Tue November 29	<u>Check-ins and Final Research Assignment Consults</u>
Thu December 01	<u>Student Panels – Research Papers</u>
Tue December 06	<u>Student Panels – Research Papers</u>
Thu December 08	<u>Student Panels – Research Papers</u>
Thu December 13	<u>Jubilation a la Caribbean and Closing Exercises</u> ***Research Assignments Due***