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**WOMENSST 393C**  
**Fall 2012**  
**Schedule #: 60548**

**Caribbean Women Writing**  
**Resistance Identity & Politics**  
**Tue & Thu: 1:00 – 2:15 pm**  
**Bart 302**

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

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Office & Hours: Bartlett 7B » Tuesdays 2:30 – 4:00 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 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 25<sup>th</sup> and Thursday October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012.* 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 Thursday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012.*
- Response/analytical paper to the text, The Burning Bush Women by Cherie Jones – 10%. *Due on Thursday November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012.* Details, options, and guidelines will be given and discussed.
- Research Assignment, 10-15 pages – 25%, *due Tuesday December 04<sup>th</sup>, 2012.* 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 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 authenticated with reasons or examples, and you must keep your fellow classmate and readers in mind. Are you giving the reader enough information? Keep the following:

- 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 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 interdisciplinaritys?
- 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 piece? 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?

***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> . 2004. ISBN: 0-896087085, South End Press
	Evelyn O’Callaghan, <i>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939: “A Hot Place, Belonging to Us”</i> . 2004. Routledge. ISBN: 041528835.
	Cherie Jones, <i>The Burning Bush Women</i> . 2004. Peepal Tree Press. ISBN: 9781900715584

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 04	<p><b><u>Introduction to Course</u></b></p> <p>Exercises, Expectations, Syllabus, Preamble to the Caribbean Diaspora.</p>
Thu September 06	<p><b><u>Contextualizing Caribbean Feminism</u></b></p> <p>Readings: [Handout] Geo-Politics of the Caribbean, Contextualizing Caribbean Feminism and Development.</p> <p>[Handout] <i>Paradise Revealed: Readings in Caribbean Literature. Two Questions</i>. Erika J. Waters, Ph.D. 2009. www.rtbot.net/caribbean-literature.</p> <p>[Handout] Momsen Janet, <i>The Double Paradox in Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Thought</i>. Patricia Mohammed, 2002. University of the West Indies Press, pp. 44-55.</p>
Tue September 11	<p><b><u>Gender, Sexuality and Diaspora Identity</u></b></p> <p>Readings: [E-Reserves] Gourdine, Angela KM. Chapter 5, pp. 80-102 in <i>The Difference Place Makes</i>, 2002. Ohio State University Press.</p> <p>[E-Reserves] DeCosta-Willis, Miriam. <i>Daughters of the Diaspora: Afra Hispanic Writers</i>, 2003, pp. 26-41 &amp; 43-67. Ian Randle Publishers: Kingston, Jamaica.</p> <p>[E-Reserves] Michelle Rowley. <i>Reconceptualizing Voice: The Role of Matrifocality in Shaping Theories and Caribbean Voices in Gendered Realities</i> by Patricia Mohammed, 2002. University of the West Indies Press, 22-43.</p>
Thu September 13	<p><b><u>Historical Themes of Postcolonialism, Imperialism, and Independence</u></b></p> <p>Readings: [E-Reserves] Helen Scott, <i>Caribbean Women Writers and Postcolonial Imperialism in Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence</i>, 2006. Ashgate Publishing Ltd. Introduction pp. 1-23.</p> <p>[E-Reserves] Barbara Shaw Perry, <i>Cultural Identity, Resistance &amp; 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.</p>
Tue September 18	<p><b><u>Caribbean Feminism Sexuality and Caribbean Literature</u></b></p> <p>Readings: [E-Reserves] Vera M. Kutzinski. <i>Improprieties: Feminism, Queerness, and Caribbean Literature</i>, 2001. Macalester International, Vol.10, article 18.</p> <p>[On line] Responses to Kutzinski's articles by Anne Gomez-Huff (2001) and Michelle Wright (2001). Macalester International, Vol 10 article 19 and 20.</p>
Thu September 20	<p><b><u>Writing the Self – Narrative as History, Theory, Agency and Activism</u></b></p> <p>Readings: [E-Reserves] Ferguson, Moira. <i>The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave</i>, 2004, pp. 55-94. University of Michigan Press.</p> <p>[Handout] Garcelle Champagne. 2008 Commonwealth College Honors Thesis</p>
Tue September 25	<p><b><u>Student Roundtable Papers</u></b></p> <p>***Critical Analysis/Reflexive Paper 1 due in class***</p>

Thu September 27	<b><u>Women's Access to Authorship: Re-envisioning History</u></b>
Readings:	[Text] Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 1
Tue October 2	<b><u>Women's Access to Authorship: The Politics of Language and Identity</u></b>
Readings:	[Text] Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 2
Thu October 04	<b><u>Women's Access to Authorship: Strategies of Resistance</u></b>
Readings:	[Text] Browdy De Hernandez & Martinez, <u>Women Writing Resistance</u> , Part 3
Tue October 09	<i>No Class. Monday's schedule will be observed</i>
Thu October 11	<b><u>Contextualizing the Term West Indian Women/Women of the Caribbean</u></b>
Readings:	[Text] O'Callaghan, <u>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939</u> , pp. 1-57. ***Critical Analysis/Reflexive paper 2 due in class***
Tue October 16	<b><u>Early Narratives and Problems of 'Categorization'</u></b>
Readings:	[Text] O'Callaghan, <u>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939</u> , pp. 58-117
Thu October 18	<b><u>The West Indies as Trope &amp; Theoretical Considerations</u></b>
Readings:	[Text] O'Callaghan, <u>Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939</u> , pp. 118-13
Tue October 23	<b><u>Video Screening: Caribbean Documentaries</u></b>
Thu October 25	<b><u>Student Discussions - Mid-Term Examinations</u></b>
Readings:	***Mid-term Examinations due in class***
Tue October 30	<b><u>Caribbean Creolization: Language, Literature and Identity</u></b>
Readings:	[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. [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 November 01	<b><u>Framing Indo-Caribbean Women Writers</u></b>
Readings:	[E-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. [E-Reserves] Verene A. Shepherd, <i>Constructing Visibility: Indian Women in the Jamaican Segment of the Indian Diaspora</i> in <u>Gendered Realities</u> by Patricia Mohammed, 2002. University of the West Indies Press, 107-127.
Tue November 06	<b><u>Dress as Resistance, Dress as Accommodation</u></b>
Readings:	[E-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.

Thu November 08	<b><u>Performing Culture: Oraliture, Politics, Gender, Race, Sexuality</u></b> Calypso, Poetry, Spoken Word, Traditional Oral Stories, Talk Stories
Tue November 13	*** <b>No Class – Veteran’s Day Holiday (Schedule on Wednesday)</b> ***
Thu November 15	<b><u>Student Discussions Papers</u></b> *** <i>The Burning Bush Women Analysis Paper due in class</i> ***
Tue November 20	<b><u>Check-ins: Research Papers</u></b>
November 21-25	*** <i>Thanksgiving Recess</i> ***
Tue November 27	<b><u>Student Roundtable – Research Papers</u></b>
Thu November 29	<b><u>Student Roundtable – Research Papers</u></b>
Tue December 04	<b><u>Student Roundtable – Research Papers</u></b> *** <i>Research Assignment Due</i> ***
Thu December 06	<b><u>Jubilation a la Caribbean and Closing Exercises</u></b>