

Carleton University
Fall 2013
Department of English Language and Literature

ENGL 3940A: *Studies in Diaspora Literature: Novels of the Caribbean*

Mondays and Wednesdays 1-2:30 PM
Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*

Instructor: Sarah G. Waisvisz
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Office Hours: Mondays 3-4:30 and Wednesdays 11-12:30 or by appointment

Course Description

How can we define “diaspora”? What is “diaspora literature”? What is a diasporic subject or a diasporan? Can one choose to be diasporan or is it a question of geography? Though we will look at several different examples of diaspora in order to set our context, this course will focus the question of “diaspora” on the literature of the *Caribbean diaspora*. Diaspora in the Caribbean context can be seen as DOUBLE-faced: The Caribbean region itself is a diasporic space because of its combination of social and cultural ties to pre-contact indigenous peoples, Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, with the result that Caribbean people can be thought of as having multiple different “homelands.” Moreover, the Caribbean region is also the origin site for diasporic people who immigrate elsewhere, including to Canada, the US, France, and England. We can look to the Caribbean region as a microcosm of our globalized, inter-connected, colonial-legacy society. With its confluence of seas and trade winds; movement of slaves, labourers, and merchants; confrontation and syncretism of cultures and languages; and often traumatic mixing of people and histories, the Caribbean region and its literature can enrich our understanding of contemporary world events. Since all the creative texts we will read are written by women writers, major course themes will include how gender and sexuality intersect with experiences of diaspora and the related issues of race, racism, class, immigration, exile, servitude, violence, language, religion, belonging/unbelonging, indigeneity, violations of human rights, and the omnipresent machine of imperialism/colonialism.

Texts/ Reading List

All the required texts, except the first 3 articles, are novels. You may beg, borrow, or buy any copy of the text that you wish, but ultimately having the same edition as your peers is easiest for referencing pages and passages. Paperback editions of all the texts will be available at Octopus Books (116 Third Ave. in the Glebe: 613-233-2589). Copies, though not necessarily of the same edition, will also be available on Reserve at the Carleton Library. Links or copies of the articles will be available on CU Learn or on Reserve.

Some novels are long, some are short, some are "quick reads." I have tried to balance the reading list accordingly.

- a. article: "Diasporas." By James Clifford. *Cultural Anthropology*. 9 (3). 302-338. 1994.
- b. article: "Introduction." By Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller. *Rites and Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*. New York: Columbia UP, 2011.
- c. article: "The Strange Career of Xenophobia." *Everybody Was Kung-Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*. By Vijay Prashad. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.
- 1. Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. 1988.
ISBN: 9780374527075.
- 2. Danticat, Edwidge. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. New York: Soho/ Vintage, 1994.
ISBN: 9780375705045.
- 3. Espinet, Ramabai. *The Swinging Bridge*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 2004.
ISBN: 9780006485957
- 4. Garcia, Christina. *Dreaming in Cuban*. Toronto: Random House, 1992.
ISBN: 9780345381439.
- 5. Brand, Dionne. *What We All Long For*. Toronto: Vintage, 2005.
ISBN: 9780676976939
- 6. Levy, Andrea. *Small Island*. London: Review (Macmillan), 2004.
ISBN: 9780755307500.
- 7. Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Vancouver: Press Gang, 1996.
ISBN: 9780771064005.

Course Calendar/ Schedule of Readings

Week	Date	Topic / Reading Due	Assignment
1	Sept. 9	Introduction. Course Outline. Teaching Philosophy.	
1	Sept. 11	Geography of the Caribbean World.	
2	Sept. 16	Clifford, James. "Diasporas"; Hirsch, Marianne & Nancy K. Miller. "Introduction."	
2	Sept. 18	Prashad, Vijay. "Xenophobia."	last day to register/add-drop course
3	Sept. 23	Kincaid, Jamaica. <i>A Small Place</i> .	
3	Sept. 25	Kincaid, Jamaica. <i>A Small Place</i> .	
4	Sept. 30	Danticat, Edwidge. <i>Breath, Eyes, Memory</i> .	
4	Oct. 2	Danticat, Edwidge. <i>Breath, Eyes, Memory</i> .	
5	Oct. 7	Espinet, Ramabai. <i>The Swinging Bridge</i> .	
5	Oct. 9	Espinet, Ramabai. <i>The Swinging Bridge</i> .	
6	Oct. 14: NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS.	No class. Write.
6	Oct. 16	Special Class, no class prep: Topic TBA. **NB: Your first Essay is due (25%) **	Essay is due.
7	Oct. 21	Garcia, Christina. <i>Dreaming in Cuban</i> .	
7	Oct. 23	Garcia, Christina. <i>Dreaming in Cuban</i> .	
8	Oct. 28: NO CLASS	READING WEEK: NO CLASS: please read <i>What We All Long For!</i> It is long.	No class. Read.
8	Oct. 30: NO CLASS	READING WEEK: NO CLASS: please read <i>What We All Long For!</i> It is long.	No class. Read.
9	Nov. 4	Brand, Dionne. <i>What We All Long For</i> .	
9	Nov. 6	Brand, Dionne. <i>What We All Long For</i> .	
10	Nov. 11	Levy, Andrea. <i>Small Island</i> .	
10	Nov. 13	Levy, Andrea. <i>Small Island</i> .	
11	Nov. 18	Levy, Andrea. <i>Small Island</i> .	
11	Nov. 20	Levy, Andrea. <i>Small Island</i> .	
12	Nov. 25	Mootoo, Shani. <i>Cereus Blooms at Night</i> .	
12	Nov. 27	Mootoo, Shani. <i>Cereus Blooms at Night</i> .	
13	Dec. 2	Mootoo, Shani. <i>Cereus Blooms at Night</i> .	
13	Dec. 4	Mootoo, Shani. <i>Cereus Blooms at Night</i> .	
14	Dec. 9	Last Day of Class: ** NB: Final Project is due (30%) **	Final Project is due. Last day to withdraw.

Course Evaluation

Attendance:

Your attendance is vital to the success of our work together this semester. Please do not miss class for anything short of an emergency. If you need an extension for any reason, please notify me well in advance so that we can work together on finding a solution. Although only 10% of your final grade is based on attendance, you will automatically fail the course if you miss too many classes, since if you miss more than 1 class for a non-legitimate reason your attendance grade will be lowered one letter grade for each missed class. I encourage you to communicate with me if you are ill, in crisis, or experiencing personal distress; all matters will be treated confidentially and together we can find solutions for class work and attendance.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Your final grade will be based on attendance, four in-class writing assignments, one essay, and one final project. In-class writing assignments will make up 35 percent of your grade; your essay and final project will each count for 25 percent and 30 percent, respectively. In each case, regular attendance and keeping up with the reading will ensure you do well in this course.

Attendance/Informed Participation (10%):

Attendance/Informed Participation will count for 10 percent of your grade. If you attend every class, or miss one class, and engage in class discussion/contribute to the discussion in an informed way, you will receive an “A” for attendance. If you miss more than 1 class your attendance grade will be lowered one letter grade for each missed class. For example, if you miss two classes you will receive a “B” for attendance, and if you miss three you will receive a “C.”

In-Class Writing (35%):

Over the course of the semester, there will be 4 un-announced in-class writing assignments. These may take the form of brief responses to the reading, or of reading quizzes. They are designed to ensure that you attend class, keep up with the reading, and give the reading some thought in advance of our class meetings. For this reason, you will not be allowed to make up these assignments.

Essay (25%):

You will write one 5-page essay. When reading this essay, I will look for clear, communicative writing, as well as original and convincing analysis of the text/s in question. The goal of this essay is to engage effectively with the text/s. Grammar, spelling, and correct use of MLA Style will be discussed in class prior to the due-date of the essay, and so will be required components of the essay and the final project.

Final Project (30%):

This project, due at the end of the semester, will evolve out of our work over the course of the term. You will have the option to either write a second essay or to work in another format (photo album, Powerpoint presentation or “prezzie,” collage, video, website, or a creative writing project). For this project, whether it be an essay or otherwise, you will

consult with me before choosing a topic and we will agree on the evaluation scheme in advance.

Laptops and Cell Phones:

Please note that our classroom will be device-free. Each week two students will volunteer to take notes (on laptops) for the entire group. (They will receive extra credit for taking careful and accurate notes). These notes will be posted on CU-Learn. Otherwise, the only students allowed to use laptops in the classroom will be those with special permission from the Paul Menton Centre. Likewise, students will not be allowed to use cell phones or other devices for any purpose during class. If you do use a device in class, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is cheating.

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence and it cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Final Grades:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first

two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov. 8, 2013 for the Fall term and March 7, 2014 for the Winter term. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.