

Prof. Sarah Casteel
520-2600 ext. 2306
sarah_casteel@carleton.ca
1801 Dunton Tower
office hours: Tuesdays 10:00-12:00

ENGL 5606G, Winter 2011
Blacks and Jews:
Comparative Diasporas in Transnational Perspective

Thurs. 10:05-12:55, 1816 Dunton Tower

Course Description:

Diaspora studies is increasingly moving away from the study of isolated minority groups in favour of a "comparative diasporas" or "comparative racializations" approach. One of the richest sites for this kind of comparative analysis is the fraught history of Black-Jewish relations in the United States, a history that includes both Civil Rights-era cooperation between Blacks and Jews and more recent controversies surrounding the Crown Heights riots and Jewish participation in the slave trade. Scholarship on Black-Jewish relations in the U.S. has highlighted the racial instability of Jewishness as well as the narratives of slavery, exodus, and return that the African and Jewish diasporas share.

How might this picture be complicated, however, by a consideration of Black-Jewish dynamics that moves beyond the American literary scene? Black British critic Paul Gilroy, for example, takes pains to acknowledge a debt to Jewish thinkers in *The Black Atlantic*, while Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora novelists such as Maryse Condé and Caryl Phillips explore connections and disconnections between Jewish and Black experiences of persecution and displacement. Why does Jewishness emerge as a key reference point for some Caribbean writers? How does the Holocaust figure in the literature of Caribbean decolonization? How do Caribbean writers approach the vexed question of the relationship of Jews to New World slavery?

This seminar will adopt a comparative diasporas approach in order to consider not only prominent American texts that treat Black-Jewish relations but also less well-known Caribbean engagements with Jewish motifs. Alongside fiction, memoir and theoretical writing, we will discuss a number of evocative works of performance, music and film.

Course Requirements and Grading Scheme:

25%	regular attendance and active participation, including weekly 1-paragraph responses to the assigned reading by email, due by 9 pm on the night before the class in which that text is being discussed (you do not need to write one for the day on which you are presenting) → these responses should be brief but thoughtful, raising questions about the reading or identifying a passage or motif that you found particularly striking (no plot summaries please!)
30%	15-minute (roughly 7 double-spaced pages) conference-paper style presentation on an assigned text → please send me a brief email a couple of days before your presentation indicating what your focus will be; submit a hard copy of your presentation to me at the beginning of class and distribute a handout to the other students summarizing your basic argument
45%	15-page expanded and refined version of your oral presentation → in MLA format (12 point font, double spaced) due in the final class

Texts (available at Haven Books, 43 Seneca St. at Sunnyside, 730-9888):

Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (Plume)

Maryse Condé, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (University of Virginia)

Bernard Malamud, *The Tenants* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

Caryl Phillips, *The Nature of Blood* (Random House)

Philip Roth, *The Human Stain* (Vintage)

Alice Walker, *Meridian* (Harcourt)

course binder available in English Dept. photocopy room (containing readings marked*)

Accommodations:

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course are encouraged to contact a coordinator at the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities to complete the necessary letters of accommodation. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet and discuss your needs with me at least two weeks prior to assignment deadlines.

Plagiarism:

See the statement on Instructional Offences in the Graduate Calendar.

Schedule of Readings (subject to revision)

date	topic	readings and screenings
Jan 6	introduction	Black/Jewish musical intersections
Jan 13	minstrelsy and the construction of whiteness	<u>screening</u> : <i>The Jazz Singer</i> (clips) Rogin, <i>Blackface, White Noise</i> , Ch. 4* Gilman, "The Jewish Nose"* Brodkin, "How the Jews Became White Folks"* Diner, <i>In the Almost Promised Land</i> , ch. 1*
Jan 20	competing for the house of fiction	Malamud, <i>The Tenants</i> Ozick, "Literary Blacks and Jews"*
Jan 27	Civil Rights	Walker, <i>Meridian</i> Baldwin, "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White" Carson, "The Politics of Relations between African-Americans and Jews"
Feb 3	Crown Heights	<u>screening</u> : <i>Fires in the Mirror</i> Smith, "Introduction"* Jay, "Other People's Holocausts"*
Feb 10	passing	Roth, <i>The Human Stain</i> Itzkovitz, "Passing Like Me"*
Feb 17	interracial memoir	Azoulay, <i>Black, Jewish and Interracial</i> ("Prelude")* Walker, <i>Black, White and Jewish</i> (1-75)* McBride, <i>The Color of Water</i> (1-105)*
Feb 24	Reading Week	
March 3	pan-Africanism, Black Zionism and decolonization	Blyden, "The Jewish Question"* DuBois, "The Case for the Jews," "Africa, Colonialism, and Zionism," "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto"* Césaire, <i>Discourse on Colonialism</i> (9-25)* Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> (ch. 4+5)* Gilroy, <i>The Black Atlantic</i> (205-223)*
March 10	Jews and slavery in the Americas	Condé, <i>I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem</i> Davis, "Jews in the Slave Trade"*
March 17	Holocausts I	Phillips, <i>The Nature of Blood</i> Phillips, "In the Ghetto," "Anne Frank's Amsterdam"*
March 24	Holocausts II	Cliff, <i>Abeng</i> Cliff, "Sites of Memory"*
March 31	conclusion	essay due

