

World Cultures: The Caribbean and Revolutionary Thought

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Spring 2007

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Office Hours: T 11:00-12:15 or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

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What constitutes revolutionary thinking? Our course will examine the Caribbean in four units as a site where radical challenges to and within Western thought have emerged. The first unit begins with the 16th-century theological problem of how to explain the existence of the American continent when these lands were unaccounted for in the Scriptures; this unit ends with the debate in the Spanish court and universities at that time on whether the "Indian" possessed a soul. The second unit focuses on the enigmas of freedom during the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), when slaves defeated Napoleon's army, thereby creating the world's only successful slave rebellion and the second independent nation-state in the hemisphere. The third unit examines the Cuban Socialist Revolution (1959) through an interrogation of the relationship between man and society that Fidel Castro and Che Guevara advocated. The final unit investigates whether the Caribbean is currently undergoing a revolution based on neoliberal economics; the focus will be on Jamaica and its long traditions of both participating in and resisting the world economy. Materials for analysis will also include political speeches, films, and song lyrics.

Booklist (Purchase at NYU Bookstore)

Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies*
C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*
Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*
Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Che Guevara, *Manifesto: Three Classic Essays on How To Change the World*
Edmundo Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment*
Bonham C. Richardson, *The Caribbean In the Wider World, 1492-1992*
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Evaluation of Final Grade:

3 Papers (5 pages each):	45%
1 Mid-Term Exam:	20%
Participation (& Attendance):	10%
Final Exam:	25%

Attendance Policy:

You are expected to attend all lectures and recitation sections. Please note that more than 4 unexcused absences during the semester will result in the reduction of your final grade. Obviously, you cannot participate if you do not attend the lectures and recitation sections. (A helpful hint: since participation will amount to 10% of your final grade, please take the time to participate in your recitation sections in ways that will be meaningful for your own learning experience and that of your classmates. Good participation does not mean participating for the sake of participating but answering questions intelligently and also posing good ones.)

Readings and Assignments:

[(Bb) = document on Blackboard site]

Wednesday, January 17:

Introduction

Lecture Subject: Maps, Mappings, and Routes.

Monday, January 22:

Readings: Bonham Richardson, "The Creation of the Caribbean" and "A Colonized Environment" [in *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992.*]

Lecture Subject: Approaching the Caribbean Region

Unit 1: "Discovery," "Conquest," and the Souls of the Indigenous

Wednesday, January 24:

Readings: Matthew Restall, "A Handful of Adventurers: The Myth of Exceptional Men" [in *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford, 2003)] (Bb)

Lecture Subject: Conquest, Empire, and "What is the Indian?"

Monday, January 29:

Reading: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account* (Johns Hopkins, 1992)

Lecture Subject: The Debate between Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda

Wednesday, January 31:

Reading: Anthony Pagden, “The Theory of Natural Slavery” (**Bb**)

Lecture Subject: “Natural Slavery” and Sepúlveda’s Arguments

Monday, February 5:

Readings: Anthony Pagden, “The Theory of Natural Slavery” (**Bb**)

Viewing: First part of Roland Joffé’s *The Mission* (1986).

Wednesday, February 7:

Readings: Matthew Restall, “The Indians Are Coming to an End: The Myth of Native Desolation” (**Bb**)

Lecture Subject: Review & Summary of Issues

Monday, February 12:

Turn in First Paper (5 pages)

Lecture Subject: Writing About the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804)

Unit 2: Slavery and the Haitian Revolution

Wednesday, February 14:

Reading: C.L.R James, “Prologue,” “The Property,” and “The Owners” in *The Black Jacobins*

Lecture Subject: The Haitian Revolution and Hegel’s “Master and Slave Dialectic”

Monday, February 19:

Holiday: Presidents' Day

Wednesday, February 21:

Readings: C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, "The War of Independence"

Lecture Subject: Further Reflections on Freedom

Monday, February 26:

Readings: Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*, Part One

Viewing: Tomás González Alea's *La última cena* [The Last Supper] (1976) (first part of film)

Wednesday, February 28:

Readings: Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*, Parts Two and Three

Lecture Subject: *The Kingdom of This World*, Parts 1-3

Monday, March 5:

Readings: Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World*, Part Four

Lecture Subject: Comparing C.L.R. James and Alejo Carpentier on the Haitian Revolution

Wednesday, March 7:

Turn in Second Paper (5 pages)

Readings: C.L.R. James, "Appendix: From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro" in *The Black Jacobins*

Lecture Subject: Caribbean Anti-Colonial Struggles

Monday, March 12: **Spring Break**

Wednesday, March 14: **Spring Break**

Monday, March 19:

Mid-Term Exam

Unit 3: The Cuban Socialist Revolution

Wednesday, March 21:

Readings: Marx and Engels, “The Communist Manifesto” in *Manifesto*

Lecture Subject: Communist Manifesto

Monday, March 26:

Readings: Louis A. Pérez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930-1959” in *Cuba: A Short History* (**Bb**)

Viewing: Mikhail Kalatozov’s *Soy Cuba/ I Am Cuba* (1964) (first two episodes)

Wednesday, March 28:

Readings: Che Guevara, “Socialism and Man in Cuba” in *Manifesto*

Lecture Subject: Socialism: Theory and Practice

Monday, April 2:

Readings: Edmundo Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, from beginning to page 50

Lecture Subject:

Wednesday, April 4:

Readings: Edmundo Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, from page 50 to end

Lecture Subject: Summary of Issues

Monday, April 9:

Turn in Third Paper (5 pages)

Lecture Subject: Contemporary Cuba

Unit 4: The Neo-Liberal Economic Revolution

Wednesday, April 11:

Readings: Martin Kohr, “A Closer Look: The World Bank” (**Bb**) and Anwar Shaikh, “Globalization and the Myth of Free Trade” (**Bb**)

Lecture Subject: Neoliberalism

Monday, April 16:

Readings: Leonard Barrett, Sr., “Paradise Island” from *The Rastafarians* (**Bb**) and Bob Marley’s lyrics (**Bb**)

Listen: Bob Marley’s Songs (**Bb**)

Lecture Subject: Rastafarianism and an Analysis of Marley’s Songs

Wednesday, April 18:

Readings: Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*

Lecture Subject: Tourism in the Caribbean

Monday, April 23:

Readings: Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*

Viewing: Stephanie Black (Dir.), *Life and Debt*

Wednesday, April 25:

Analysis of Black’s Film and **Conclusion**

Monday, April 30:

Final Exam