World Cultures: The Caribbean and Revolutionary Thought

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Fall 2007

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Office Hours: W 4:00-5:00 or by appointment

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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*
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:

For any issues concerning your attendance, please contact your recitation instructor. 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 the course's Blackboard site]

Wednesday, September 5:

Introduction

Lecture Subject: Maps, Mappings, and Routes.

Monday, September 10:

Readings: Bonham Richardson, "The Creation of the Caribbean" and "A Colonized Environment" (**Bb**)

Lecture Subject: Approaching the Caribbean Region

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

Wednesday, September 12:

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, September 17:

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, September 19:

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

Lecture Subject: "Natural Slavery" and Sepúlveda's Arguments

Monday, September 24:

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

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

Wednesday, September 26:

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

Lecture Subject: Review & Summary of Issues

Monday, October 1:

Turn in First Paper (5 pages)

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

Unit 2: Slavery and the Haitian Revolution

Wednesday, October 3:

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, October 8:

No Classes

Wednesday, October 10:

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

Lecture Subject: Further Reflections on Freedom

Monday, October 15:

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, October 17:

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

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

Monday, October 22:

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, October 24:

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

Lecture Subject: Caribbean Anti-Colonial Struggles

Unit 3: The Cuban Socialist Revolution

Monday, October 29:

Mid-Term Exam

Wednesday, October 31:

Readings: Marx and Engels, "The Communist Manifesto" in *Manifesto*

Lecture Subject: Communist Manifesto

Monday, November 5:

Readings: Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Cuba, c. 1930-1959" in *Cuba: A Short History* (**Bb**) and Che Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba" in *Manifesto*

Lecture Subject: Socialism: Theory and Practice I

Wednesday, November 7:

Turn in Second Paper (5 pages)

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

Monday, November 12:

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

Lecture Subject: Socialism: Theory and Practice II

Wednesday, November 14:

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

Lecture Subject: Summary of Issues

Monday, November 19:

Lecture Subject: Contemporary Cuba

Unit 4: The Neo-Liberal Economic Revolution

Wednesday, November 21:

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

Thanksgiving Recess: Thursday, November 22 – Sunday, November 24.

Monday, November 26:

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

Lecture Subject: Neoliberalism

Wednesday, November 28:

Turn in Third Paper (5 pages)

Readings: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

Lecture Subject: Tourism in the Caribbean

Monday, December 3:

Readings: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

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

Wednesday, December 8:

Analysis of Black's Film

Monday, December 10:

Conclusion and Review

Wednesday, December 12:

Final Exam [in class]