Course description

Known for its beauty, cultural vitality, and diverse mix of peoples, cultures, and languages, the Caribbean is where today’s globalization began some 500 years ago, and where the idea of “modernity” took shape. Its sugar economy and colonial history of slave labor and indenture made it the site of massive transplantations of peoples and cultures from Africa for four centuries, from Asia and the Middle East for two centuries, and, throughout, a sizeable influx of peoples from Europe.

This course examines Caribbean colonial and postcolonial histories and cultures, focusing on the relationship between processes of development and exploitation of the region. It also explores local ideas about race, class, culture, gender, and sexuality, which both justify and challenge these processes. We will tack between the past and the present, in order to better understand the relationship between historical and contemporary forces. Our coverage will be interdisciplinary, and will include ethnographic and other non-fiction works, fiction, and films.

Required reading

(1) *A Small Place*, by Jamaica Kincaid (in NYU bookstore)
(2) *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*, by Lorgia García-Peña (in NYU bookstore)
(3) *The Pagoda*, by Patricia Powell (in NYU bookstore)
Other course requirements

All students are expected to attend lectures and recitation sections, to arrive on time, to participate in class discussions, and to complete assignments by the date they are due. Students are permitted two “free” absences (combined lecture and recitation); more than two absences will result in a drop of one letter in your final grade—UNLESS you have verifiable documentation of a medical or comparable emergency. Attendance and class participation in lecture and recitation section are factored into your final grade (attendance is taken in both lecture and recitation), so your own efforts to be with us and participate can make a difference.

You will post one Brief Communique each week to your recitation section. These will be one or two paragraphs on some aspect of the reading or lecture material. Brief communiques will be read by everyone in your section, as well as your T.A., before the section meeting time, and discussed in section. The brief communiques, along with attendance and participation, will total 20% of your final grade.

You will write three Response Essays (see schedule of topics below for due dates). Each paper will be four (double-spaced) pages, which together will total 60% of your final grade (20% for each paper).

You will take one Comprehensive Final Exam, held in class on the university assigned final exam date, which will be 20% of your final grade. Material covered on the final exam will not include the subject matter covered in the 3 response papers.

Grading scales


Overall: 100-95=A, 94-90=A-, 89-85=B+, 84-80=B, 79-75=B-, 74-70=C+, 69-65=C, 64-60=C-59-50=D, 49-0=F

Additional assistance for this class is available to you free of charge at the College Learning Center, located on the 1st floor of Weinstein Hall. For information on one-on-one and group peer tutoring, please stop by the CLC or go to their website: http://www.nyu.edu/cas/clc

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Wed Sept 6 Overview of the course

Mon Sept 11 Foundations: class exercise
Reading: Aisha Khan, “Africa, Europe, and Asia in the Making of the 20th Century Caribbean” (in course pack)

Wed Sept 13 Foundations: Interpreting the Caribbean
Reading: Dawn Marshall, “The History of Caribbean Migrations: The Case of the West Indies” (in course pack)
Film: “Redemption Song: Iron in the Soul,” Episode 1, parts A and B

Mon Sept 18 Interpreting the Caribbean continued
Reading: Karen Fog Olwig “Introduction” (pp. 1-33, Caribbean Journeys, e-book in Bobcat)
**Wed Sept 20** Interpreting the Caribbean continued  
**Reading:** Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “North Atlantic Fictions: Global Transformations, 1492-1945” (in course pack)

**Mon Sept 25** Foundations: colonialism, capitalism, globalization  
**Reading:** continue Trouillot, “North Atlantic Fictions: Global Transformations, 1492-1945”

**Wed Sept 27** Colonialism, capitalism, globalization  
**Reading:** Carlos Guillermo-Wilson, “The Caribbean: Marvelous Cradle-Hammock and Painful Cornucopia” (in course pack)

**Mon Oct 2** Colonialism, capitalism, globalization continued  
**Reading:** begin Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

**Wed Oct 4** Colonialism, capitalism, globalization continued  
**Reading:** continue *A Small Place*  
**Film:** “Life and Debt” (1st part)

**Mon Oct 9** NO CLASSES

**Wed Oct 11** Colonialism, capitalism, globalization continued  
**Reading:** finish *A Small Place*  
**Film:** “Life and Debt” (2nd part)  
**Response essay #1 due!**

**Mon Oct 16** Agent Provocateurs of Primitive Accumulation (pirates)  
**Reading:** (1) Jennifer Marx, “The Golden Age of Piracy,” (in course pack) and (2) [http://mentalfloss.com/article/58889/9-female-pirates-you-should-know](http://mentalfloss.com/article/58889/9-female-pirates-you-should-know)  
**Film:** “Great Ships, Pirate Ships”

**Wed Oct 18** Pirates continued  
**Reading:** finish pirates reading

**Mon Oct 23** Post-emancipation labor schemes: Asian indenture  
**Reading:** Walton Look Lai, “Push Factors and Migration Trends in India and China”

**Wed Oct 25** Asian indenture continued  
**Reading:** Verene Shepherd, “Indian Migrant Women and Plantation Labour in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Jamaica: Gender Perspectives” (in course pack)

**Mon Oct 30** Asian indenture continued  
**Reading:** Verene Shepherd, “Indian Women and Labour Migration” (in course pack)  
**Film:** “Coolies, Sailors, Settlers”

**Wed Nov 1** Asian indenture continued  
**Reading:** Lisa Yun, “The Depositions” (in course pack)

**Mon Nov 6** Asian indenture continued  
**Reading:** finish all readings 10/23 to 11/1  
**Guest speaker:** Tao Goffe (NYU Department of Social and Cultural Analysis)
**Wed Nov 8** Asians beyond indenture  
*Reading*: begin *The Pagoda*

**Mon Nov 13** Asians beyond indenture continued  
*Reading*: continue *The Pagoda*  
*Guest speaker*: Amanda Perry (NYU Department of Comparative Literature)

**Wed Nov 15** Asians beyond indenture continued  
*Reading*: finish *The Pagoda*  
*Film*: “The Chiney Shop”

**Mon Nov 20** Other Legacies of Racial Formations  
*Reading*: begin *The Borders of Dominicanidad*  
*Response essay #2 due!*

**Wed Nov 22** NO CLASSES, THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Mon Nov 27** Racial Formations continued  
*Reading*: continue *The Borders of Dominicanidad*

**Wed Nov 29** Racial Formations continued  
*Reading*: finish *The Borders of Dominicanidad*

**Mon Dec 4** Racial Formations continued  
*Reading*: tba  
*Guest speaker*: Saudi Garcia (NYU Department of Anthropology)

**Wed Dec 6** Racial Formations continued  
*Reading*: Joan Phillips, “Tourist-Oriented Prostitution in Barbados” (in course pack)  
*Film*: “The Toured”

**Mon Dec 11** Racial Formations continued  
*Reading*: Junot Diaz, “How To Date a Brown Girl, Black Girl, White Girl, or Halfie”

**Wed Dec 13** Racial Formations continued  
*Reading*: Donna P. Hope, “From Browning to Cake Soap: Popular Debates on Skin Bleaching in the Jamaican Dancehall”  
*Response essay #3 due!*

**Wed Dec 20** FINAL EXAM, 12:00-1:50pm, our classroom