Professor: Dr. Diane Accaria-Zavala

Course code: English 8107

Course title: Imagining Caliban: The Presence of the Caribbean in the American Imaginary

Credit Hours: 45 hours / 3 credits

Prerequisites: English 6488 or equivalent or professor's authorization

Course Description: The exploration of the Caribbean (its region and its people) as a presence that informs the texture of the *American imaginary in the formulation of an identity and in the production of a definition of aesthetics that affect literature, cinema, and popular culture.

*Note: As it is still in common usage in academia, the term *American* is used here to denote the U. S.

Course objectives:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

• bring the Caribbean to the forefront of an exploration of the American imaginary and understand how it contributes to the re-mapping of aesthetic constructions, methodologies or practices, and of theories utilized for American literary and/or cultural studies.
• expand the cultural horizon of the intersecting histories of these two regions to accommodate the idea of cultural transmission, or of cultural exchange, rather than solely intrusion or imposition.
• focus and elaborate upon the themes, characters, or settings within chosen American texts (literary and/or cinematographic) that are directly entwined with the Caribbean region and explore how much of what we read or see is native to the Caribbean and how much is imagined.
• elaborate on what advantages and/or disadvantages are gained from using the Caribbean as a backdrop for aesthetic constructions (or deliberations) in the American imaginary.
• understand how cultural, political, economic, and aesthetic relations might work to reconstellate the field of American and/or Caribbean studies, by reinflecting its questions within a larger frame.
• produce scholarly essays that might be developed as thesis topics, conferences or professional publications.
Course Outline (Content and Broad Calendar):

**Part I: Undermining the Myth of Cultural Purity: The Caribbean’s Creolization of America** [Weeks 1, 2 and 3]

Selected readings and discussion will bring some of the chief exponents of Caribbean philosophy, and what has been called "Caliban’s reason" (Paget Henry: 2001), to the forefront of our exploration of the presence of the Caribbean in the American imaginary. The course opens with an examination of how theoretical and philosophical thinkers such as José Martí, Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon, R. Fernández Retamar, Wilson Harris, Stuart Hall, A. Benítez Rojo, Edouard Glissant among others, address and contribute to the re-mapping of aesthetic constructions, methodologies, and/or theories utilized for American and Caribbean literary and cultural studies. The exploration of these works will help students expand the cultural horizon of the intersecting histories of these two regions to accommodate the idea of cultural transmission, or of cultural exchange, rather than solely intrusion or imposition of one region (the US) over the other (the Caribbean). *See course calendar for assigned texts.*

**Part II: Imagining Caliban--The Literary Trope** [Weeks 4-10]

The Caribbean, a powerful source of universality (Benítez Rojo: 1996), will be discovered as a cause of inspiration and creative outburst bestowed upon its neighbor throughout much of the 19th and the 20th century. For the poet in America, Caliban’s children offered a new sound system, a wealth of new images and linguistic cadences or tropes. The Caribbean offered the American novelist opportunities for the aesthetic exploration of the diverse dimensions of reality, a rich source for themes, and a derivation of “otherness” that led to definitions of individual and collective identity.

Here, we focus and elaborate upon the themes, characters, or settings within chosen American literary texts that are directly entwined with the Caribbean region. We may further explore how much of what we read in these texts is native to the Caribbean and how much is imagined. We will also try to see what is gained (or lost) in the use American writers make of “imagining Caliban” for their poetic or fictional discourses and/or constructs. Preference will be given to authors who show an influence or dialogue with ideas proposed by the Caribbean philosophers or theoreticians discussed in Part I, or to those who deliberate over important historical events staged in the Caribbean, or are influenced by aesthetic constructs made by ground-breaking Caribbean artists (such as A. Carpentier, G. García Márquez, or W. Harris).

*See course calendar for assigned texts.*
Part III: Through Prospero’s Eyes--Caliban Goes Hollywood  
[Weeks 11-15]  
The cinema, as perhaps the most important art form of the 20th century, will be the final object of our attention in our intention to bring the Caribbean to the forefront of an exploration of the American imaginary. Representational practices will be examined and linked to the formulation of personal and collective identities. "Movies," Carlos Fuentes has said, "are the bearers of the collective unconscious, the warehouse of modern myths. It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of movies. Hollywood manufactures the archetypes we need to understand our collective life.... American pop archetypes have permeated the world from the mountains of Tibet to the jungles of Brazil." Hence, we focus and elaborate upon the themes, characters, or settings within chosen American film texts that are directly (or indirectly) entwined with the Caribbean region. We may further explore how much of what we see in these film texts is native to the Caribbean and how much is imagined. We will also try to see what is gained (or lost) in the use filmmakers make of “imagining Caliban” for their images and/or constructs. We will further examine the role of the performer in the representational act, especially in the case of Caribbean actors working in American film productions. See course calendar for assigned readings.  

Film Texts (we'll choose at least five; see course calendar; see Filmography for more):  


Teaching strategies*: Seminar based on lectures, class discussions, and student-generated analysis.

Required Resources: Richardson Seminar Room and Screening Room

Method of Evaluation**: 

- at least two brief oral presentations on critical and/or film texts [30%]
- mid-term essay (evaluates analytical & theoretical application skills) [20%]
- investigation of primary / secondary source material for final paper [10%]
- a final class report and research paper [40%]

Grading System: A, B, C, D, F.

*Students that receive services from Occupational Rehabilitation should contact me at the start of the semester to plan for reasonable accommodation and any assistive equipment as recommended by the Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimento (OAPI) of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. Any student who has special needs or requires any type of assistance or accommodation should see me.

**A differentiated evaluation system is available for students with special needs. 

{Evaluación diferenciada disponible para estudiantes con necesidades especiales.}
Bibliography: *Imagining Caliban*
[Note: an asterisk * marks the texts we will read and discuss in class. All others are recommended for your extended research on the theme. For a complete view of what will be assigned specifically, see Assigned Readings list.]

- **Literary Texts** [a sample]

  - **Alcott, Louisa May.** *Moods* [1864]
  - **Behn, Aphra.** *Oroonoko; or the Royal Slave* [1688]
  - **Carpentier, Alejo.** *El reino de este mundo* [1948] / *Los pasos perdidos* [1953]
  - **Cooper, James Fenimore.** *The Last of the Mohicans* [1826]
  - **Crane, Stephen.** “The Open Boat” [1898] / *War is Kind* [1902]
  - **Crane, Hart.** *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane* [1993]
  - **Dos Passos, John.** *USA* [1938]
    - 1919 [1936]
  - **Faulkner, William.** *Absalom, Absalom!* [1936]
    - *Go Down, Moses* [1940]
    - *Intruder in the Dust* [1948]
    - “The Bear” / “Red Leaves” / **“The Old People”**
  - **García Márquez, Gabriel.** *Cien años de soledad* [1967]
    - Los funerales de la mamá grande [1962]
  - **Hemingway, Ernest.** *To Have and Have Not* [1937]
    - *The Old Man and the Sea* [1952]
    - *Islands in the Stream* [1970]
    - “After the Storm” [1939] / “Nobody Ever Dies” [1933]
  - **Hughes, Langston.** *The Weary Blues* [1926]
  - **Mamet, David.** *American Buffalo* [1975]
  - **Marmon Silko, Leslie: Almanac of the Dead* [1991]
  - **McKay, Claude.** *Songs of Jamaica* [1912]
    - *Harlem Shadows* [1922]
    - *Home in Harlem* [1928]
  - **Melville, Herman.** *Moby Dick* [1851]
    - “Benito Cereno” [1856]
  - **Miller, Arthur.** *The Crucible* [1953]
  - **O'Neill, Eugene.** *The Moon of the Caribbees* [1918]
  - **Poe, Edgar Allan.** *The Narrative of Gorden Pym* [1838] / “Eldorado” [1849]
  - **Piñero, Miguel.** *Short Eyes*
  - **Stowe, Harriet Beecher.** *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly* [1852]
Theory / History / Criticism [Caribbean and/or U.S]


*_____. “Prologue: Here We Go Again—Undermining the Myth of Cultural Purity: The Caribbean’s Creolization of America.” In Prospero’s Isles.


- Pre & Post Nineteenth Century Caribbean / U.S. Relations


Twentieth Century Caribbean / U.S. Relations


*Cohn, Deborah. “He was one of us”: The Reception of William Faulkner and the U.S. South by Latin American Authors.” *Comparative Literature Studies*, 34. 2 (1997): 149-169.


Smith, Felipe. "Claude McKay’s “Sensitive Savages”: Ariel and Caliban in the Metropole." In \textit{Prospero’s Isles}.


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Cinema / Popular Culture


Benitez Rojo, Antonio. “Reflections After Seeing \textit{Guys & Dolls}.” In \textit{Prospero’s Isles}.


- **Filmography: Caribbean Images** (a sample of USA productions; see *Course Calendar* for specific screenings and film assignments)

English 8107 / Assigned Readings

A. Texts [ordered for you at Borders (Plaza Las Americas) under my name and course number]

*Historical / Theory:*


*Literature:*

- **Behn**, Aphra. *Oroonoko; or the Royal Slave* [1688]
- **Cooper**, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans* [1826]
- **Faulkner**, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* [1936]
- **_**. *Intruder in the Dust* [1948]
- **Hemingway**, Ernest. *To Have and Have Not* [1937]
- **_**. *The Old Man and the Sea* [1952]
- **Marmon Silko**, Leslie: *Almanac of the Dead* [1991]
- **Stowe**, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly* [1852]

*NOTE:* Students should be familiar with, or ready to read passages from the work of Gabriel García Márquez in addition to the texts ordered above.

B. On Reserve in the *Richardson Seminar Room:*


C. A Course Packet available for you to xerox will include the following:


• **Cohn**, Deborah. “‘He was one of us’: The Reception of William Faulkner and the U.S. South by Latin American Authors.” *Comparative Literature Studies*, 34. 2 (1997): 149-169.


NOTE: If *Selected Essays* by Wilson Harris is not available, I will add these to course packet: