University of Puerto Rico
Río Piedras campus
College of Humanities
Department of English

**Course title:** Caribbean Literatures and Languages in a Global Context: Black British Cultural Studies: Theory, Film, Literature, and Popular Culture

**Course number:** INGL 8080/ ENGL 8080

**Course credits:** 3 credits/ 45 hours

**Prerequisites:** INGL 6489: Caribbean Narrative; INGL 6488: Literature, Language, and Culture of the English Speaking Caribbean, or professor’s authorization.

**Course Description:**
Critical study of trends in Black Cultural Studies, as articulated in recent decades by the Race and Politics Committee at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, England, and other theorists; writers and literary performers; film makers from Ceddo, Sankofa, and the Black Audio Film Collective; and popular culture artists.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to:
1. Understand the field of Black British Cultural Studies as a critical field of local and global importance, with special relevance to Caribbean Studies scholars.
2. Recognize the various differing modes in which sociologists, cultural critics, and anti-racism activists have documented the legacies of forced diaspora, slavery, colonization, creolization, decolonization, migration, anti-immigration backlash, and community mobilization in African, Asian, and Caribbean populations settling in Britain, post-WWII.
3. Critically appraise how Cultural Studies critics, writers, and film makers have interrogated essentializing, “absolute” racial categories (i.e. tropes of “Blackness”) and restrictive criteria for national belonging/exclusion maintained by dominant cultures. Evaluate how these critics and artists have responded to British state and media generated racialist discourses and public policies.
4. Historically frame sociopolitical changes in popular and intellectual conceptualizations of race in Britain, from the era of strategic appropriation and deployment of the term “Black” by grassroots social activists groups (1960s-1980s) to the contemporary period (1980s-2000s) of emphasis by African, Asian, and Caribbean-descended critics and artists on anti-essentialist identity politics and plural, heterogeneous, and syncretized
subject positions. Historically contextualize the transitions in race politics as expressed by literary, visual, cinematic, and popular artforms.

5. Trace the field's connection with (and critique of) Cultural Studies, Marxist theory, Modernity/Postmodernity Studies, and Diaspora or Globalization Studies.

6. Analyze the ways in which Gender/Feminist/Womanist Studies and Gay/Lesbian Studies (and expressive arts by women and gay/lesbian artists) have impacted Black British Cultural Studies.

7. Appreciate the relationship between the reformulations of race by Cultural Studies critics and Black popular expressions of racial and cultural affiliation in Britain (in pulp fiction, street carnival, cinema, and dancehall/popular music).

8. Demonstrate knowledge of some of the bibliographic and web sources and research methods appropriate to the advanced study of Black British Cultural theory and African, Asian, and Caribbean diaspora expressive artforms.

9. Initiate the process of independent research and study of texts, which will permit students to formulate original dissertation proposals and write, present, and publish analytical papers.

Course Outline (content and timeframe):

Introduction to the course and a critical review of studies documenting the immigrant experience, supplemented by the analysis of tropes of “the immigrant incursion” and territorial disputes appearing in newspaper editorials, state policy documents, police publications, and fiction representing Post-World War II settlers from African, the Caribbean, and the Indian Subcontinent.

Part II: Race, Racism, and the Limitations of Class Analysis in British Cultural Studies: The Emergence of Black British Cultural Studies (3 weeks):
A critical study of major texts produced (1970s-early 1990s) by critics influencing, affiliated with, or influenced by the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham and, to a lesser degree, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. Issues examined will include the relationship between labor, capital, state, and racism during eras of national decline, “moral panic,” immigration backlash, and (post)-Thatcherism; methodologies and discourses of policing; the mapping of symbolic locations within immigrant territories; subcultural style, media, popular and state representations of “Blackness” and “Britishness”; anti-immigration legislation; the emergence of “Black unity” and anti-racism movements in African, Asian and Caribbean sectors; the creation of counter-discourses of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity; factions and schisms in the “Black (imagined) community”; and the assertion of complex, multi-form identity politics in contemporary multi-racial Britain. Additionally, the connection between Black British Cultural Studies and Cultural Studies, Marxist theory,
Modernity/ Postmodernity Studies and Diaspora/ Globalization Studies will be discussed.


Part III: Black British Cinema and Cultural Studies: The Contradictory Spaces Between Memory, Identity, Self-Image, Modes of Representation, Theory, Britishness, Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality (3 weeks): A study of theoretical/ sociopolitical interventions and experimental techniques of Black independent film-making (1980s-90s) by film collectives Ceddo, Sankofa, the Black Audio Film Collective and Channel Four, as well as the critical reception of these films by Black British Cultural Studies critics.

Part IV: Black British Feminism and Writing by Black Women in Britain: 1980s-1990s (1 week): Multiple forms of feminist theory in the Black British context, as well as novels and films by women of African, Asian, and Caribbean descent, will be analyzed. Readings in Black Feminist Criticism will highlight how issues of racial, cultural, and gendered identity are foregrounded in fiction by Black women writers.

Part V: Ethnic and Religious Factionalism in Anti-racism Coalition-building: Critical and Popular Controversies Over Fictional Representations of British Muslims and Inter-Cultural Hybridity (1 week): A study of the societal impact of Salman Rushdie’s Satanic Verses and subsequent book-burning rallies on conceptualizations of Black solidarity. Although, previously, notions of “Black unity” co-existed with understandings of the wide array of ethnic and cultural affinities, prejudices, and tensions dividing those diverse individuals and groups categorized as “Black,” the Rushdie controversy contributed to a polarized public debate over cultural differences. This phenomenon and its analysis by Black Cultural Studies critics will be studied.

Part VI: Black British Cultural Studies and Desire: Masculinities, Sexual Politics, and Challenges Against Homophobia (1 week): Cultural Studies criticism, fiction, and films that have transgressed class, national, racial, and sexual boundaries by challenging exploitative hegemonic images of Black manhood or asserting positive Black gay images will be studied.

Part VII: Black British Popular Culture: Theorizing Culture, Race, Nation, and Identity Politics on the Popular Level in Pulp Fiction, Dancehall Music, and the London Notting Hill Carnival (1 week): Black British Cultural Studies’s analysis of popular culture’s capacity to “theorize” and perform in a popular mode decodings of British state and (trans)national mass cultural productions will be studied. Moreover, popular culture’s contradictory tendency to reinscribe essentialist ethnic, racial, and gendered representations and its ability to (de)construct complex (post)-colonial, (post)-national, and (post)-modern
reformulations of cultural, racial, national, communal, and individual markers of identity will be analyzed. Black Cultural Studies theory will be applied to readings of popular cultural productions, such as pulp fiction, dancehall music, and the London street carnival in Notting Hill.

Part VIII: Contemporary Black Britain, Transnationalism, and Postmodernity: Belonging and Beyond (1 week): An analysis of divergent signifiers and representations of transnational linkages and intercultural pastiche in the contemporary multiracial Britain, focusing on criticism, novels, and films that depict the possible, improbably, and, at times, problematic combinations, syncretisms, and fissures of individual identities, families, neighborhoods, and communities. A study of representations of communities comprised of an admixture of peoples with varying degrees of alienation from or connection to their consanguineous, familial, and cultural ties to African, Asian, and Caribbean immigrant heritage.

Teaching Strategies:
Brief lectures (25%), discussion (25%), oral reports (25%), film screenings (25%), annotated bibliography project, and research/writing project.

Ley 51
Los estudiantes que reciban servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional deben comunicarse con el (la) profesor(a) al inicio del semestre para planificar el acomodo razonable y equipo asistivo necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con impedimento (OAPI) del Decanato de Estudiantes. También aquellos estudiantes con necesidades especiales que requieren de algún tipo de asistencia o acomodo deben comunicarse con el (la) profesor(a).

Required Resources: Seminar Room, Screening Room, Graduate Seminar Room.

Methods of Evaluation:
Oral presentations on critical, theoretical, historical, literary, or cinematic texts (30%)
Weekly one-page, single-spaced response paper (20%)
One annotated bibliography project (20%)
One final seminar-length research paper (18-25 pages) (30%)
Students who are absent for three class sessions should expect their final grade to be lowered by one letter grade. Students missing five or more classes should expect to fail the course.

***A differential grading system will be applied for students with special needs.

Grading System: A, B, C, D, F
COURSE OUTLINE:

Monday, August 18th, August 25th

Part I: “Blackness,’ Britain, and National Belonging in the Post-WWII decades (1950s-1960s): The Immigrant Experience, Representations of Immigrants in Media and State Documents, and Counter-discourses of Migration (2 weeks): Introduction to the course and a critical review of studies documenting the immigrant experience, supplemented by the analysis of tropes of “the immigrant incursion” and territorial disputes appearing in newspaper editorials, state policy documents, police publications, and fiction representing Post-World War II settlers from African, the Caribbean, and the Indian Subcontinent.

Required Readings:

Critical Studies:

Novels:
Sam Selvon, *Lonely Londoners*
Colin MacInnes, *Absolute Beginners*

Oral Reports:

Critical Study:

Novels:
Andrew Salkey, *The Adventures of Catullus Kelly*
V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*

In-class Screening/Film:
15-minute excerpt from *The Notting Hill Carnival* (BBC, 1995)

Optional Readings:

Critical Study:

Essays:


**Monday, September 8th, 15th, 22nd**

**Part II: Race, Racism, and the Limitations of Class Analysis in British Cultural Studies: The Emergence of Black British Cultural Studies (3 weeks):** A critical study of major texts produced (1970s- early 1990s) by critics influencing, affiliated with, or influenced by the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham and, to a lesser degree, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. Issues examined will include the relationship between labor, capital, state, and racism during eras of national decline, “moral panic,” immigration backlash, and (post)-Thatcherism; methodologies and discourses of policing; the mapping of symbolic locations within immigrant territories; subcultural style, media, popular and state representations of “Blackness” and “Britishness”; anti-immigration legislation; the emergence of “Black unity” and anti-racism movements in African, Asian and Caribbean sectors; the creation of counter-discourses of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity; factions and schisms in the “Black (imagined) community”; and the assertion of complex, multi-form identity politics in contemporary multi-racial Britain. Additionally, the connection between Black British Cultural Studies and Cultural Studies, Marxist theory, Modernity/ Postmodernity Studies and Diaspora/ Globalization Studies will be discussed.

**Required Readings:**

**Critical Studies:**

Oral Reports:

**Week #1, September 8th**

**Week #2, September 15th**

**Week #3, September 22nd**

Optional Readings:

Journals:
*Race and Class*
*Race Today*

**Monday, September 29th**

**Part II-B: Race and Representations of Public Disorders, 1958, 1976, 1981, 1982:** “The Enemy Within” vs. “Come What May, We’re Here to Stay” (1 week): A study of media, police, and Cultural Studies critiques and state policy reformulations in response to the White Riots of Notting Hill (1958), the Carnival disorder of 1976, and the Brixton disorders of 1981 and 1982, as well as other public manifestations of the period. Issues explored include the “colour bar”; housing discrimination; criminalization of Black youths and police practices; racialized conceptualizations of urban space/ violence; and community action.

Required Readings:

Critical Study:

Essays:

Screenplay:

In-Class Screening/ Film:
Stephen Frears, dir., Sammy and Rosie Get Laid (written by Hanif Kureishi)

Out-of-Class Screening/ Film:
John Akomfrah, dir., Handsworth Songs

Optional Readings:
Critical Studies:

Essay:

Poetry:
Linton Kwesi Johnson, Dread beat and Blood (print and audio)

Monday, October 6th, October 20th, October 27th

Part III: Black British Cinema and Cultural Studies: The Contradictory Spaces Between Memory, Identity, Self-Image, Modes of Representation, Theory, Britishness, Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality (3 weeks): A study of theoretical/ sociopolitical interventions and experimental techniques of Black independent film-making (1980s-90s) by film collectives Ceddo, Sankofa, the Black Audio Film Collective and Channel Four, as well as the critical reception of these films by Black British Cultural Studies critics.

Required Readings:

Critical Studies:
Week #1, October 6th


**Week #2, October 20th**


**Week #3, October 27th**


**Essays:**

**Week #1, October 6th**


**Week #2, October 20th**


**Week #3, October 27th**


**In-Class Screening/ Films:**

Maureen Blackwood and Issac Julien, dir. *The Passion of Remembrance*

Issac Julien, dir., *Territories*

Martina Atille, dir., *Dreaming Rivers*
Pratibha Parmar, dir., *Khush*
Pratibha Parmar, dir., *Sari Red*

**Optional Readings:**

**Critical Studies:**


**Essays:**


**Monday, November 3rd**

**Part IV: Black British Feminism and Writing by Black Women in Britain: 1980s-1990s (1 week):** Multiple forms of feminist theory in the Black British context, as well as novels and films by women of African, Asian, and Caribbean descent, will be analyzed. Readings in Black Feminist Criticism will highlight how issues of racial, cultural, and gendered identity are foregrounded in fiction by Black women writers.

**Required Readings:**

**Critical Study:**

**Essays:**


*Black Women Writers in Britain.* Special issue of *Wasafiri* 17 (Spring 1993).

**Novels (Class divided for readings):**
Buchi Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen*
Ravinder Randhawa, *A Wicked Old Woman*
Meera Syal, *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*
Jenny McLeod, *Stuck up a Tree*
Joan Riley, *Waiting in the Twilight*

**Out-of-Class Screenings/ Films:**
- Gurinder Chadha, dir., *Bhaji on the Beach* (written by Meera Syal and Gurinder Chadha)
- Menelik Shabazz, dir., *Burning an Illusion*

**Optional Readings/ Film:**
- Critical Studies and Anthologies:
- Film:
  - Gurinder Chadha, dir., *A Nice Arrangement*

**Monday, November 10**

**Part V: Ethnic and Religious Factionalism in Anti-racism Coalition-building: Critical and Popular Controversies Over Fictional Representations of British Muslims and Inter-Cultural Hybridity (1 week):** A study of the societal impact of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* and subsequent book-burning rallies on conceptualizations of Black solidarity. Although, previously, notions of “Black unity” co-existed with understandings of the wide array of ethnic and cultural affinities, prejudices, and tensions dividing those diverse individuals and groups categorized as “Black,” the Rushdie controversy contributed to a polarized public debate over cultural differences. This phenomenon and its analysis by Black Cultural Studies critics will be studied.

**Required Readings:**

- Critical Study:

- Novel:
  - Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses*

- Oral Report:
  - Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

**Out-of-Class Screening/ Film:**
Udayan Prasad, dir., *My Son the Fanatic*, 1997

**Monday, November 17th**

**Part IV: Black British Cultural Studies and Desire: Masculinities, Sexual Politics, and Challenges Against Homophobia (1 week):** Cultural Studies criticism, fiction, and films that have transgressed class, national, racial, and sexual boundaries by challenging exploitative hegemonic images of Black manhood or asserting positive Black gay images will be studied.

**Required Readings:**

**Critical Study:**

**Play:**
Michael McMillan. *Brother to Brother*, in *Black and Asian Plays*

**Screenplay:**
Issac Julien and Colin MacCabe, dirs. *Diary of a Young Soul Rebel* (screenplay by Paul Hallam and Derrick Saldaan McClintock)

**Oral Report/ Film:**
Issac Julien, dir., *Looking for Langston*

**In-Class Screening/ Film:**
Stephen Frears, dir., *My Beautiful Laundrette*

**Out-of-Class Screening/ Film:**
Issac Julien and Colin MacCabe, dirs., *Young Soul Rebel*

**Optional Reading:**

**Monday, November 24th**

**Part VII: Black British Popular Culture: Theorizing Culture, Race, Nation, and Identity Politics on the Popular Level in Pulp Fiction, Dancehall Music, and the London Notting Hill Carnival (1 week):** Black British Cultural Studies’s analysis of popular culture’s capacity to “theorize” and perform in a popular mode decodings of British state and (trans)national mass cultural productions will be studied. Moreover, popular culture’s contradictory tendency to reinscribe essentialist ethnic, racial, and gendered representations and its ability to (de)construct complex (post)-colonial, (post)-national, and (post)-modern
reformulations of cultural, racial, national, communal, and individual markers of identity will be analyzed. Black Cultural Studies theory will be applied to readings of popular cultural productions, such as pulp fiction, dancehall music, and the London street carnival in Notting Hill.

**Required Readings:**

**Critical Study:**

**Essays:**

**Popular Novels:**
Victor Headley, *Yardie*
Ferdinand Dennis, *The Last Blues Dance*

**Audio selections:** Ragga, Bhangra, and Jungle; DJ Apache Indian; Dub Asian Foundation

**Oral Reports/ Films:**
Julien Henrique, dir., *Babymother*
Gurinder Chadha, dir., *I’m British but…*
Issac Julien, dir., *The Darker Side of Black*

**Optional Readings:**

**Critical Studies:**

**Essay:**

**Popular Novel:**
Donald Gorgon, *Cop Killer*

**Monday, December 1st**

**Part VIII:** Contemporary Black Britain, Transnationalism, and Postmodernity: Belonging and Beyond (1 week) An analysis of divergent signifiers and representations of transnational linkages and intercultural pastiche
in the contemporary multiracial Britain, focusing on criticism, novels, and films that depict the possible, improbably, and, at times, problematic combinations, syncreticisms, and fissures of individual identities, families, neighborhoods, and communities. A study of representations of communities comprised of an admixture of peoples with varying degrees of alienation from or connection to their consanguineous, familial, and cultural ties to African, Asian, and Caribbean immigrant heritage.

**Required Readings:**

**Critical Studies and Anthologies:**

**Essay:**

**Novels (class divided for readings):**
Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*
Buchi Emecheta, *The New Tribe*
Sunetra Gupta, *A Sin of Colour*

**Oral Reports:**
**Oral Reports/ Novels:**
Ravinder Randhawa, *The Coral Strand*
Judith Bryan, *Bernard and the Cloth Monkey*

**Oral Reports/ Poetry:**
Jean “Binta” Breeze, *The Arrival of Bright Eye*

**Oral Reports/ Films:**
Damien O'Donell, dir., *East is East* (written by Ayub Kahn-Din)

**Optional Readings:**
**Critical Studies:**

**Essays:**


A. Selected Bibliography:


