



Sybil Atteck, Bele

ENG 301G: Caribbean Women's Writing

Instructor: Sarah Harsh
Spelman College Spring 2019
1-1:50 MWF

Instructor Email: sharsh@spelman.edu
Office: Cosby 313

Course Website:
Office Hours: 2-5 Wednesdays

Course Description: This course analyzes the relationship between nation and gender in Caribbean women's writing. It is organized by genre and explores how our authors subvert literary conventions. Theories of race, postcolonialism, and the tourism industry structure our approach to our readings which include literary, critical, and theoretical texts. Active participation is required in this discussion based class. Assignments include literary analysis and research papers along with visual and digital projects.

Course Rationale: Like the islands from which it springs, Caribbean women's writing is diverse yet connected. In this course, we'll study the Anglophone literary tradition of Caribbean women's writing. We'll explore how the legacy of colonialism has shaped the region and how gender impacts the lives and literatures of Caribbean women. We'll investigate the shared themes, images, and motifs of Caribbean women's writing while learning about the unique characteristics of individual island nations. In all of our lines of inquiry, we will pay close attention to the roles of history, memory, and myth. The theoretical framework for this course will explore how ideas about gender shape ideas about nationhood. This class is organized by genre, allowing for sustained investigation of how authors manipulate literary forms and conventions. Authors of focus will include Jamaica Kincaid, Jean Rhys, Michelle Cliff, Louise Bennett, Lorna Goodison, and Tiphonie Yanique. Students will learn and practice advanced literary

interpretation techniques, strengthen their writing abilities, and hone their critical thinking skills. Major assignments will include a close reading paper, a digital mapping project, a visual art piece, an oral presentation, and a literary research paper. Active participation is required in this discussion-based class.

Course Objectives

Learning Objective	Related Assignment(s)
Students will articulate the Caribbean's historical contexts, Anglophone literary tradition, and current situation. As they respond our reading, students frequently and accurately reference relevant Caribbean contexts.	Discussion Posts, Close Reading Paper, Author Presentation, Literary Research Paper, Broadside Assignment, Digital Mapping Project
Students will evaluate current debates within the field of Caribbean studies and appraise different methodological approaches. Students will situate Caribbean studies within area and cultural studies more broadly and discuss the implications and applications of such lines of inquiry.	Close Reading Paper, Literary Research Paper, Author Presentation
Students will create literary analysis and research projects that demonstrate advanced understanding of audience, purpose, and genre. Students will perform close readings of our primary sources and build insightful arguments supported by textual evidence.	Close Reading Paper, Literary Research Paper
Students will effectively and creatively utilize digital and visual modes to express their ideas about Caribbean women's writing.	Broadside Assignment, Digital Mapping Project
As they undertake scholarly inquiry and produce their own arguments, students summarize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the ideas of others. Students learn accepted and ethical ways to integrate other texts into their work, rightly handling citation and adaptation.	Literary Research Paper, Author Presentation
Students will examine, interrogate, and critique the role of gender in Anglophone Caribbean literary tradition.	Discussion Posts, Close Reading Paper, Author Presentation, Literary Research Paper, Broadside Assignment, Digital Mapping Project

Fourth Hour Justification: This course meets for three hours each week, yet students receive four hours of credit. To earn the fourth credit, you have to engage in outside activity that fulfills the goals of the class, generally 15 additional hours of parallel or out-of-class assignments. For this course, you will earn your fourth credit through completion of regular blog posts on Moodle, which will require you to engage with the readings and enter into a dialogue with your classmates. Additionally, this course will require at least one film screening to be completed outside of class hours.

Required Course Texts:

- Jamaica Kincaid. *A Small Place*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000.
- Tiphonie Yanique. *How to Escape from a Leper Colony*. Graywolf Press, 2010.
- Jean Rhys. *Wide Sargasso Sea (Norton Critical Editions)*. W.W.Norton, 1998.
- Michelle Cliff. *Abeng*. Plume, 1995.
- Other texts will be made available as PDFs and hyperlinks throughout the semester

Method of Instruction: While lectures will take place (typically as an introduction to a topic at the start of class) this is a discussion-based class where students are expected to actively participate in their own learning. This means coming prepared with thoughts on the day's assigned readings, engaging in class discussion, and participating thoughtfully in workshops.

Course Grading Information

Required Coursework: To pass this course you must satisfactorily complete all assignments and maintain an active level participation, both in class and on our course website. Here is a brief overview of major assignments. Detailed assignment sheets will be provided well in advance of due dates.

- **Close Reading Paper:** You will write a 4-7 page paper making an argument about one of our course texts using evidence based on close readings. The text for this paper will be Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
- **Broadside Gallery:** You'll create a visual representation of a poem and write a statement about your project. You will select a poem from our course readings.
- **Digital Mapping Project:** You will build a digital map of one of the locations mentioned in a story from Tiphonie Yanique's collection *How to Escape from a Leper Colony*.
- **Author Presentation:** Students will form groups and will give an oral presentation on a Caribbean author not studied in our course. They'll research this author and present their findings to the class.
- **Literary Research Paper:** Students will craft a research proposal based on a question or topic that intrigues them. They'll locate outside sources and consult literary criticism, integrating their findings into a 5-7 page textual analysis that responds to their original inquiry.

Grading Scale and Criteria: The assignments in English 103 will receive letter grades corresponding to percentage points. Below is a breakdown of each letter grade:

- **A (100-94%)/ A-(93-90%): Excellent**

- Assignments which thoughtfully respond to the topic and demonstrate exemplary rhetorical skills and mastery of genre.
- **B+ (89-87%)/ B (86-84%) / B- (83-80%): Good**
 - Assignments which demonstrate a thorough understanding of the topic and a well-crafted response. While they may contain some minor errors, “B” assignments still demonstrate above-average rhetorical skills and a good understanding of genre.
- **C+ (79-77%) / C (76-74%) / C- (73-70%): Average**
 - Assignments are mediocre responses. They reflect some understanding of the topic and assignment, but lack insight or reflection. These assignments contain several errors, but still demonstrate adequate rhetorical skills.
- **D(69-60%): Below average**
 - Assignments are poor responses that reflect a lack of understanding or a misunderstanding of the topic at hand. They have numerous errors, and demonstrate below average rhetorical skills.
- **F (59% and under): Failing**
 - Assignments do not respond to the topic appropriately, contain an unacceptable number of errors and/or demonstrate a lack of rhetorical skills.

Method of Evaluation: Your final grade for this course will be evaluated according to the following breakdown of assignments:

Attendance, Participation, Moodle Posts	30% (10% each)
Close Reading Paper	15%
Poetry Broadside	10%
Digital Mapping Project	10%
Author Presentation	10%
Literary Research Paper	25%

Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness Policy: In this class, you are allotted three absences without penalty. You do not need to notify me in advance to explain these absences, they are simply yours to use if and when you need them. Note that even if you are absent, you are still responsible for submitting the day’s writing assignments and completing the required reading. After three absences, your attendance grade will be lowered by 5% for each missed class. If you have an ongoing circumstance that necessitates more than three absences, please consult the College’s excused absence policy which will grant an official excuse and enable makeup work and extensions. Students who arrive to class more than 5 minutes late will be marked tardy. Three tardies will count as one absence.

Late Assignment Policy: Unless otherwise stated, assignments are due on or before the start of class listed as the due date on the assignment sheet. Even if you are absent, you are still required to submit your work before class. Late assignments will be docked 5% for each day late past the deadline. If students are aware of a conflict, they may request a penalty-free extension up to 24 hours in advance of the due date. Extensions will be considered, but are not guaranteed. Unless there is an extenuating circumstance, students will not be granted more than one extension during the semester.

Technology Usage Policy: You may use technology in class as part of your learning process. Laptops, tablets, E-readers may be used in class to access our readings, assignment sheets, and Moodle discussions boards. Cell phone use is in general not permitted during class hours, unless students notify me of their intended cell phone use before class. In all cases, technology use must be limited to classwork only. Students observed using technology for purposes unrelated to our class will be marked absent for the day. If a problem persists, the student's participation grade will be significantly lowered.

Acceptable Behavior/Etiquette Policy: Students are expected to conduct themselves thoughtfully and respectfully in this course. This means coming to class on time, bringing the required readings with you, expressing your ideas in a thoughtful way, engaging with others' ideas in a respectful manner, using technology appropriately, and giving our course your full attention during class hours. Failure to meet acceptable behavior standards will negatively impact your participation grade. For a refresher on appropriate email etiquette in a professional or educational setting, please read ["Re: Your Recent Email to Your Professor" from Inside Higher Ed](#).

Content Advisory: This course will read about and discuss difficult topics including sexual assault, racialized violence, and mental illness. If you would like advance notice to prepare yourself to approach these topics, please reach out to me to make arrangements. Any conversations of this nature will be held in the strictest confidence.

Academic Integrity Policy: At the heart of Spelman College's mission is academic excellence, along with the development of intellectual, ethical and leadership qualities. These goals can only flourish in an institutional environment where every member of the College affirms honesty, trust, and mutual respect. All members of the academic community of Spelman College are expected to understand and follow the basic standards of honesty and integrity, upholding a commitment to high ethical standards. Students are expected to read and abide by the Spelman College Code of Conduct (see the current Spelman College Student Handbook) and are expected to behave as mature and responsible members of the Spelman College academic community. Students are expected to follow ethical standards in their personal conduct and in their behavior toward other members of the community. They are expected to observe basic honesty in their work, words, ideas, and actions. Failure to do so is a

violation of the Spelman College Academic Integrity Policy. Violators will be subject to the sanctions outlined in the Spelman College Bulletin.

Student Access Statement: Spelman College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the College's programs or services, you should contact Student Access Center (SAC) as soon as possible. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with SAC. The SAC works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. SAC serves as a clearinghouse on disability issues and works in partnership with faculty and all other student service offices. For further information about services for students with disabilities, please contact the SAC at 404-270-5289 (voice), located in MacVicar Hall, Room 106.

College Policies

Copyright and Fair Use Statement: Copyright laws and fair use policies protect the rights of authors. Copyrighted materials may be used in this class, including articles, music, artwork, etc. These materials are provided for private study, scholarship, or research and adhere to the copyright law of the U.S. (Title 17, U.S. Code). You may copy or download from the course website one copy of the materials on any single computer for non-commercial, personal, or educational purposes only, provided that you do not modify it and use it only for the duration of this course. Beyond this use, no material from the course or website may be copied, reproduced, re-published, uploaded, posted, transmitted or distributed in any way without the permission of the original copyright holder. The instructor nor the College assumes any responsibility for individuals who improperly use copyrighted material.

Incomplete Policy: An Incomplete (IP) is assigned to a student when extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness, death of an immediate family member, or family emergency" prevent a student who is passing a course from completing the final exam or final assignment(s) by the end of the semester. In consultation with a Dean, the faculty member determines if an Incomplete is appropriate and completes the necessary paperwork. The faculty member determines the date for completion of all work. An Incompletion must be changed by the deadline specified on the College academic calendar. A student who cannot complete the Incomplete by the specified deadline must request an extension from the professor, who will notify the Office of the Dean of the extension. If the required work is not completed by the established deadline or the student is not given an extension, the IP will automatically be changed to an F.

Course Schedule

Subject to change. Check your email for updates about our course schedule.

Week	Date	Reading	Assignments
Theorizing the Caribbean: Locations and Dislocations			
1	Weds. 1/16	Syllabus	In-class writing
	Fri. 1/18	Derek Walcott, Nobel Lecture, " The Antilles, Fragments of Epic Memory "	
2	Mon. 1/21	No class (MLK Day)	
	Weds. 1/23	Kamala Kempadoo "Thinking about the Caribbean" in <i>Sexing the Caribbean</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 1/25	M. NourbeSe Philip, "The Absence of Writing or How I Became a Spy" in <i>She Tries her Tongue</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
History and Tourism: Consuming the Caribbean			
3	Mon. 1/28	Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i>	Discussion Posts
	Weds. 1/30	Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i>	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 2/1	Excerpts from Ian Strachan, introduction to <i>Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
Novel I: Gender and Colonialism in <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i>			
4	Mon. 2/4	Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation" [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Weds. 2/6	Jean Rhys, <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> pg. 9-27	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 2/8	Jean Rhys, <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> pg. 27-56	Discussion Posts
5	Mon.	Jean Rhys, <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> pg. 56-71	Discussion Posts

	2/11		
	Weds. 2/13	Jean Rhys, <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> pg. Pg. 71-98	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 2/15	Jean Rhys, <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> pg. 98-112	Discussion Posts
6	Mon. 2/18	Jennifer Gilchrist “Women, Slavery, and the Problem of Freedom in <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> ” in <i>Twentieth Century Literature</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Weds. 2/20	Laura Ciolkowski, “Navigating the Wide Sargasso Sea: Colonial History, English Fiction, and British Empire” in <i>Twentieth Century Literature</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 2/22	Presentations	
Poetry: Locating a Voice			
7	Mon. 2/25	M. NourbeSe Philip, selections from <i>She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks</i> [pdf]	Close Reading Paper Due
	Weds. 2/27	Louise Bennett, selected poetry [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 3/1	Presentations	
8	Mon. 3/4	Grace Nichols, selected poems [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Weds. 3/6	Lorna Goodison, selected poems [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 3/8	Presentations	
Spring Break (no class)			
Writing the Middle Passage			
9	Mon. 3/18	M. NourbeSe Philip, selections from <i>Zong!</i>	Discussion Posts

		[pdf]	
	Weds. 3/20	Edouard Glissant, “The Open Boat” in <i>The Poetics of Relation</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 3/22	Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage” in <i>GLQ (Gay/Lesbian Quarterly)</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
Short Fiction: Identity and Belonging			
10	Mon. 3/25	Watch: Jamaica Kincaid and Tiphonie Yanique: Caribbean Feminisms on the Page	Broadside Assignment Due
	Weds. 3/27	Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl”	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 3/29	Tiphonie Yanique, “Bridge Stories” in <i>How to Escape from a Leper Colony</i>	Discussion Posts
11	Mon. 4/1	Tiphonie Yanique, “International Shop of Coffins” in <i>How to Escape from a Leper Colony</i>	Discussion Posts
	Weds. 4/3	Tiphonie Yanique, “International Shop of Coffins” in <i>How to Escape from a Leper Colony</i>	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 4/5	Choose one other story from Tiphonie Yanique, <i>How to Escape from a Leper Colony</i> and be prepared to discuss it in class	Discussion Posts
Novel II: Gender and Nationalism in <i>Abeng</i>			
12	Mon. 4/8	Michelle Cliff biography Postcolonial Studies @ Emory	Digital Mapping Project Due
	Weds. 4/10	Michelle Cliff, <i>Abeng</i>	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 4/12	Michelle Cliff, <i>Abeng</i>	Discussion Posts
13	Mon.	Michelle Cliff, <i>Abeng</i>	Discussion Posts

	4/15		
	Weds. 4/17	Michelle Cliff, <i>Abeng</i>	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 4/19	No class (Good Friday)	
14	Mon. 4/22	Jocelyn Fenton Stitt, "Gendered Legacies of Romantic Nationalism in the Works of Michelle Cliff" in <i>Small Axe</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Weds. 4/24	Jennifer Thorington Springer, "Reconfigurations of Caribbean History: Michelle Cliff's Rebel Women" in <i>Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism</i> [pdf]	Discussion Posts
	Fri. 4/26	None: Workshopping	Research Proposal due
15	Mon. 4/29	None: Research strategies	
	Weds. 5/1	None: Workshopping	
	Weds. 5/8	Literary research paper due	

Course Bibliography

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"Jamaica Kincaid and Tiphonie Yanique: Caribbean Feminisms on the Page." Vimeo. Uploaded by BCRW Videos. 9 September 2015. <https://vimeo.com/138764562>

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