

Fall 2018  
TF: Dena Fehrenbacher  
dfehrenbacher@fas.harvard.edu  
Office Hours: TBD, Barker 105

## Anglophone Caribbean Novels

### Tutorial Description:

This course will survey a range of 20th and 21st century Anglophone Caribbean novels. The first half of this course will address novels written on the cusp of or in the aftermath of colonial independence; the second half of this course will address novels written in the past twenty years or so, largely from the diaspora.

Topics of inquiry will include, but not be limited to: Caribbean cultural history, and the effects of slavery and colonialism; the cultural politics of language, national languages, creolization, Caribbean heterogeneity; the place of gender in Caribbean literature and the gendered formulas of narration and nation-building; the effect of academic study, literary markets and the “Anglocentric gaze” on Caribbean literature and theory; the significance and varieties of emigration in Caribbean experience.

Additionally, this course will repeatedly ask, “Why the novel?” Many of the writers we’ll address also write in other literary modes. When and why do these Caribbean writers choose the novel form? What are the possibilities and limits of the novel form? What does a survey of the Caribbean *novel* specifically offer? We will discuss the Caribbean presence in British and American literature, the place of transatlantic slavery in the rise of the novel, and the complicated awareness Caribbean authors signal of US, Latinx, Spanish, British, French and other novel traditions.

### Tutorial Goals:

*General Goals of the Junior Tutorial:* The junior tutorial is designed to help junior concentrators gain the skills to write a research paper. In working toward that goal, this tutorial will systematically ask and address the basic questions of literary research. The first half of the course will specifically address questions around the task of research: what kinds of questions can we ask about form, history, context, conceptual ideas, audience, and influence? What is a good research question? How do we incorporate theory and criticism into our research? The second half of the course will address questions around the task of writing. How do we organize evidence and structure our claims? What are helpful tactics for revision?

*Goals specific to this tutorial:* This specific tutorial aims to familiarize students with Anglophone novels of and concerning the Caribbean. Additionally, this course aims to acquaint students with formal questions surrounding the novel form. By the end of the semester, students should feel conversant with the thematic topics and questions stated in the tutorial description—questions that may be relevant to their own final research project.

The two-part division of research in this course will also correspond to a two-part division in the course’s content. In the first half of the semester, we will read four novels published between 1953-1966 that concern the end or immediate aftermath of colonialism. In the second half of the semester, we will read four novels that are written in the past 20 years from Caribbean writers in the diaspora. As a point of contrast to our discussion of novels, this tutorial will be bookended by poetry, non-fiction, short stories, and drama.

As noted in descriptions of week one and week four, students will be encouraged to read ahead on the syllabus based on their intended research interests.

**Primary Texts to purchase (no specific editions required):**

George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953)  
V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961)  
Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (1962)  
Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)  
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988)  
Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994)  
Nalo Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998)  
Jamaica Kincaid, *Autobiography of My Mother* (1996)  
Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)

**\*Note, short primary material like poetry and secondary material will be emailed out or passed out in class**

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) Regular attendance and participation in class
- 2) A visit to the department writing fellow
- 3) Weekly short response (1-2 Paragraphs) due by email 24 hours before seminar on weeks where no other assignments have been given
- 4) 5-6 page short paper, due Week 4: an extended close reading of a literary text; will be followed by an individual conference with Dena
- 5) 2-4 page Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography (8-10 sources) Due Week 6; The bibliography should reproduce in a few sentences the main argument of each work you intend to use. It should also include, in a few sentences, how you plan on engaging with the thesis of each summarized work.
- 6) 15-20 page Draft Due between Week 10 and Week 11
- 7) Final version of Research Paper (Due to Dept & Dena after Week 13) and 5-min presentation at Tutorial Conference; the final paper should be 20 pages, and should incorporate a substantial amount of critical articles

**Breakdown of Grading:**

The Junior Research Paper, and its related assignments, amount to over half the student's grade. Course Requirements #1-3 ~ 20%, #4 ~ 15%, #5 ~ 15%, #6~ 10%, 7 ~ 40%  
Please note: If you do not turn in the final paper, you will fail the course.

**Junior Research Paper Schedule:**

Week 5: Provisional Topic Due  
Week 6: 2 Page Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography (8-10 sources)  
Week 10: 15-20 page draft due (with subsequent in-class workshop)  
After Week 13: Junior Research Paper Due

**Policies**

**Email:** I'll try to respond to emails within 36 hours; please do not "share" Google docs as a means of turning in your assignment.

**Office Hours:** If you can't make my office hours due to a regularly scheduled conflict, let's discuss an alternative. Routine meetings with me across the semester will be expected.

**Participation:** Participation in each meeting is expected; please come to class with your texts in hand, having read all the reading material for the week

**Extensions:** Due dates for assignments are given well in advance; extensions will be given on a case-by-case basis, and must be requested sufficiently before the deadline.

**Late Assignments:** will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day late

**Absences:** Participation at tutorial-specific and tutorial-wide events are mandatory; one unexcused absence will be allowed. Arriving late to class will affect participation grade.  
**(Further policies listed at end of syllabus)**

## Course Schedule

— Part One —

### Caribbean Novels at the “End” of Colonialism

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#### Introduction to Research: Choosing Topics, Asking Questions, Gathering Sources

**Week One:** *Before class students will be sent the readings for the first week, as well as paragraph selections from the course’s novels; we will discuss the novels’ different styles and anticipate the course’s themes...*

**Secondary Reading:**

Excerpts from C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory”

*(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: Modes of historiography)*

**Week Two:** *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961)

**Secondary Reading:** George Lamming, “The Occasion for Speaking;”

C.L.R. James, “Discovering Literature in Trinidad;” Teju Cole, “Teju Cole on a House for Mr.

Biswas” in *The Guardian*; Teju Cole, “Natives on a Boat” in *The New Yorker*

*(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: canons, canonicity & literary cultures)*

**\*\*\*Required Tutorial-Wide Meeting #1: TBD\*\*\***

**Week Three:** George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953)

**Secondary Reading:** Lamming, “The Peasant Roots of the West Indian Novel;” Braithwaite, “Jazz & the West Indian Novel”; Ch. 1-3 of Belinda Edmonson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women’s Writing in Caribbean Narrative*

*(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: nation-building and literary form)*

**Week Four:** *Students should read ahead in a novel that they are interested in or plan to research... potentially incorporated into their 5-6 page paper*

**Library Visit .... and 5-6 Page Short Paper Due**

**\*Students will bring in research questions to library meeting and complete search-engine exercises beforehand.\***

**Week Five:** Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (1962)

**\*Students will be expected to have chosen a research topic.**

**Secondary Reading:** “The Re-enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter”; Selections from Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*; Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change”

*(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: (post-)humanism, secularism, postcolonial studies, eco-criticism)*

**Week Six:** Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)... and **Annotated Bibliography Due**  
**\*Students will share their bibliographies and corresponding questions in class.\***  
**Secondary Reading:** Selections from Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*; Derek Walcott, "Jean Rhys;" Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism"  
(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: literary traditions, canons, gender, race and ethnicity studies)

**\*\*\*Required Tutorial-Wide Meeting #2: TBD\*\*\***

— Part Two —  
**Contemporary Caribbean Writing from the Diaspora**  
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**The Writing Phase: Structure, Tactics, Craft**

**Week Seven:** Jamaica Kincaid, *Autobiography of My Mother* (1996)  
**Secondary Reading:** Excerpts from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*  
Allison Donnell, "Dreaming of Daffodils: Cultural Resistance to the Narratives of Theory"  
Selections from Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*  
(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: affect theory, gender studies, the history of the novel, the role of theory)

**Week Eight:** Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994)  
**Secondary Reading:** Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"  
(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: gender studies, critical race studies, Afro-pessimism)

**Week Nine:** Nalo Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998)  
**Secondary Reading:** Nalo Hopkinson TED Talk: "How to Write Fiction that Comes Alive;"  
Selections from Doris Sommer, *Proceed with Caution, When Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas*  
(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: speculative genres, the study of multiethnic literature)

**Week Ten:** Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)  
**Secondary Reading:** "Junot Diaz and Toni Morrison: Live from the NYPL" (available on Youtube, and in podcast and transcript form); Glenda Carpio, "Now Check It: Junot Diaz's Wondrous Spanglish," from *Junot Diaz and the Decolonial Imagination*  
(Some topics for methodological and critical questions: language, community, genealogies)

**Week Eleven:** In Class Workshop of Drafts... and **15-20 Page Draft Due**

**Week Twelve:** Short stories, non-fiction and poetry: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988); Edwidge Danticat, "Seven"; poetry from Derek Walcott, Claude McKay, Kamau Brathwaite, Jean Binta Breeze, Benjamin Zephaniah, Mutabaruka, Lorna Goodison and others

**Week Thirteen:**  
Wrap-up Discussion + discussion of *Hamilton*  
**Paper Due after Week Thirteen, followed by Junior Tutorial Conference**

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## Further Course Policies

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failure on the paper to dismissal from the course to even more serious actions. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with Harvard FAS's Honor Code: *"Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs."*

**Collaboration:** You are absolutely encouraged to talk with other students about the course and its readings, and to read each others' work. In individual assignments, academic collaboration and external sources should be always cited.

**Attendance:** Your attendance in tutorial is vital to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole; so is your attendance in Junior Tutorial General Meetings and at other required events. Missing more than one class will decrease your participation grade, and excessive absence could result in failing the course. If you have attenuating circumstances, you must communicate with me in a timely manner so that we can discuss how to deal with it.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** *"Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation."*