

# INTRODUCTION TO CARIBBEAN STUDIES

---

Dr. Claire Antone Payton  
claire.payton@virginia.edu

New Cabell Hall 211  
Thursday, 3:30-6:00 PM

Office Hours:  
by appointment

The Caribbean is both a tranquil beach paradise and the origin of some of the most radical revolutionary movements in the history. It supplied the West with one the world's most delightful substances, sugar, but only at the cost of enormous suffering of millions of enslaved Africans. The Caribbean is where concepts of racial difference were invented. It is where the world's wealthiest can store billions in off-shore bank accounts and where, a few miles away, people can die of hunger and curable diseases. Despite their small size, more than a dozen languages are spoken across the islands, a linguistic indicator of their lasting global connections. It is where centuries of structural and physical violence produced some of the most startlingly creative and dynamic cultures in the world.

In this course, we will grapple with the way that the Caribbean's historical roles as both the epicenter of African chattel slavery and of revolution have shaped its distinct cultural and social world today. In the first few weeks we will familiarize ourselves with the realities of slavery and colonialism. Then we will explore some of the powerful ways that Caribbean people have challenged and even overthrown these forms oppression. In the last few weeks we will look at how this history finds expression in contemporary Caribbean society, literature, and theory.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Trace the development of the Caribbean at the intersection of global social, material, and culture dynamics.
- Articulate how the social construction of race is articulated outside of the U.S. context.
- Engage with historical perspectives and sources that emerged outside of Europe and the United States and gain a critical understanding of times and places removed from their own lives.
- Recognize the multifaceted ways that history informs contemporary issues.
- Learn interdisciplinary approaches for evaluating knowledge and knowledge production.
- Talk about difficult social concepts such as race, power, and identity.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

### **Available at the UVA Bookstore**

- Danticat, Edwige. *The Farming of Bones*.
- Diaz, Junot. *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*.
- James, C. L. R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*.
- Katz, Jonathan. *The Big Truck That Went by: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left behind a Disaster*.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **Meet and Greet** (0% of final grade)

Come meet with me once in the first three weeks of the class, either during office hours or by appointment. My office is in Minor Hall. I'd like to learn more about you!

### **Participation:** (20% of final grade)

This is a class based on collaborative discourse. As such, being prepared to participate in discussions is a course requirement. This entails having read, annotated, and thought about the complete assignment carefully before class starts. Furthermore, you must bring your copy of the text to class every day. Attendance is mandatory. You will be allowed two absences, use them wisely!

More generally: Ask questions. Be curious. Listen to others. You are more than welcome to have a different interpretation of a text than a classmate or me; just be sure to share your perspective in a productive and supportive manner. Since the course will be conducted as a seminar-and not a series of lectures-the substance of our class meetings will primarily consist of your responses to the course texts (such as general questions, impressionistic responses, or interpretations of particular passages) and, secondarily, my engagement with your responses. Your thoughts and questions will provide the starting point for our discussions. Your active participation will be consequently factored into your final grade for the course. If you're reluctant to speak up, please talk to me and we'll figure out a way for you to participate.

### **Reading Response Papers:** (20% of final grade)

Over the course of the semester, students will individually compose 10 250-word analytical responses to given set of readings. It is up to you to decide which weeks you will submit responses. Responses should be shared with the class via Collab 6PM the night before class.

Responses should be structured in two parts:

1. Concise and accurate summary of a core argument or theme from one of the assigned texts, along with an example of evidence of this theme from the text. What do you think about this theme? **(50%)**
2. Take an idea from one of the texts and put it in "conversation" with other ideas we have encountered in the course, either in the day's readings, in other readings, or in class discussion. **(45%)**

Use inline citations when referencing other texts, with page numbers (example: (Payton, 2010, 2-3)). The texts should be polished and proofread. **(5%)**

(The one mandatory reading response paper for everyone will be Week 11's Music Analysis Project. Guidelines will be distributed.)

### **Three Source Analysis Writing Assignments** (15% each)

Three projects, 5-7 pages in length. Further information about the assignments will be distributed in class.

**Indigenous Letter Project** – Assigned Week 2, due Week 5

**Haitian Revolution Primary Source Project** – Assigned Week 5, Due Week 8

**Tourist Guide Analysis Project** – Assigned Week 10, Due Week 13

You will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit one of these assignments if you would like the chance to improve your grade.

**Take Home Exam:** (15%)

In lieu of a final research paper, students will be given 2 weeks to write a 5-page response to a prompt based on readings and materials we have worked with in the class.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1 January 17 What Makes the Caribbean the Caribbean?**

---

In Class: Introductory Discussion

### **Week 2 January 24: The Taino and the Columbian Exchange**

---

- *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and its Peoples*, edited by Stephan Palmié and Francisco Scarano (2011) Chapters 3, 5&7 [Collab]
- Newton, Melanie J. “‘The Race Leapt at Sauteurs’: Genocide, Narrative, and Indigenous Exile from the Caribbean Archipelago.” *Caribbean Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (June 2014): 5–28. [Collab]
- Poole, Robert. “What Became of the Taino,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 2011. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/what-became-of-the-taino-73824867/>

<b>ASSIGNMENT 1: INDIGENOUS LETTER WRITING PROJECT (DUE FEBRUARY 14)</b>
--

### **Week 3 January 31: Slavery in the Caribbean**

---

- Benitez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island*. Chapter 1 [on Collab]
- Palmié, *The Caribbean*, Chapters 8 & 16 [on Collab]
- 

### **Week 4 February 7: The Haitian Revolution**

---

- James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins*, Chapter 3-12

### **Week 5 February 14: Colonial Violence, Archival Power**

---

In Class: go to Special Collections

- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Chapter 1-3

### **ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE**

### **Week 6 February 21: Decolonial Thought and Caribbean Independence**

---

- Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of A Return to My Native Land* [on Collab]
- Drabinski, John E. “Césaire’s Apocalyptic Word.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, no. 3 (July 2016): 567–84. [on Collab]

<b>ASSIGNMENT 2: PRIMARY SOURCE LETTER WRITING PROJECT</b>
--

## (DUE MARCH 7)

### Week 7 February 28: The Cuban Revolutions

---

In Class: Watch “Memories of Underdevelopment”

- Jelly-Schapiro, Joshua. *Island People* Chapter 4-6 [On Collab]
- Marti, José. “Our America” <http://www.josemarti.cu/publicacion/nuestra-america-version-ingles/>
- Guevara, Che. “Man and Socialism in Cuba” <https://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1965/03/man-socialism-alt.htm>

### Week 8: March 7 Borders and Boundaries

---

- Danticat, Edwige. *The Farming of Bones*.

## ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE

¡¡SPRING BREAK!!

### Week 9 March 21: Caribbean as Crisis Zone

---

In Class: Conversation with Jonathan Katz

- Katz, Jonathan. *The Big Truck that Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster*.

### Week 10: March 28: Caribbean as Paradise

---

In Class: Conversation with Guidebook writer, Paul Clammer

- Glmech, George. *Behind the Smile: The Working Lives of Caribbean Tourism* Chapters 1-2, 4-5. [Ebook via Library website]
- Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*.

## ASSIGNMENT 3: TOURIST GUIDE ANALYSIS PROJECT (DUE APRIL 18)

### Week 11 April 4: Music

---

- Gilroy, Paul. “Jewels Brought from Bondage”: Black music and the Poetics of Authenticity” in *The Black Atlantic* [on Collab]
- DjeDje, Jacqueline Cogdell. “Remembering Kojo: History, Music, and Gender in the January Sixth Celebration of the Jamaican Accompong Maroons.” *Black Music Research Journal* 18, no. 1/2 (1998): 67–120.

### Week 12 April 11: Diasporas

---

- Diaz, Junot. *Brief and Wonderous Life of Oscar Wao*

### Week 13 April 18: The Past in the Present

---

- 
- Saidiya Hartman, “Lose Your Mother” in *Lose Your Mother* [On Collab]
  - Sharpe, Christina, *In the Wake*, Introduction [on Collab]
  - Glissant, Edouard. *Caribbean Discourses*, “The Quarrel with History” [on Collab]
  - Walcott, Derek “The Sea is History” [on Collab]

### **ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE**

#### **Week 14 April 25 What Now?**

---

- Strecker, Amy “Indigenous Land Rights and Caribbean Reparations Discourse,” *Leiden Journal of International Law* [On Collab]
- Beckles, Hilary “Slavery was a long, long time Ago”: Remembrance, Reconciliation and the Reparations Discourse in the Caribbean.” [On Collab]
- “UWI to Benefit from over US \$250 Million in Support as Part of Reparations for Slavery.” *Caribbean360* <http://www.caribbean360.com/news/uwi-to-benefit-from-over-us-250-million-in-support-as-part-of-reparations-for-slavery>.
- Explore website of CARICOM Reparations Commission:  
<http://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricoms-10-point-reparation-plan/>