University of Wisconsin–Madison
Departments of History and Afro-American Studies

History/Afro-American Studies 347
THE CARIBBEAN AND ITS DIASPORAS
Semester II, 2007-2008

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Course description:
As a gateway to the Americas, the Caribbean region has been at the center of power rivalries and long-distance mercantile exchanges since the European invasions five centuries ago. Competition between Atlantic powers for its fertile soils, vital trade routes, and strategic location has been a constant factor in the archipelago’s development. So, too, has the islands’ pervasive orientation toward, and dependence on, overseas markets for sugar, coffee, tobacco, and other tropical staples.

These patterns have defined the contemporary Caribbean in precise ways. They have led to, among other things, an entrenched colonial and neocolonial dependence on outside powers; to a plantation economy—and, more recently, an industrial and tourism economy—geared for the satisfaction of external demands, and to the widespread use of slavery and other forms of unfree labor. All of these systems of exploitation were (and are) predicated, to one degree or another, on racial and cultural distinctions. In the end, the social and cultural patterns spawned by outside dependence and required for labor control have had an ambiguous result. For one, they have aggravated social problems and have diminished the opportunities for resolving them. But at the same time, they have led to the establishment of resourceful, multiracial cultures, built upon a resilient African substratum which serves as a common denominator of the region’s cultural formations. Hence, although the societies in question are quite varied in ethnic, racial, political, and linguistic terms, they are united by a common African-American heritage and by their identity as the European world’s oldest colonial sphere.

Since World War II, the Caribbean has emerged as one of the world’s regions most affected by the emigration of its people to countries in the North. While there are precedents for these out-migrations going back to the 1800s, after the War a fundamentally changed political economy of industrial labor spurred massive emigration to Europe, the United States, and Canada. Simultaneously, decolonization and globalization opened up new “Caribbeans” in the former or current metropoles. The intimate connections existing between “inner” and “outer” communities are of great import if one is to fully understand the dynamics of Caribbean life today.

This course will explore major topics in the history of Caribbean societies, with emphasis on the processes by which they became the multiracial and diasporic nations of today. Our prime objective is to develop an understanding of the manner in which colonial rule, and the social institutions on which it was built—in particular, slavery and other forms of forced labor—shaped regional societies, beginning in the early days of European expansion and continuing into our
times. A secondary emphasis will be on the diaspora communities created by Caribbean peoples in the United States and Europe.

Requirements:

A) Mid-term and Final Exams:
The mid-term (Thursday, March 13, in class) and final examination (Monday, May 12, at 7:45 a.m., place TBA) will consist of several identification items and two essay questions each. I will select these questions from a review list handed out several days before the exam date. Students are expected to be creative and original while integrating ideas and information gleaned from the pertinent core readings, as well as from lectures and class discussions. The exams are each worth 30% of the final grade.

B) Papers:
Two 5-7 pp. essays, due Friday, March 3, and Friday, April 21. For each, students will select one topic from those listed at the bottom of this section and will write a 5 to 7-page essay which concisely develops a thesis or argument about a specific, well-defined problem which relates to the chosen topic. Further details, including specific instructions on writing the papers, will be provided in class. Each paper is 10% of the grade.

Paper topics:

For paper # 1 you will select from the following list of general topics:

1) Consequences (social, economic, ecological, cultural, etc.) of the European conquest of the Caribbean;
2) Caribbean slavery as an economic and demographic system;
3) Slave women, the family, and culture-building in the Caribbean;
4) Capitalism, slavery, and anti-slavery (the so-called Williams Debate);
5) Resistance, rebellion, and the forging of autonomous and/or independent spaces and states
6) Causes and consequences of Emancipation;
7) Marronage and maroon societies.

For paper # 2 you will select from the following list of general topics:

1) The establishment of U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean;
2) Race and nation-building in the twentieth century;
3) Workers’ organizations and their problematic support of nationalist projects;
4) Gender as a factor in colonial domination;
5) Populist movements;
6) Comparative decolonization processes;
7) Tourism as economic development--prospects and limitations;
8) Relationship of diasporic communities with sending societies;
9) Ethnic politics among Caribbean emigrants in the United States and Europe.
**C) Reaction paragraphs:**
Several times during the semester, on an unannounced basis, students will be asked to write short (one-page maximum) reaction essays to the week’s readings. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis and will count toward 10% of the final grade.

**D) Class participation:**
Because a part of each class hour will be devoted to discussion, it is essential that students participate actively in such exchanges. At the end of the term, I will assign a grade to each person’s participation based on my impression of the frequency and value of the student’s in-class commentaries.

**Grading**
The final grade will be based, therefore, on 100 points, divided as follows:

- Midterm and final exams.....40 points
- Papers.................................30 points
- Reaction paragraphs.............10 points
- Class participation..............20 points

**Books and other materials**
The following books are available for purchase at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 W. Gilman St. (tel. 257-6050). They will be used extensively throughout the course.


**Other required readings**
Most other required readings will be available for electronic download from the Library Reserves system. For those items not so available, I will announce their availability in class before the week they are due.
WEEKLY TOPICS AND READINGS
(PD = primary documents)

Week 1: Introductory session; Caribbean Geography and Ecology (1/22-24)
Tuesday: Course Introduction
Thursday: The Geographic Background to Caribbean History


Week 2: The Aboriginal Past and the Spanish Invasion (1/29-31)
Tuesday: The Taínos and their Predecessors
Thursday: The Arrival of the Bearded Ones


Week 3: Negotiations of Conquest (2/5-7)
Tuesday: Economy and Society of the Conquest Caribbean
Thursday: Aboriginal Resistance and the Challenges of Depopulation


Week 4: The Competitive Empires (late 16th-17th. centuries) (2/12-14)
Tuesday: Becoming Backwaters of Empire
Thursday: Imperial Competition

Week 5: The Sugar Revolution: From Barbados to Saint Domingue (2/19-21)
Tuesday: The Sugar Revolution, from Indentured Servants to Slaves
Thursday: Slave Societies Compared: Jamaica and Saint Domingue


PD #5: Bob Marley, “Redemption Song”

PD #6: Olaudah Equiano, “The Middle Passage,” and “The Case Against the Slave Trade.”

Week 6: The Caribbean between Corsairs and Reformers (2/26-28)
Tuesday: Peasant Societies in the Spanish Caribbean
Thursday: Daily Lives and Struggles of Enslaved People


Week 7: The Haitian Revolution (3/4-6)
Tuesday: Revolution, Emancipation, and Citizenship
Thursday: The Consequences of Revolution


PD # 8: Documents on the Haitian Revolution.

**Week 8: Midterm week (3/11-13)**

Franklin W. Knight, visiting lecturer: “Migration and Culture: A Case Study of Cuba, 1750-1850), noon-1:30, place TBA

Tuesday: Discussion of Franklin W. Knight lecture
Thursday: Midterm

**SPRING RECESS (3/15-23)**


Tuesday: The Second Slavery: Cuba and Puerto Rico
Thursday: British and French Emancipation


PD #9: Richard Henry Dana, To Cuba and Back (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966), selections.

**Week 10: Emancipation, Race, and Nationhood (4/1-3)**

Tuesday: The Problem of Nationhood in the Nineteenth-Century Caribbean
Thursday: The Cuban War and the Making of a Third Empire

**Week 11: The Rise of the American Empire (4/8-10)**
- Tuesday: The American Sugar Kingdom
- Thursday: The Early Emigrant Communities in the U.S.


  PD #10: Excerpts from the West Indian Royal Commission (Moyne Commission) report (1940-45)

**Week 12: Crisis and Response (4/15-17)**
- Tuesday: Nationalisms of the Right and Left
- Thursday: Decolonization by Any Other Name


**Week 13: Populism and Revolution (4/22-24)**
- Tuesday: Caribbean Dictators and Populists
- Thursday: The Revolutionary Impulse


**Week 14: The Caribbean and the Cold War (4/29-5/1)**
- Tuesday: The Caribbean and the Wider World
- Thursday: The Emigration Dialectic


**Week 15: The Caribbean in the Age of Globalization (5/6-8)**
- Tuesday: Revolutionary Cuba in the Special Period
- Thursday: The Caribbean of Last Resorts