As a gateway to the Americas, the Caribbean region has been at the center of power rivalries and long-distance mercantile exchanges since the Columbian contact five centuries ago. Competition between European and North American 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 export, and to the widespread use of slavery and other forms of unfree labor. All of these systems of labor were (and are) predicated, to one degree or another, on racial and cultural distinctions. In the end, the socioeconomic and political structures 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 regional societies and 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.

This course will explore major topics in the history of Caribbean societies, with an emphasis on the processes by which they became the multiracial entities 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.

Requirements:

A) Mid-term and Final Exams:

The mid-term and final examinations will consist of three essay questions each, to be selected by the instructor 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. papers, due Thursday, Oct. 14 and Thursday, Dec. 9, in review essay style. For each, will select one topical category from the four listed at the bottom of this section—a total of two for the semester—and will write a 5 to 7-page review essay that gauges the contribution, and assesses the quality of, at least 5 bibliographic items (books or articles, or a combination), of which no more than three
can be from the required reading list. Further details will be provided in class. Each paper is 15% of the grade.

*Categories*: 1) the economics and demographics of Caribbean slavery; 2) slave women, the family, and culture–building in the Caribbean; 3) capitalism, slavery, and anti-slavery; and 4) resistance, rebellion, and the forging of autonomous and/or independent spaces and states.

**C) Class attendance and participation:**
Students are expected to attend all sessions and to actively participate in debates, exercises and other in–class activities. These will be assessed at 10% of the grade.

**Readings:**
The following texts, available at University Bookstore, are recommended for purchase.


The following title is recommended as a supplementary text. It is also available at University Bookstore.


In addition, you may purchase a packet containing other required readings from the L&S Copy Center, located on the first floor of the Humanities building.
TOPICS AND READINGS
(* * in xerox packet)

I. ORIENTATION (9/2)
Course issues and themes, format and requirements, grading, expectations, logistics. Self-presentations.

II. THE CARIBBEAN REGION: AN OVERVIEW (9/7–9)
Principal readings:


Supplementary:


III. A DYING WORLD: THE NATIVE CARIBBEAN AND THE EUROPEAN INTRUSION (9/14–16)
Principal readings:


Supplementary:


IV. PLANTATION SLAVERY: SUGAR-ISLAND ECONOMICS (I) (9/21–23)

**Principal readings:**


**Supplementary:**


V. PLANTATION SLAVERY: SUGAR-ISLAND ECONOMICS (II) (9/28–30)

**Principal readings:**


**Supplementary:**


**VI. CAPITALISM AND SLAVERY (10/5–7)**

*Principal readings:*


*Supplementary:*


**VII. SLAVE DEMOGRAPHY: TREATMENT AND DISEASE ISSUES (10/12–14)**

*Principal readings:*


*Supplementary:*


VIII. DEMOGRAPHY AND FAMILY LIFE (10/19–21)

**Principal readings:**


**Supplementary:**


IX. GENDER, RACE, AND LABOR IN THE SLAVE PLANTATION (I) (10/26–28)

**Principal readings:**
Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, pp. 1–89.

**Supplementary:**


X. GENDER, RACE, AND LABOR IN THE SLAVE PLANTATION (II) (11/2–4)

**Principal readings:**

**Supplementary:**


XI. BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK: THE FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR (11/9–11)

Principal readings:


Supplementary:


XII. FORMS OF RESISTANCE (I): REBELLION AND MARRONAGE (11/16–18)

Principal readings:


Supplementary:


Michael Craton, Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies (Ithaca, 1982).

Jalil Sued Badillo and Angel López Cantos, Puerto Rico negro (Río Piedras, 1986).


David Barry Gaspar, Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua, with implications for Colonial British America (Baltimore, 1985).

XIII. FORMS OF RESISTANCE (II): REVOLUTION AND EMANCIPATION (11/23)

Principal readings:


Supplementary:


XIV. THE ORDEAL OF FREE LABOR (6/10)

Principal readings:

Supplementary:


XV. THE HAITIAN CRUCIBLE (6/11)

**Principal readings:**

Michel-Ralph Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation* (New York, 1990), all.

**Supplementary:**
