When one thinks of the "peasant" areas of the world, the Caribbean is hardly the first that comes to mind. In fact, if most students of peasantries were asked to locate and describe the world's chief "peasant zones", the Caribbean would probably not be among the top ten on any of the lists. Long defined by European and North American imperial powers as an area notably suitable for large-scale export agriculture, organized largely on the basis of imported working populations, the islands of the West Indies and the surrounding tropical lowlands are among the foremost agro-industrial areas spawned by European expansion. As Sidney Mintz reminds us, the manufacture of sugar from the juice of the cane was among the most sophisticated mechanical and chemical processes invented before the era of steam power. Because sugar so thoroughly dominated Caribbean history until the middle of the twentieth century, and because the laboring populations recruited for sugar-making were chiefly slaves brought from Africa, it would appear that there was little room left in Caribbean history for the development of peasantries.

Yet, in actuality, few world areas have appeared as suitable for the study of processes leading into and out of "peasantness" as the West Indies. Several of the most useful and popular concepts for the study of these transitions have been derived from observations of Caribbean societies: Wolf's classification of "closed corporate" and "open" peasant communities, for example, and Mintz's construct of the "rural proletariat" as an identifiable social type quite distinct from peasants and urban workers. Moreover, in few cases where the "nation" is defined by the presence of a large class of rural smallholders have the complex, interdependent forces of race, class, gender, and external control been so palpably central to the historical process as in Haiti since its independence in 1804. Finally, Caribbean migration to the United States and Europe has recently introduced into these regions populations whose customs, mentalities, and cultural orientations are definitely no less rural than those of the Eastern European or Italian migrants of an earlier time.

What does it mean to be a peasant in the Caribbean setting today, and what has it meant over the long stretch of nearly five centuries? What commonalities have existed between such peasantries and those of Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America? How have they arisen, and how can one characterize their relations with dominant forms of production, such as the plantation, and with the various forms that states have assumed historically across the region? If peasants, by temperament, resist outside domination and control, what forms has this resistance taken in the Caribbean, and why?

These are some of the questions that will concern us in this seminar. In order to tackle the problems they raise, we will look at some of the conceptual foundations of peasant studies and will sample the ways in which peasantries have been looked at by analysts. We will also read selectively from the historical, anthropological, and sociological literature on Caribbean peasantries. The intent, however, is not to cover any one problem in depth but to survey the breadth of issues which peasantries and "peasantness" pose, especially in the Caribbean context. Seminar work will concentrate instead on research leading to a substantial paper, which each student will present to the seminar in one of the latter sessions of the semester.
SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1 (Sept. 7) -- Peasant studies and Caribbean studies (orientation session)


Week 2 (Sept. 14) -- Peasantries: essential concepts

Readings:

Week 3 (Sept. 21) Peasant societies and economies

Readings:
Units I and II in *P&PS* (much may be skimmed).

Week 4 (Sept. 28) Peasant cultures

Readings:
Unit III in *P&PS*.

Week 5 (Oct. 5) Resistance

Readings:
Unit IV in *P&PS*. 
Week 6 (Oct. 12) Reconstituted peasantry

Readings:

Week 7 (Oct. 19) Reconstitutions in borderlands and frontiers

Readings:
Angel Quintero Rivera, "La cimarronería como herencia y utopía," David y Goliath (Buenos Aires), 40 (noviembre de 1985), 38-41.

Week 8 (Oct. 26) Proto-peasantry and slavery in the era of commercial capital

Readings:
Week 9 (Nov. 2) Forced labor, peonization, and the construction of peasantries

Readings:

Week 10 (Nov. 9) Emancipation and the rise of peasantries

Readings:

Week 11 (Nov. 16) Peasants and plantations

Readings:

Week 12 (Nov. 23) Proletarianization or lumpenization?

Readings:
Unit V in *P&PS* (again, much may be skimmed).
Week 13 (Nov. 30) Between reform and revolution

Readings:

Weeks 14 and 15 (Dec. 7 and 14) Paper presentations
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a sample of recent writings in general peasant studies and on the peasantry in the Caribbean and Latin America. It reflects the instructor's reading of the literature and does not purport to be comprehensive. It should thus be used as a complement to the bibliography in Shanin's (ed.) Peasants and Peasant Societies.

General and Comparative


Firth, Raymond, and B. S. Yamey, eds. *Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies: Studies from Asia, Oceania, the Caribbean and Middle America*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964.


Froehlicher, Robert. "En marge des societes paysannes: l'agriculture a temps partiel."


Keith, Nelson W., and Novella Zett Keith, eds. *New Perspectives on Social Class and Socioeconomic Development in the Periphery*. Contributions in Economics & Economic


Ranger, Terence O. Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative


_____. "Defining Peasants: Conceptualizations and De-conceptualizations Old and New in a Marxist Debate." Peasant Studies 8 (Fall 1979): 38–60.


Wolf, Eric. "'Comment' on G. Dalton, 'Peasantries in Anthropology and History'" *Current Anthropology* 13, no. 3-4 (1972): 410–11.


*The Caribbean*


Mariñez, Pablo. *Resistencia campesina, imperialismo y reforma agraria en República*


Latin America


Cardoso, Ciro Flamarion S. "The Peasant Breach in the Slave System: New Developments in


Jiménez, Michael. "Class, Gender, and Peasant Resistance in Central Colombia, 1900–1930." In


Mattos de Castro, Hebe Maria. "Beyond Masters and Slaves: Subsistence Agriculture as Survival Strategy in...


Slatta, Richard W. "Bandits and Rural Social History: A Comment on Joseph." *Latin American


