

English 438: Special Studies in Postcolonial Literature and Theory

Fall 2014 UVic CRN: 11369

CLE C110 MWR 2:30-3:20 PM

This year's topic: Caribbean literature and culture

Dr. Lincoln Z. Shlensky

Office: CLE D332

Office hours: R 12:00-2:00

Email: shlensky@uvic.ca

Course Web site: www.shlensky.com/teaching

Course Description

This course will offer a survey of creative and theoretical texts of the postcolonial Caribbean for students with diverse disciplinary backgrounds in the humanities. The course will not assume that you have previously been exposed to postcolonial theory and literature or to Caribbean literature and history. The only essential prerequisite you will need for this class is an openness to reading unfamiliar and sometimes complex texts, and the willingness to consider the viewpoints of people whose experiences may be very different from yours.

We will begin with the hypothesis that the primary concerns of postcolonialism as a field are the twin problems of artistic and political representation. In other words, two fundamental related questions are raised by postcolonial theory as a field: first, how can the experiences of the (formerly) colonized peoples be expressed authentically, creatively, and responsibly in literature, film, and other media (“artistic representation”); and, secondly, what is entailed in speaking on behalf of, or in dialogue with, postcolonial peoples as individuals or collectives (“political representation”)?

In answering these questions we will explore topics such as: nationalism, revolution, mimicry, hybridity, subalternity, haunting, resistance, contestation, creolization, feminism, sexuality, collective memory, patriarchalism, tourism, AIDS, globalization, environmentalism, trans-nationalism or regionalism, reconciliation, solidarity, reparation and reconciliation.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, I expect that you will have developed greater familiarity with Caribbean postcolonial literature, film, and theory. You will be more familiar with historical events, political movements, theoretical paradigms, and Caribbean postcolonial literary themes and forms. You can best build skills and increase your knowledge through attentively reading assigned material by the due date, consistently attending class and participating in discussion, writing assignments, and taking and reviewing preparatory and discussion notes. Writing assignments, quizzes and exams will be designed to help you deepen and solidify your knowledge.

Required texts

Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place* [1988]. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.)

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea* [1966]. (New York: Norton, 1998.)
Laming, George. *In the Castle of My Skin* [1953]. (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1991.)
Lovelace, Earl. *Salt* [2004]. New York: Persea Books, 2004.

Assorted articles and short texts, available at shlensky.com/secure (password to be distributed in class)

Course grades

I will determine final grades as follows (as a percent of the final grade):

1. 10 in-class quizzes on the readings for the course. Responses will be given 1 point if competent, 2 points if notably incisive. No make-ups (except with a doctor's note), but each quiz is worth just 2%, for a total of 20% of your final grade.
2. A research essay. Draft due November 20. Final version due November 27.
1800-2500 words (7-10 pp.): 35%
3. Two group-researched and written "reader's guides" for texts we have read. 20% (10% each)
4. A final exam that tests your understanding of formal concepts and historical information introduced in class discussion and in assigned readings: 20%
5. Participation (attendance + engagement in class discussion): 5%

Grades will be assigned according to the following UVic guidelines <<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar/FACS/UnIn/UARe/Grad.html>>:

A+	90-100	B-	70-72
A	85-89	C+	65-69
A-	80-84	C	60-64
B+	77-79	D	50-59
B	73-76	F	0-49

For more specific information about how to do well on the essay you will write for this class, please see my document "Assessment Criteria for Undergraduate Student Research Essays" at shlensky.com/materials.

I will give you ample notice of any changes to the syllabus.

If you have a disability, please let me know so I can help to accommodate you. Please also register at the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability if you wish to have them prepare alternate examination arrangements.

N grades

Students who have completed the following elements will be considered to have completed the course and will be assigned a final grade:

- Six quizzes (out of 10)
- "Reader's guide" group assignment
- Research essay

- Final exam

Failure to complete any of these four elements will result in a grade of “N” regardless of the cumulative percentage on other elements of the course. An N is a failing grade, and it factors into a student’s GPA as 0 (maximum percentage that can accompany an N on a transcript is 49).

“Reader’s guide” group assignment

This is a group project, in two parts. Please see the instructions at shlensky.com/materials.

Research essay assignment

Please see the assignment instructions at shlensky.com/materials. Draft due November 20; final version due November 27.

Submission guidelines

Please submit written assignments to me as **PDF files**, without spaces or special characters in the file name, like this: yourname-2014engl438-yourtitle.pdf. Upload your assignment to me at shlensky.com/teaching (Submissions >>) using the password “camera.” The file you send must be a PDF file. I may later request a hard copy of your essay. *Be sure to keep a copy of all the written work you submit with the file name you submitted.*

Late Submission Policy

I know that completing your work on time requires self-discipline, and I want to reward students who meet their responsibility to turn in assignments when they are due. To be fair to these students, I will deduct credit for assignments turned in late: 1/3 of a letter grade per day. I will grant submission extensions under some circumstances, if you let me know at least a week in advance. Please give me documentation if there is a medical or other emergency situation for which you are requesting an exception to this policy.

Writing improvement

To help you improve your performance on writing assignments, I may request that you seek tutoring at The Centre for Academic Communication <<http://www.ltc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/twc.php>>, which is located on the main floor of the McPherson Library in the Learning Commons. You can book an appointment at the Centre’s website or take advantage of online tutoring, which is a good option for improving the organization, style, grammar and clarity of your writing. If I request this of you, please supply documentation of your use of these resources.

Final Exam

I suggest that you prepare for the final exam in two broad ways.

- Make sure that you have read all of the texts that were assigned during the term. While not every text will be covered in the exam, this will be your best guarantee that you can answer questions that I may pose. You may wish to refresh your memory

about any texts you do not feel you grasped sufficiently after our discussion. Be sure that you know crucial information about the texts, such as the author's name, character names, publication date, theme and style.

- Review your class notes, and be sure to get notes or a recap from other students for any classes you may have missed. Consider how you would relate each of the texts to the themes we addressed in class, particularly those related to postcolonial history, culture and discourse. (Regardless of what is on the syllabus, I will not ask you questions about any texts that we did not discuss during the term.)

Course participation and attendance

Your active participation in class discussions represents an important contribution to your own development of ideas. When you ask a question or answer one, you are contributing to the intellectual growth of all the students in the class. I greatly value the efforts of students who enrich discussion by offering their own views in class. Attendance is a vital part of participation, and so I ask that you attend all classes for this course. I understand, however, that there will be rare occasions when you cannot attend class for personal reasons. **More than four absences** during the semester compromises your ability to participate and will affect your final grade. If you must be absent for more than three classes due to medical reasons, please bring documentation of these issues. I will factor participation and attendance into your final grade.

Computers in the classroom

I have found that computer use during class is often a source of distraction. If you feel you must use a computer in class, please refrain from using it for any activity not directly related to class.

Learning environment

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe working and learning environment for all its members. We, students and faculty members, are all expected to adhere to the UVic human rights policy. Please let me know if something is going on in the classroom that makes you feel personally uncomfortable.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is a sign of your interest in helping to build and support an intellectual community. Please be aware of and adhere to the UVic academic integrity policy (web.uvic.ca/calendar/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcl.html). Using someone else's ideas or writing without attribution (plagiarism), cheating, multiple submission, or other forms of academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the course and further sanctions by the University. You can easily avoid plagiarism by putting any material taken from another person's writing in quotation marks and by acknowledging the source of any ideas or information you are paraphrasing. I may submit student writing assignments to TurnItIn.com for an originality review.

About me

It may be helpful for you to know a little about me. I completed my graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, in Comparative Literature. My MA focused on the Enlightenment French philosophers, Rousseau and Diderot. My PhD dissertation was a comparison of the writing of two late-modernist/postmodernist writers, Aharon Appelfeld, an Israeli author who writes in Hebrew, and Edouard Glissant, a francophone writer from Martinique. I have since continued to work in both Caribbean and Jewish studies, writing about the francophone and, increasingly, the anglophone Caribbean, as well as about Hebrew literature and Middle Eastern topics. I am currently working on a new research project on global film production. I teach and have research interests in film and semiotic theory, which was the focus of my undergraduate degree at Brown University. Just so you'll know, I have a young son and toddler⁵ daughter, both of whom keep me very busy when I am not at work!

Schedule of Assignments

Please complete assignments by the due date listed below.

Wednesday, September 3
Introduction: the Caribbean

Thursday, September 4
Introduction: Caribbean literature
In class: W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (excerpts)

Monday, September 8
Quiz 1: Kincaid
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988), pp. 3-37

Wednesday, September 10
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*, 41-81

Thursday, September 11
Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939), 1-27 (to “The End of the world of course.”) (available at shlensky.com/secure)

Monday, September 15
Quiz 2: Césaire
Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 27-57 (end of the poem).

Wednesday, September 17
Due: Group 1 “Reader’s Guide” for *A Small Place*
George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), 9-58.

Thursday, September 18
George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, 58-108.

Monday, September 22
Quiz 3: Lamming
George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, 109-158.

Wednesday, September 24
George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, 159-208.

Thursday, September 25
No class.
George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, 209-247.

Monday, September 29
George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, 247-303.

Wednesday, October 1

Quiz 4: Fanon

Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), 30 pp (shlensky.com/secure)

Thursday, October 2

Due: Group 2 "Reader's Guide" for *In the Castle of My Skin*

Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Mask* (Isaac Julien, U.K. 1996), 52 mins. (screening in class)

Monday, October 6

In class: Jean Rhys background: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), 3-35 (Part I).

Wednesday, October 8

Quiz 5: Rhys

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), 36-74.

Thursday, October 9

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), 74-113.

Monday, October 13

Thanksgiving Day (no class)

Wednesday, October 15

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), 114-123.

Thursday, October 16

Sam Selvon, "The Cricket Match" (1957) 10 pp. (shlensky.com/secure)

V. S. Naipaul, "The Nightwatchman's Occurrence Book" (1962) 8 pp. (shlensky.com/secure)

Monday, October 20

Louise Bennett, "No Lickle Twang" and "Colonization in Reverse" (1966) (shlensky.com/secure)

Wednesday, October 22

Due: Group 1 "Reader's Guide" for *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Derek Walcott, "The Sea is History" (1979) 3 pp. (shlensky.com/secure)

Thursday, October 23

Derek Walcott, "The Schooner Flight" (1979) 12 pp. (shlensky.com/secure)

Monday, October 27

Quiz 6: Walcott

Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory" (1992) 25 pp. (shlensky.com/secure)

Wednesday, October 29

Earl Lovelace, *Salt* (2004), 3-43.

Thursday, October 30

Earl Lovelace, *Salt*, 44-93.

Monday, November 3

Quiz 7: Lovelace

Earl Lovelace, *Salt*, 94-133.

Wednesday, November 5

Earl Lovelace, *Salt*, 134-188.

Thursday, November 6

Earl Lovelace, *Salt*, 189-243.

Monday, November 10

Reading Break.

Earl Lovelace, *Salt*, 244-260.

Wednesday, November 12

Reading Break.

Thursday, November 13

Lovelace conclusion.

Monday, November 17

Wednesday, November 19

Quiz 8: Glissant

Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* [1990], 5-9, 11-22. (shlensky.com/secure)

Thursday, November 20

Due: Group 2 "Reader's Guide" for *Salt*

Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* [1990], 63-75. (shlensky.com/secure)

Monday, November 24

Quiz 9: Danticat

Edwidge Danticat, "Children of the Sea" (1995), 12 pp.; "The Book of the Dead" (2009), 6 pp. (shlensky.com/secure)

Wednesday, November 26

No class.

Thursday, November 27

No class.

First draft of research essay due. Please see the instructions at shlensky.com/materials. Peer editing.

Monday, December 1

Quiz 10: Kincaid

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (re-read).

Kincaid, "Girl" (1988), 3 pp.; "My Mother" (1988) 9 pp. (shlensky.com/secure)

Wednesday, December 3

Research essay due. Please see the instructions at shlensky.com/materials.
Concluding class.