Spring 2015 CORE-UA.509 Cultures and Contexts: The Caribbean
Mon/Wed 12:30-1:45
Prof. Aisha Khan, 998-3751, ak105@nyu.edu
Office hours: Tues 10-12, Wed 2:30-5:00
Teaching Assistants: Louis Romer (lpr226@nyu.edu), Lee Douglas (leefotos@gmail.com), Amanda Perry (ap3234@nyu.edu)

Course description

Known for its beauty, cultural vitality, and diverse mix of peoples, cultures, and languages, the Caribbean is where today’s globalization began some 500 years ago, and where the idea of “modernity” took shape. Its sugar economy and colonial history of slave labor and indenture made it the site of massive transplantations of peoples and cultures from Africa for four centuries, from Asia and the Middle East for two centuries, and, throughout, a sizeable influx of peoples from Europe.

This course examines Caribbean colonial and postcolonial history and cultures, focusing on the relationship between processes of development and exploitation of the region. It also explores local ideas about race, class, culture, gender, and sexuality, which both justify and challenge these processes. We will tack between the past and the present, in order to better understand the relationship between historical forces and contemporary processes. Our coverage will be interdisciplinary, and range across English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, French-speaking, and Dutch-speaking territories.
Required reading: books

(1) A Small Place, by Jamaica Kincaid (in NYU bookstore and on Bobst library reserve)
(2) Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops, by
   Ginetta E.B. Candelario (in NYU bookstore and on Bobst library reserve)
(3) The Pagoda, by Patricia Powell (in NYU bookstore and on Bobst library reserve)
(4) Cultures and Contexts: Caribbean course pack (available on line from Linus Books website
   (see NYU Classes electronic board), and on Bobst Library reserve.

Other course requirements

All students are expected to attend lectures and recitation sections, to arrive on time, to
participate in class discussions, and to complete assignments by the date they are due. Students
are permitted two “free” absences (combined lecture and recitation); more than two absences
will result in a drop of one letter in your final grade–UNLESS you have verifiable
documentation of a medical or comparable emergency. Attendance and class participation in
lecture and recitation section are factored into your final grade (attendance is taken in both
lecture and recitation), so your own efforts to be with us and participate can make a difference.

You will post one Brief Communique each week to your recitation section. These will
be one or two paragraphs on some aspect of the reading or lecture material. Brief communiques
will be read by everyone in your section, as well as your T.A., before the section meeting time,
and discussed in section. The brief communiques, along with attendance and participation, will
total 20% of your final grade.

You will write three Response Papers (see schedule of topics below for due dates).
Each paper will be four pages, which together will total 60% of your final grade (20% for
each paper).

You will take one Comprehensive Final Exam, held in class on the university
assigned final exam date, which will be 20% of your final grade. Material covered on the
final exam will not include the subject matter covered in the 3 response papers.

Additional assistance for this class is available to you free of charge at the College Learning
Center, located on the 1st floor of Weinstein Hall. For information on one-on-one and group peer
tutoring, please stop by the CLC or go to their website: http://www.nyu.edu/cas/clc
Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Mon Jan 26th Overview of the course

Wed Jan 28th Foundations, and class exercise
Film: “Iron in the Soul,” Episode 1, parts A and B

Mon Feb 2nd Foundations: Interpreting the Caribbean
Reading: Carlos Guillermo Wilson, “The Caribbean: Marvelous Cradle-Hammock and Painful Cornucopia” (in course pack)

Wed Feb 4th Interpreting the Caribbean continued
Reading: Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “North Atlantic Fictions: Global Transformations, 1492-1945” (in course pack)

Mon Feb 9th Interpreting the Caribbean continued
Reading: Stuart Hall, “Myths of Caribbean Identity” (in course pack)

Wed Feb 11th Foundations: colonialism, capitalism, modernity today
Reading: A Small Place (finish by Feb 18th)

Mon Feb 16th No class (Presidents’ Day)

Wed Feb 18th Foundations: colonialism, capitalism, modernity today continued
Film: “Life and Debt” (1st part)
Response paper #1 due!

Mon Feb 23rd Foundations: colonialism, capitalism, modernity today continued
Reading:
Film: “Life and Debt” (2nd part)

Wed Feb 25th Agent Provocateurs of Primitive Accumulation (Pirates)
Reading: Jennifer Marx, “The Golden Age of Piracy” (in course pack)

Mon Mar 2nd Pirates continued
Reading: finish pirates reading
Film: “Great Ships, Pirate Ships”

Wed Mar 4th Post-emancipation labor schemes: Asian indenture
Reading: Walton Look Lai, “Push Factors and Migration Trends in India and China” (in course pack)

Mon Mar 9th Asian indenture continued
Reading: Verene Shepherd, “Indian Migrant Women and Plantation Labour in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Jamaica: Gender Perspectives” (in course pack)
Film: “Coolies, Sailors, Settlers”
Wed Mar 11th Asian indenture continued  
Reading: Lisa Yun, “The Depositions” (in course pack)

SPRING BREAK: Mar 16-Mar 22

Mon Mar 23rd Asian indenture continued  
Reading: Verene Shepherd, “Indian Women and Labour Migration” (in course pack)

Wed Mar 25th Asian indenture continued  
Reading: begin The Pagoda

Mon Mar 30th Asian indenture continued  
Guest lecture: Amanda Perry  
Reading: continue The Pagoda

Wed Apr 1st Asian indenture continued  
Reading: finish The Pagoda  
Film: “The Chiney Shop”  
Response Paper #2 due!

Mon Apr 6th Other Legacies of Racial Formations  
Reading: begin Black Behind the Ears

Wed Apr 8th Racial Formations (continued)  
Reading: continue Black Behind the Ears

Mon Apr 13th Racial Formations (continued)  
Reading: continue Black Behind the Ears  
Film: “Black in Latin America”

Wed Apr 15th Racial Formations (continued)  
Reading: finish Black Behind the Ears

Mon Apr 20th Industries and the Environment: The “Off-Shore” Dutch Caribbean  
Guest lecture: Louis Romer  
Reading: (1) Rose Mary Allen, “The Complexity of National Identity Construction in Curacao, Dutch Caribbean” (in course pack), (2) Bill Maurer, “Islands in the Net: Rewiring Technological and Financial Circuits in the “Offshore” Caribbean” (in course pack)

Wed Apr 22nd Industries and the Environment: Tourism  
Reading: (1) Joan Phillips, “Tourist-Oriented Prostitution in Barbados” (in course pack)  
(2) Marian Miller, “Paradise Sold, Paradise Lost” (in course pack), (3) Maurice Burac, “The Struggle for Sustainable Tourism in Martinique” (in course pack)  
Film: “The Toured”
Mon Apr 27th Industries and the Environment: Bio-Power
Guest Lecture: Prof. Vanessa Agard Jones
Reading: finish 4/22 assignments

Wed Apr 29th Melodies of Resistance
Reading: Sonjah Stanley Niaah, “Out of Many, One Dancehall” (Bobst e-book),
Film: “Dancehall Queen”

Mon May 4th Melodies of Resistance continued
Reading: Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, “Fabricating Identities: Survival and the Imagination in Jamaican Dancehall Culture” (in course pack)
Response Paper #3 due!

Wed May 6th Melodies of Resistance continued
Reading: Donna P. Hope, “From Browning to Cake Soap: Popular Debates on Skin Bleaching in the Jamaican Dancehall” (in course pack)

Mon May 11th Melodies of Resistance continued
Reading: Byrd, Ayana, “Claiming Jezebel: Black Female Subjectivity and Sexual Expression in Hip-Hop” (distributed to class)

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 13th, 12:00-1:50pm, our classroom