

Dr. Abigail Palko
Email: apalko@nd.edu
Office: 325 O'Shaughnessy Hall
Telephone: 631-8635

Office Hours:
M, 10:00-noon; W, 10-noon;
& other times by appt.

GSC 20509/AFST 23775/ENGL 20712:
Miranda's Meaning/Sycorax's Speech: Caribbean Women Writers
204 DeBartolo Hall

The Caribbean has fascinated Europe since Columbus's 15th century voyages, rapidly inspiring the Shakespearean figures of Caliban, Prospero, and Miranda. In the 20th century, Caribbean (male) intellectuals appropriated these tropes, figuring themselves as Caliban to Europe's Prospero. This new configuration of power, however, still silenced Miranda, an exclusion that Caribbean women have sought to rectify for the past four decades. This course will begin with two plays written by men in order to contextualize the trope of Caliban and Miranda, illustrating the ways in which the Caribbean has figured in Western imaginations since its "discovery"; it will then focus on the development of women's voices in their attempts to define and describe their unique concerns. Novels have been chosen to represent the diversity of authors at work in this region; as such, they come from eight different islands (plus the US and France) with varied cultures and traditions, representing three of the dominant linguistic traditions (English, French, and Spanish) in the Caribbean. Readings are grouped thematically, exploring themes such as colonization, madness, childhood, memory, and subjugation (also touching on family relationships, love, and sexuality), with the objective of arriving at a fundamental, but necessarily incomplete, understanding of this complex region and its concerns as expressed in its radical rereading of Western culture. As early as our reading of Sylvia Wynter's essay "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'," we will begin to see why the course title is necessarily problematic and to explore the various restrictions of women's voices in the Caribbean and the implications of overcoming them.



Primary Texts – to be purchased:

1. Phyllis Shand Allfrey, *The Orchid House* (1953; Dominica)
2. Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (1962; Jamaica)
3. Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (1984; Jamaica)
4. Cristina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992; Cuba/US)
5. Patricia Powell, *The Pagoda* (1998; Jamaica/US)
6. Gisèle Pineau, *Chair Piment (Devil's Dance)* (2002; Guadeloupe/France)
7. Elizabeth Nuñez, *Prospero's Daughter* (2006; Trinidad)

Primary Texts – available on e-reserves:

- Brand, Dionne. "Elizete, Beckoned." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. 70-77. (Trinidad)
- Danticat, Edwidge. "Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work" in *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*. New York: Vintage: 2011. 1-20. (Haiti)
- Kincaid, Jamaica. "On Seeing England for the First Time." *Concert of Voices: an Anthology of World Writing in English*. Ed. Victor J Ramraj. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview P, 2009. 235-39. (Dominica)
- Montero, Mayra. "Corinne, Amiable Girl." Trans. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. *Callaloo* 17.3 (Summer 1994): 836-46. (Puerto Rico)
- Mootoo, Shani. "Out on Main Street." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. 252-60. Print. (Trinidad/Ireland)
- Rhys, Jean. "On Not Shooting Sitting Birds" and "The Insect World." *Sleep It Off, Lady*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. 87-92, 123-36. (Dominica)

Secondary Texts – available on e-reserves:

- Davies, Carol Boyce and Elaine Savory Fido. "Women and Literature in the Caribbean: an Overview." *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Eds. Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido. Trenton, NJ: Africa World P, 1990. 1-24. Print.
- Francis, Donette. "Strategies of Caribbean Feminism." *Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell. New York: Routledge, 2011. 332-43. Print.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'." *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Eds. Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido. Trenton, NJ: Africa World P, 1990. 355-72. Print.

Requirements:

- 35% Analytical Essay
- 10% Participation
- 20% Short response papers
- 35% Final

Required assignments include:

- One response paper per unit (2 typed pages); due dates are indicated on the schedule of readings. They will be informal in nature in that I am looking for your reaction to readings/class discussions. This is an opportunity for you to further explore issues raised in class discussions or elements of readings we do not cover.
- An analytical essay (6-9 pages). This essay will ask you to examine the early history of Caribbean women's writing/publishing in connection with 1 or 2 of the class novels [the prompt will be provided 9/24; due 10/1].
- Participation in class discussions.
- Final exam (including 1 or 2 take-home essays and an in-class portion of quotation identifications and short answers at the scheduled exam period).

Rationale and Objectives:

In our efforts to explore the historical and intellectual developments of the region, we will quickly discover the great variety of experiences that have converged to shape the region today. This course will introduce postcolonial theory, specifically as it pertains to the Caribbean, and serve as an initial survey of the diverse literary offerings of this region. It will also examine the major literary movements of Caribbean literature, including *négritude*, *antillanité*, *creolité*, and *la folie antillaise* in order to determine where women's voices fit within this tradition. While this study will permit the exploration of the different nuances of female voices to be discovered in this rich literary tradition, it also will reveal the common themes and concerns of Caribbean women as they answer back to the Western tradition that has shaped their reality.

Students will be encouraged to analyze the readings and their concerns, make connections between texts, move across boundaries (both geographical and intellectual) and understand various forms of fiction. They will also be prompted to undertake literary analysis in their own writing, and assignments and instructor feedback are designed to assist the students in improving their writing skills.

Consistent with the mission of the University of Notre Dame, the Gender Studies Program is dedicated to fostering a learning community that represents and builds on a rich diversity of human experiences, backgrounds, cultures, histories, ideas, and ways of living. We also commit to the task of negotiating the dual priorities of authentic free speech and active regard for all others in a safe, supportive, and anti-oppressive classroom environment. An anti-oppressive environment means that we work against language, actions, interactions and ideologies that hurt people. Hate speech of any kind will not be permitted. This includes use of racial, sexual, gender, or abled slurs and personal attacks on others' ideas.

Class etiquette: In developing the following policies, I was primarily guided by an understanding of our purposes in gathering twice a week, which I see as 1) developing your reading and literary analysis skills, primarily of the Caribbean, and 2) preparing you as future professionals; they are intended to facilitate both objectives.

- Plagiarism cannot be tolerated. Please be mindful of the Honor Code pledge – “As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.” – I will ask you to sign it on your exams and research paper, which must be done on your own, with any ideas of scholars properly cited (Please use MLA style). You may discuss the readings with classmates both before and after class meetings; I ask that you acknowledge your peers' ideas should they influence your response paper (a simple footnote to that effect will suffice).
- Attendance – We will cover a book every 2-3 class sessions. You need to attend everyday – it's hard to contribute to discussions at which you are not present. That said, more than TWO absences will be reflected in your final grade (loss of half a grade level per absence after two). **Missing more than FOUR class sessions may result in a FAILING grade for the course. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING OUT FROM A CLASSMATE WHAT YOU HAVE MISSED. Additionally, ABSENCE IS NOT AN EXCUSE TO NOT TURN IN WORK ON TIME – EMAIL IT TO ME.**
- Email – Please use a subject line that indicates your content. Also, please compose the email in a professional manner (i.e., greeting and closing, including your name)
- I expect that class will not be interrupted by cell phones or text messages.

Course Outline:

* This syllabus can be modified to meet the needs (as determined by me) of the class. Readings and assignments are due the class day on which they are listed.

Unit One: The Caliban Trope

Week 1:

Wednesday, 8/21:

- Introduction
- Shakespeare, *The Tempest* – to be read in class
- Césaire, *Une Tempête* – to be read in class

Week 2:

Monday, 8/26:

- Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, "Women and Literature in the Caribbean: an Overview" (Davies and Fido 1-24) – [E]
- Donette Francis, "Strategies of Caribbean Feminism" – [E]

Wednesday, 8/28:

- Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'" (Davies and Fido 355-72) – [E]

Unit Two: Caribbean Women Begin Writing

Week 3:

Monday, 9/3:

- Phyllis Shand Allfrey, *The Orchid House* ("The Days Before" and "Miss Stella Comes Home"; 1-84)

Wednesday, 9/5:

- Allfrey, *The Orchid House* ("Miss Joan Returns"; 85-136)
- **Response to Unit 1 due (in hard copy or via email at the beginning of class)**

Week 4:

Monday, 9/10:

- Allfrey, *The Orchid House* ("Miss Natalie Arrives"; 137-216)

Wednesday, 9/12:

- Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (Part One: Saturday; 7-111)

Week 5:

Monday, 9/17:

- Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (Part Two: Friday and Part Three: The Night; 113-279)

Wednesday, 9/19:

- Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (Part Four: The Morning; 281-315)
- **Response to Unit 2 due (in hard copy or via email at the beginning of class)**

Unit Three: The Child Speaks

Week 6:

Monday, 9/24:

- Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (parts I & II, pgs 3-107)

Wednesday, 9/26:

- Cliff, *Abeng* (part III, pgs 111-166)

Week 7:

Monday, 10/1:

- Mayra Montero, "Corinne, Amiable Girl" – [E]
- Analytical Essay due (in hard copy or via email at the beginning of class)

Wednesday, 10/3:

- Cristina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* ("Ordinary Seductions" pgs 3-101)

Week 8:

Monday, 10/8:

- Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* ("Imagining Winter" pgs 103-209)

Wednesday, 10/10:

- Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* ("The Languages Lost" pgs 211-245)
- Response to Unit 3 due (in hard copy or via email at the beginning of class)

FALL BREAK (10/15-10/19)

Unit Four: Madness and Lucidity

Week 10:

Monday, 10/22:

- Jean Rhys, "On Not Shooting Sitting Birds" and "The Insect World." – [E]

Wednesday, 10/24:

- Gisèle Pineau, *The Devil's Dance* (1st half)

Week 11:

Monday, 10/29:

- Gisèle Pineau, *The Devil's Dance* (2nd half)

Unit Five: Migration and Colonization

Wednesday, 10/31:

- Jamaica Kincaid, "The First Time I Saw England" – [E]
- Response to Unit 4 due (in hard copy or via email at the beginning of class)

Week 12:

Monday, 11/5:

- Patricia Powell, *The Pagoda* (chapters 1-3, pgs 3-88)

Wednesday, 11/7:

- Patricia Powell, *The Pagoda* (chapters 4-6, pgs 89-163)

Week 13:

Monday, 11/12:

- Patricia Powell, *The Pagoda* (chapters 7-11, pgs 164-245)

Wednesday, 11/14:

- Dionne Brand, "Elizete, Beckoned" [E]

Week 14:

Monday, 11/19:

- Shani Mootoo, "Out on Main Street" [E]
- Response to Unit 5 due (in hard copy or via email at the beginning of class)

Wednesday, 11/21: no class (Thanksgiving)

**Unit Six: The Post-colonial Memory Claims Its Voice:
The Future of Caribbean Women's Writing**

Week 15:

Monday, 11/26:

- Elizabeth Nuñez, *Prospero's Daughter* (Part 1)

Wednesday, 11/28:

- Elizabeth Nuñez, *Prospero's Daughter* (Part 2)

Week 16:

Monday, 12/3:

- Elizabeth Nuñez, *Prospero's Daughter* (Part 3)

Wednesday, 12/5:

- Edwidge Danticat, "Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work" (chapter 1 of *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*; 2010; Haiti) – [E]
- Wrap-up

Wednesday, December 12, 4:15-6:15 → Final exam (take home essay(s) due at exam period; plus ids and short questions at period)



The logo of the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars