

English 106 Section A3
Writing About Caribbean Texts
Spring 2018

MWF 8-8:50am

Dooly Memorial 119

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Office Hours: W 9-10am in Ferre 101, and by appointment (email to set up a time)

Texts and Materials: All course materials will be available online via Blackboard
Texts and readings must be brought to class either printed or on an electronic device (laptop or tablet)

This course will sharpen your analytical reading and writing skills as well as introduce you to academic research methods through a multidisciplinary approach to studying the Caribbean. In particular, we will consider how Miami's location at the hub of the Americas implicates it (and the university, and us) in the politics, history, economics and cultural production of the Caribbean. Through reading and analysis of literary and non-fiction texts from and about the Caribbean, we will ask whether and in what ways Miami might be considered a part of the Caribbean.

In this course, we will work on writing strategies and skills applicable to all fields and majors, such as textual analysis, researching and locating scholarly sources, and constructing an argument in conversation with existing research. However, we will also consider the differences in academic writing styles among disciplines such as the natural sciences, social sciences, business, and the humanities. As such, you will be responsible for learning the citation style and academic writing conventions of your chosen field or discipline. Your final research project will address a topic, issue or problem related to the Caribbean from the perspective of your field or discipline.

Please note that you do not need any prior knowledge of the Caribbean to succeed in this course.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this course, students will demonstrate the ability to..

- Synthesize multiple sources to craft original and sophisticated arguments
- Find, evaluate, and employ appropriate sources
- Engage in close reading of texts
- Deploy increasingly sophisticated rhetorical skills
- Cite sources formally (using MLA, APA, CBE, or other citation formats)

Writing Assignments

1. Short close readings (10%)

These brief textual analysis papers will be 2-3 pages and require you to select a passage from a text we read in class and examine how the author uses language and rhetorical strategies to convey an argument. You will have one close reading paper due near the beginning of the semester and a second paper close to the halfway point.

2. Lensing assignment (20%)

This assignment asks you to use a theoretical or conceptual text as a framework to read a primary text, likely a creative or fictional work. One way to approach this is to imagine yourself as the author of the theoretical text, and respond to the second text from their perspective. The goal of this assignment is use the concepts and ideas of the theoretical text as a "lens" to evaluate and interpret the other text. 4-6 pages.

3. Comparative genre analysis (15%)

For this assignment, you will choose a potential topic for your final research project compare/contrast how this topic has been discussed in three different rhetorical contexts, genres or academic disciplines. For instance, you might look at how your topic is approached in the social sciences, humanities, economics, or healthcare fields and in a popular source such as a newspaper or magazine. You should then use your analysis to make recommendations for writing persuasively in each of these contexts.

4. Literature review (15%)

This assignment will act as building block for your final research project. After selecting a topic for your project, you will conduct research and provide an overview of the existing body of research on the topic—trace the different schools of thought or approaches to the topic, summarize what other scholars have said, and examine how they agree, disagree, and relate to each other. You are stepping into the ongoing conversation on your research project, and your goal is to outline the strands of that conversation. The literature review will help you situate your argument within the body of scholarly research, and aspects of it may become a part of your final project.

5. Final research project (20%)

You will produce a research paper in a scholarly format on a topic of your interest that relates to the Caribbean or Miami. Your project will involve research from scholarly sources, put forward a clear and convincing position on the topic, and follow the citation style, format and conventions of your field or discipline. 8-10 pages.

Participation (20%)

Considered and engaged participation is crucial to your success in this course as well as creating a rich learning environment for the class. Successful, “A” level participation includes...

- **Coming to class prepared, with a paper or electronic copy of the assigned reading**
- Reading course readings fully, carefully, and critically, and preparing to make and argue assertions about the reading
- Attentively listening to the comments of your peers and extending or constructively critiquing their ideas
- Bringing our attention to passages from the reading and make connections to earlier readings or previous class discussions
- Thoughtfully and constructively contributing to group activities, discussions, and peer response
- Providing respectful, constructive feedback on your peers’ writing and creating a collaborative, supportive environment of inquiry

Your participation grade will be negatively impacted by...

- Failing to attend class
- Sleeping or chatting in class
- Off-task use of electronic devices: texting, checking social media, shopping, etc in class
- Coming to class unprepared i.e. without a paper or electronic copy of the reading, without access to your peers’ essays, without having done the reading
- Participating infrequently or in ways that are not constructive and do not move the conversation forward

- Merely being present in class but failing to engage in discussions or activities in small or large groups

Blackboard Reading Responses (part of participation grade)

The night before most reading assignments are due, you will be asked to respond to a specific prompt or question related to the reading. These responses are designed to stimulate your thinking about the text and the course themes and help prepare you for class discussion. They are also great places to start generating ideas for your essays and final research project. These posts will be graded informally, but thoughtful responses will enrich our class discussions and help you develop confidence in your ideas, critical reading skills and writing. **To earn full points on your reading responses, you will need to write thoughtful answers in full sentences and/or paragraphs totaling about 300 words.**

Policies, Expectations and Etiquette

Attendance is mandatory for this course. Your participation in class discussions is essential to both your own learning and the quality of the course we will be creating together. Excused absences are allowed only for participation in university sanctioned events and religious holidays. In these cases, please inform me of the dates of your absences during the first week of classes. In addition, you are allowed **three excused** absences for the semester, with no penalty (for illness, emergencies, etc.) For each class you miss after the limit, your participation grade will drop one increment (so an A becomes an A-, B+ to B, and so on.) If you miss **six** or more classes, you may fail automatically.

Papers should be submitted **in class** on the day they are due as a **hard copy**. Papers will be deducted by 10% for each class period they are late. If you anticipate that you will have difficulty meeting a deadline please come and talk to me about that well in advance, and NOT the night before the assignment is due. In general, adjustments or extensions to the deadline should be discussed at least three days before the due date. .

Electronic devices play a useful role in the 21st century classroom and I will not attempt to enforce a no phones or laptops policy. However, know that off-task use of electronic devices will result in a loss of participation points for the day. Use of technology for non-class purposes does not only negatively impact your ability to participate, but distracts your classmates. I prefer that laptops be closed and out of sight unless you are specifically using them to access a reading or paper for class or to conduct research. While I understand that laptops are commonly used for note-taking, I prefer that you take notes by hand if you are able in order to reduce distractions to yourself and your peers.

Plagiarism can include, but is not limited to, using the words and ideas of others as your own, failing to appropriately cite and give credit to the words and ideas of others, copying and pasting from sources without proper citation, submitting another (current or previous) student's paper as your own, or submitting a paper purchased or downloaded from a database as your own. As a serious ethical and legal violation, it will be punishable by failure of the course and possible dismissal from UM. For more information on the Student Honor Code, please see www.miami.edu/honor-code

Grades may not be discussed via email due to federal requirements, so if you have a question or concern about an assignment or participation grade, please come and see me during my office hours or email me to arrange a meeting.

Statement of university values: “While we defend freedom of speech and assembly, we denounce the rhetoric and actions of white supremacists and any other groups that promote exclusion, suppression, and intimidation of people who look, speak, or pray differently. History has shown us that it is only through respectful and constructive exchanges that societies can evolve and flourish. That is the core mission of the University of Miami, and we recommit to it at this challenging time.” (University of Miami President Julio Frenk, August 14th 2017.) In this course, we will strive to model the values expressed by President Frenk and shared by the University of Miami by creating an inclusive and welcoming classroom that fosters respectful and critical dialogue.

Tips for Success in this Class

- It is essential that your **UM email** points to a current working email that you check *regularly*, as I will communicate with you via the Blackboard email system.
- The **Writing Center** is an excellent (and free!) resource. I encourage you to bring in your papers throughout the semester.
 - The Writing Center is located on the first floor of Richter Library in the Learning Commons (past the elevators to your left)
 - Make an appointment at <http://www.as.miami.edu/writingcenter/> or call 305-284-2956. Appointments are available for either 30 minutes or an hour. Walk-ins also available, but limited.
 - The Writing Center can help you at any stage in your writing process, from brainstorming and outlining to revising drafts to working on grammar and sentence-level issues.
 - In order to help them help you, please always bring a copy of the **assignment sheet**, relevant **readings** and texts, and a copy of the syllabus to your appointment.
- Feel free to come to my **office hours** or email me to make an appointment to discuss questions or concerns, or simply to check in. If you have trouble speaking in class, come and talk to me about ways to overcome hesitations. If you find yourself falling behind, come and talk to me about strategies for managing your study time. If you feel overwhelmed, or confused, or just lost, come and talk to me. I am here to help you as best I can.
- I will respond to emails as promptly as I am able, but I cannot guarantee a same-day response. Please take that into consideration when emailing me with questions about assignments and the class.
- If, at any point, your work is not of passing quality, I will inform you immediately. While this is not specifically a grammar course, I do expect that your writing will be of a reasonably correct standard. If I see serious problems in your writing, I will ask that you see a tutor at the writing center on a weekly basis.
- This class will ask you to unlearn some of your assumptions and ideas about writing, thinking and learning. It demands not just the rote production of papers, but deep engagement with ideas that may challenge your worldview. Be prepared to invest several hours outside of class each week in thinking, writing, and reflecting. I promise that your effort will not be wasted, and will pay off in the rest of your college career.

Course Schedule: Please keep in mind that this schedule is subject to adjustment throughout the semester. Please refer to this Google document

https://docs.google.com/document/d/15joNy3P76koNztK5GT_BXhGOKhQgwwV50wxS6JWd46c/edit?usp=sharing for the most up-to-date version of the course schedule and reading assignments.

Weeks 1-4: Textual Analysis and the Caribbean

Main text: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

Assignments: Close reading #1

Weeks 5-7: Miami and the Caribbean

Main texts: *Make Your Home Among Strangers* by Jennine Capo-Crucet (excerpt) and *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* by Edwidge Danticat (excerpts)

Assignments: Lensing

LOWE MUSEUM VISIT

Weeks 8-9: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Caribbean

Main texts: *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* by Joshua Jelly-Schapiro (excerpts);

Research articles about the Caribbean from different disciplines

Assignments: Comparative genre analysis, close reading #2

Weeks 10-12: Scholarly Research on Miami and the Caribbean

Main texts: *They Say, I Say* (excerpts)

Assignments: Literature review

LIBRARY VISIT

Weeks 13-14: Developing the Final Research Project

Main texts: *The Craft of Research* (excerpts)

Assignments: Final research project