Spring 2017

DRAFT – SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES

FRSEM-UA 637 Haiti: A Land Under Dispute

Dr. Suzy Cater
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Office hours by appointment.

Seminar:
Mondays ............................................. 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. …… 25 West 4th St, room C9

Course description

When the name “Haiti” appears in the media, phrases such as “the poorest country in the Western hemisphere,” along with details of the nation’s political instability and health crises, regularly follow. How did Haiti come to be in this quandary, with its people struggling to exert positive ownership over their economy, natural resources, political process, and bodies? In probing these issues, we delve into the country’s long and turbulent history as a land under violent dispute, and some of the diverse – and conflicting – representations of the island by Haitians and foreigners over the centuries. We explore a variety of Haitian historical moments and the ways they have been imagined in culture, from the 18th-century slave revolts that culminated in this prized French colony throwing off white rule and establishing itself as the world’s first black republic, through to the 2010 earthquake and its aftermath. We trace how Haiti has functioned as a tension point for some of the biggest questions at the heart of Western society – questions about freedom, racial equality, democracy, free trade, and migration. We also engage with the experiences of the diasporic community here in New York City, home to the largest concentration of Haitians in the United States and a dynamically vibrant Haitian culture.
Overview

As a seminar designed for first-year students in the College of Arts and Science, this course has a number of complementary goals.

First, it is designed to be a formative social and intellectual introduction to your life as an undergraduate student in the liberal arts. Together with your classmates and the others in your cohort, you will learn what it means to join in the community of scholarship that is the university.

Second, we will pursue our studies in a liberal spirit, examining historical events and different depictions of Haiti as more than information to absorb or memorize. We will be interrogating the works under discussion to ask what they reveal about the human condition and how they help us to imagine the possibilities of human freedom.

Finally, the seminar is intended to introduce you to methods of research in the humanities, and your major goal for the course will be to complete a substantial piece of independent research. Together with the other reading and writing skills we will practice, the seminar should help hone the critical and analytic abilities you will need for success in your later studies and for your future lives as thoughtful individuals and engaged citizens.

Learning outcomes

This course will teach you to:

• Identify and explain major events in Haitian history, which have shaped Haiti’s modern-day circumstances.

• Analyze fictional and non-fictional texts and films, in order to ask questions about how Haiti has been represented at various times and how such representations have been disputed.

• Investigate the experiences of the Haitian diaspora in New York City.

• Analyze links and moments of dialogue or disagreement between different writers, artists, and historical actors in relation to Haitian experiences.

Course materials to purchase


The above texts can be purchased at the NYU Bookstore. They are also available on Amazon for approximately $5 or less. Please buy paper copies, not Kindle editions.

• All other texts will be provided in PDF format on NYU Classes.

• Films can be viewed at the Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media at Bobst Library.
Course assessment

1. Assigned readings, attendance and participation (10%):
   You are expected to read the assigned texts closely and carefully, to attend all classes, to arrive at class promptly, and to contribute actively and in an informed manner to seminar discussions.

2. Weekly homework assignments and quizzes (15%):
   These will assess your knowledge and understanding of the historical events we are exploring.

3. Oral presentation (10%):
   The oral presentation is an opportunity to perform a close reading of a passage from one of the assigned texts. The passage will be chosen by the instructor, and three or four questions will be provided to give you an idea of what to focus on in your analysis. After your presentation, you will be expected to answer questions from your fellow classmates.

4. Midterm paper (10%):
   Your first paper will be 3-4 pages long, typed and double-spaced. You will be expected to analyze one or more of the assigned texts in response to a prompt that I will give you.

5. Report on Haiti and New York City (20%):
   For this assignment, you will attend a Haitian cultural, educational or political event of your choice in New York City and produce a 4-5 page report on your experience. Ideas and preparations for this will be discussed in class.

6. Final Research Paper (35%):
   This will be a substantial work of independent research (10-12 pages) on modern-day representations of Haiti in fictional or non-fictional texts or films. The topic will be developed in consultation with me during class and in office hours. You should prepare an outline of your final paper before the last class meeting of the semester, in order to workshop it with your peers.

Classroom policies

- Absences will adversely affect your participation grade. If you cannot make it to class for any reason, you are expected to contact me by email to explain your absence.
- Please arrive promptly and be prepared to remain in the classroom for the duration of the session (there will be a break part of the way through!)
- The use of cellphones and laptops is not permitted.
- Please refrain from eating in class.
- Make sure to read the assigned texts before coming to class and bring your books with you.

Additional information

- Please take the time to read the NYU Honor Code and information on Academic Integrity: [http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity). Students who do not abide by these principles will be penalized. We will discuss in class how best to integrate critical sources into final papers, so there is no excuse for plagiarism.
• Students with a disability or learning difficulty must be registered at the Moses Center and show their letter of registration to the instructor. More information on the Moses Center is available here: http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html
• You may find the NYU Writing Center to be a valuable resource. Information about hours and how to set up an appointment is available here: http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html

### Schedule of Classes

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<td>Carpentier. Excerpts from <em>The Kingdom of This World</em>.</td>
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<td>In-class film screening: <em>Black Dawn</em>. Dir. Robin Lloyd. 19 min.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td><strong>Gaps and Silences</strong></td>
<td>Dubois. <em>Haiti</em>. 89-134.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2/13</td>
<td><strong>Vodou, Fear, (Mis)Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Dubois. <em>Haiti</em>. 135-64.</td>
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<td>Zora Neale Hurston. Excerpts from “Voodoo in Haiti.” <em>Tell my Horse</em>.</td>
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<td><em>President’s Day: No Class</em></td>
<td><strong>PAPER 1 due via email by 5pm Tuesday 2/21.</strong></td>
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<td>Frederick Douglass. Excerpts from “Lecture on Haiti.”</td>
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<td><em>Spring Break: No Class</em></td>
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<td>3/20</td>
<td><strong>Class, Gender, National Identity</strong></td>
<td>Dubois. <em>Haiti</em>. 275-310.</td>
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<td>Marie Vieux-Chauvet. <em>Love</em>.</td>
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Week 9  4/3:  **Writing Dictatorship: The Duvaliers (cont’d)**
Marie Vieux-Chauvet. *Love*.

**REPORT ON HAITI & NEW YORK due in class 4/3**

Week 10  4/10:  **Diaspora: Family, Politics, New York**
Film: *Stones in the Sun*. Dir. Patricia Benoit. 1hr 35 min. (To be watched before class.)

Week 11  4/17:  **On the Ground: Voices from Haiti**
Laferrière. Excerpts from *Down Among the Dead Men*.
Film: *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women. Pillars of the Global Economy*. Dir. Renee Bergan and Mark Schuller. 50 min. (To be watched before class).

Week 12  4/24:  **Diaspora and Cultural Fluidity**
Laferrière. Excerpts from *I am a Japanese Writer*.
Film: *The Other Side of the Water: The Journey of a Haitian Rara Band in Brooklyn*. Dir. Jeremy Robins and Magali Damas. 52 min. (To be watched before class.)

Week 13  5/1:  **The Earthquake and its Aftermath**
Dubois. *Haiti*. 360-70.
Katz. *The Big Truck That Went By*.

Week 14  5/8:  **Conclusion**
Katz. *The Big Truck That Went By*.
Workshop final paper outlines.

**FINAL PAPER due via email by midnight 5/14**

**Bibliography**

Listed below is information for texts that are course readings and other relevant works:


