

IMAGINING ‘THE AMERICAS’

Prof. John Drabinski
jdrab@umd.edu

http://[REDACTED]ress.com

books: Maryse Condé, *I, Tituba*; Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America*; Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*; Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*; M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*; Mario Vargas Llosa, *Death in the Andes*.

course themes: How is the meaning of “the Americas” related to the origins of the hemisphere, conquest, and slavery? How have those origins been reworked and transmitted in the imagination, creating a cultural style and politics? How does the interplay of colonialism with newer concepts and movements like “the postcolonial” and “decoloniality” help us make sense of identity and culture? This course examines the function of history and memory in imagining the Americas, with particular focus on how the experience of conquest, genocide, and the Middle Passage animate a sense of place. To that end, we will read contemporary writers including Glissant, Condé, Kincaid, Brathwaite, Wynter, Quijano, Dussel, Philip, and Galeano in order to register the long shadow cast by the original creation of “the Americas.”

We will discuss key critical concepts that will help us think through the paradoxes of this traumatic beginning: rhizomatic thinking, Plantation, hybridity, modernity-postmodernity-countermodernity, migration and indigeneity, and the meaning of traumatic memory and affect. With these tools, we will explore how a history of pain and suffering is simultaneous with the experience of beauty and pleasure. These concepts will show us how intellectuals have reckoned with origins and how regions and collective groups have worked productively inside the simultaneous experience of pain and beauty.

methods of evaluation: Part of your grade (20%) is based on **attendance and participation**. I expect you to attend every session, arrive prepared to share your thoughts on the reading, and attentively respond to classmates in discussion. Part of your grade (15%) will come from **course blog work** (details to follow separately), in which you will **respond to recap lecture videos** I post at the end of each week. Part of your grade (15%) will come from three short annotation projects (details to follow separately), in which you summarize materials – scholarly articles, creative works – from outside syllabus. Most important (40%): **a substantial final project** will comprise a substantial amount of your grade and represent your reckoning with the arc of the course.

course aims: The aims of this course are simple. We want to think through what it means that “the Americas” is a phrase synonymous with trauma and loss. How do we imagine those origins? Who and what is a person, community, and nation after that trauma and loss? How does that trauma and loss produce imagination? And how does that trauma and loss skew and distort our imagination, identification, and notions of self, other, and world? We will engage these questions through critical theory, films, poetry, novels, and polemics. Learning to see ideas in multiple media is central to our work in the course.

class rules and guidelines: See separate document posted on Elms for detailed class policy stuff, but this is really simple: **plagiarism** is a zero tolerance thing (always just ask if you are unsure if what you’re doing is plagiarism), you must be **respectful** to others in class (disagree with feeling, but respect views and arguments), arrive at class **on time and prepared** every session (read – but also *think* about – the material), do not be afraid to explore ideas in discussion and conversation (talking through ideas is the short path to clarity), and be sure to always access, simultaneously, your **analytical and creative and generous** selves inside and outside the ZoomClassroom (we are here to explore and imagine by way of reading and conversation). Also, keep this syllabus near you for consultation.

INTRODUCTION

26 January

Overview conversation

28 January

Dussel, “World-System” (PDF)

REPRESENTING CONQUEST REPRESENTING INDIGENEITY

02 February

Film: Gibson (dir.), *Apocalypse*

04 February

Las Casas, “Destruction of the Indies” (PDF)

09 February

Film: Carrasco (dir.), *The Other Conquest*

11 February

Vargas Llosa, *Death in the Andes*

16 February

Vargas Llosa, *Death in the Andes*

18 February

Discussion day

REPRESENTING THE MIDDLE PASSAGE FIGURING RESISTANCE

23 February

Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 1-10

25 February

Walcott, “The Sea is History” (PDF)

02 March

M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*

04 March

M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*

THINKING AFTER LOSS

09 March

Walcott, “The Muse of History” (PDF)

11 March

Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11-44

16/18 March (Break)

23 March

Condé, *I, Tituba*

25 March

Condé, *I, Tituba*

30 March

Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 45-80

01 April

Film: Gerima (dir.), *Sankofa*

06 April

Film: Dash (dir.), *Daughters of the Dust*

08 April

Brathwaite, “History of the Voice” (PDF)

Brathwaite, “The Dust” (PDF)

AFTERMATHS, LEGACIES, GHOSTS

13 April

Galeano, *Open Veins*, tba

15 April

Galeano, *Open Veins*, tba

20 April

Kincaid, *A Small Place*

22 April

Film: Black (dir.), *Life and Debt*

27 April

Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle” (PDF)

29 April

Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Power” (PDF)

04 May

Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” (PDF)

06 May

Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” (PDF)

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11 May (last class)