

**Ethnic Studies 410/510 (15595, 15596)**  
**Caribbean Literature and Politics**  
**M W 12:00PM-1:20 PM**  
**PAC 30**

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**Prof. Irmay Reyes-Santos**

Office Hours: M 1:30PM -2:30PM and by appointment (McKenzie 313)

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**Course Description**

This course will examine novels published in the last 15 years. We will discuss how these literary texts engage issues such as colonialism, sexuality, racism, migration, state violence, political repression, and identity.

**Texts**

**REQUIRED**

1. Santos Febres, Mayra: **Any Wednesday I'm Yours**
2. Cruz, Agnes: **Let It Rain Coffee**
3. Silvera, Makeda: **The Heart Does Not Bend**
4. Díaz, Junot: **The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao**
5. Pineau, Gisele: **The Drifting of Spirits**
6. Ana Lara: **Erzulie's Skirt**
7. Dionne Brand: **In Another Place, Not Here**
8. Earl Lovelace: **Salt**

**RECOMMENDED**

10. Shalini Puri: **The Caribbean Postcolonial**
11. Margarite Fernandez Olmos/Paravisini-Gebert: **Creole Religions of the Caribbean**
12. Franklyn Knight: **The Caribbean**

You must bring a hard copy of the assigned readings for every lecture and discussion section. Read the assigned texts before lecture, and **all** the readings assigned for the whole week before discussion section.

**Course Policies**

**Creating a safe learning environment:**

The student is responsible for attending **every** lecture, keeping up with all assigned readings, and participating actively in conversations in the classroom. The readings and lecture are only a small part of the learning experience. You must confront the challenge of the course by engaging with your teachers and classmates. Listen carefully and support your comments through references to the readings, sections, and lecture. In your comments and body language, you **MUST** show **RESPECT** for your instructors and peers. When someone is speaking, everyone listens. I reserve the right to ask you to leave the room, and/or drop the course, if you have disrupted classroom dynamics or disrespected your teachers and/or classmates. I must ensure that the classroom is a safe space for all. For this reason, you will have a strictly PROFESSIONAL relationship with the professor and GTFs.

See campus policy on these matters at <http://aaeo.uoregon.edu> and [http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/rules/OARS\\_500/OAR\\_571/571\\_004.html](http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/rules/OARS_500/OAR_571/571_004.html)

For campus regulations regarding academic dishonesty, classroom disruption, alcohol and drug violations, theft, physical assault, and sexual misconduct, see the Office of Student Judicial Affairs website: [http://studentlife.edu/programs/student\\_judi\\_affairs/index.htm](http://studentlife.edu/programs/student_judi_affairs/index.htm).

Also see campus policy on affirmative action and equal opportunity posted on e-reserves.

**The Lecture:**

You should approach the lectures as models for understanding the texts. Be prepared to articulate the analytical frameworks presented in lecture in your assignments. I request that you avoid using your personal computers in lecture, unless it is necessary. They tend to be a distraction to you as well as your classmates. If you take notes on your laptop, you must sit in the first row of the classroom. If you arrive late, you must do the same. If you miss a lecture, it is your responsibility to get notes from classmates and know the material. You can also come to see me during office hours to discuss material you have missed. Lecture notes will not be available by email or e-reserves.

**Office hours:**

The classroom and office hours are the spaces and time-slots allocated to meet your intellectual needs. We can schedule appointments, if necessary. You **MUST** come to my office at least **ONCE** in the quarter to talk about the readings, the lecture or assignments. When an assignment is due or an exam approaching, I may decide to set strict time-slots for individual students during my office hours. Therefore, if you have any questions, concerns, or just need to discuss anything at length with me, you should plan to meet before high demand periods. I strongly encourage you to seek my feedback on your work. When you come to office hours, be open to constructive comments on your work.

**Email policy:**

Email is not the primary medium to contact me. I should not be expected to respond to email immediately. Since not all of you have internet access all the time, it would be an unfair advantage for those who do to rely on email for communication. Moreover, the professor has other responsibilities (preparing class, grading, writing), which are also part of their responsibilities and occupy their time outside the classroom and the office. You can email to set appointments, ask specific questions about the reading or lecture, or send the instructors information about any health-related or personal situation affecting your academic performance.

**Email Etiquette:**

Please remember that correspondence by email is another way that you participate in the class. Therefore, it is important to ensure that your email interactions with me are professional and courteous. Please include a subject line. Do not send papers to my email address. Do not email me questions that are already answered by the syllabus. You should always address me as Prof. Reyes-Santos by email, and sign your whole name at the end of your message.

**Evaluation:****Course Requirements**

This class requires around 7-9 hours of work outside of the classroom.

1. Attendance and Participation (CRUCIAL for passing-includes quizzes): 20%
2. Read around 200-300 pages per week
3. One presentation per student. 20-minutes presentation each Monday introducing the text, its historical context, and questions for discussion: 10%
4. Weekly journal about the assigned text. Due on Wednesday: 10%
5. Mid-term (10 items in annotated bibliography, one-paragraph abstract of final research paper): 30%
6. Final Portfolio (all journal entries, mid-term exam, draft workshop on week 10, 10-15 pages research paper on one of the novels discussed, except the one discussed on week 9): 30%
7. Graduate students: will be required to read recommended texts and use those readings to contribute to class discussion, as well as write a 15-20 pages research paper

**Presentations** require you to produce discussion, provide historical context, posit themes and questions, compare to other texts, pay attention to stylistic components, analyze a quote, and bring a handout for your peers.

**Weekly Responses (one paragraph-one full page)** are meant to show that you have engaged the text in a critical manner. It is not just a first impression. *If you are writing about an academic piece*, you must summarize one of its arguments—as best as you can—, and meditate on the kinds of questions it poses and tries to answer. *If you are writing about a novel*, I want you to consider how the novel engages the political histories of the Caribbean (i.e. anti-colonialism, anti-racism, nationalism, identity, sexuality, class politics) and discuss some of its formalistic components (narrative voice(s), structure, time and place, character development, use of language(s), tone, point of view). See page 5 for examples of stylistic components.

You will be evaluated on the skills mentioned in the course description (first page).

### **Attendance and Participation**

Your grade for attendance and participation requires active participation and doing the homework assigned. If you do not participate in our conversations for the whole quarter nor go to office hours, do expect to receive a 0 in participation. If you show up to section 20 minutes late, it will be counted as an absence. If you arrive late to lecture or section, just seat yourself quietly and wait until the class is over to ask what you missed. You will be allowed one absence without an official excuse. If you use your laptop for activities not related to the course, you will lose ten percent of your participation grade.

### **Late assignments**

Late assignments will be marked down one-half letter grade (1.5%) for every day, unless you have a special arrangement with the instructor, which would only be possible under very extenuating circumstances. There are no make-up quizzes or examinations. You will be asked to produce a doctor's note if an exception is allowed. You cannot drop off late papers at the Ethnic Studies office or my office. You will have to wait until the next lecture.

### **Late Papers, Grades, Questions**

If you did not meet a deadline, avoid emotional outbursts in the Ethnic Studies office, my office, or email. You are responsible for your performance in the course and punctuality. We can always discuss exceptional circumstances.

### **Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty**

I will not tolerate any kind of academic dishonesty. Familiarize yourself with campus policy with regards to academic dishonesty: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/> Punishment could include an F for the assignment, an F or withdrawal from the course, and suspension or expulsion from the university. We actively investigate any sign of academic dishonesty in our grading.

### **Health Conditions and Disability Services**

If you have a documented health condition or experience any physical or emotional conditions that impede your full participation in the course, please meet me **soon**. You may be asked to bring a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your approved accommodations.

**Course Calendar:****Week 1**

Monday: Introduction to the course

Wednesday: Omise'ke Natasha Tinsley's "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic"

**Week 2**

Monday: Junot Díaz, 352p

Wednesday: Junot Díaz

**Week 3**

Monday: Museum exhibition; Fernández Olmos and Paravisini Gebert's "Introduction," "The Orisha Tradition in Cuba," and "Obeah, Myal, and Quimbois"; Puri's Chapter 2: "Theorizing Hybridity: Caribbean Nationalisms", 144p

Wednesday: Guest speaker, Tonel

**Week 4**

Monday: Ana Lara, 276p

Wednesday: Ana Lara

**Week 5**

Monday: Dionne Brand, 256p

Wednesday: Dionne Brand

**Week 6**

Monday: Gisele Pineau, 246p.

Wednesday: Gisele Pineau

**Week 7**

Monday: Makeda Silvera, 272p

Wednesday: Makeda Silvera

**Week 8**

Monday: Mayra Santos Febres, 288p

Wednesday: Mayra Santos Febres

**Week 9**

Monday: Earl Lovelace, 260 p

Wednesday: Earl Lovelace

**Week 10**

Monday: Agnes Cruz, 304p

Wednesday: Draft workshop

**Allegory:** Where every aspect of a story is representative, usually symbolic, of something else, usually a larger abstract concept or important historical/geopolitical event.

**Alliteration:** The repetition of consonant sounds within close proximity, usually in consecutive words within the same sentence or line.

**Antagonist:** Counterpart to the main character and source of a story's main conflict. The person may not be "bad" or "evil" by any conventional moral standard, but he/she opposes the protagonist in a significant way. (Although it is technically a literary element, the term is only useful for identification, as part of a discussion or analysis of **character**; it cannot generally be analyzed by itself.)

**Anthropomorphism:** Where animals or inanimate objects are portrayed in a story as people, such as by walking, talking, or being given arms, legs, facial features, human locomotion or other anthropoid form. (This technique is often incorrectly called **personification**.)

**Character:** The people who inhabit and take part in a story. When discussing character, as distinct from **characterization**, look to the essential *function* of the character, or of all the characters as a group, in the story as a whole.

**Characterization:** The author's means of conveying to the reader a character's personality, life history, values, physical attributes, etc. Also refers directly to a description thereof.

**Climax:** The turning point in a story, at which the end result becomes inevitable, usually where something suddenly goes terribly wrong; the "dramatic high point" of a story. (Although it is technically a literary element, the term is only useful for identification, as part of a discussion or analysis of **structure**; it cannot generally be analyzed by itself.)

**Conflict:** A struggle between opposing forces which is the driving force of a story. The outcome of any story provides a resolution of the conflict(s); this is what keeps the reader reading. Conflicts can exist between individual characters, between groups of characters, between a character and society, etc., and can also be purely abstract (i.e., conflicting ideas).

**Context:** Conditions, including facts, social/historical background, time and place, etc., surrounding a given situation.

**Creative license:** Exaggeration or alteration of objective facts or reality, for the purpose of enhancing meaning in a fictional context.

**Dialogue:** Where characters speak to one another; may often be used to substitute for exposition.

**Dramatic irony:** Where the audience or reader is aware of something important, of which the characters in the story are *not* aware.

**Exposition:** Where an author interrupts a story in order to explain something, usually to provide important background information.

**Figurative language:** Any use of language where the intended meaning differs from the actual literal meaning of the words themselves. There are many techniques which can rightly be called figurative language, including metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, onomatopoeia, verbal irony, and oxymoron. (Related: **figure of speech**)

**Foil:** A character who is meant to represent characteristics, values, ideas, etc. which are directly and diametrically opposed to those of another character, usually the protagonist. (Although it is technically a literary element, the term is only useful for identification, as part of a discussion or analysis of **character**; it cannot generally be analyzed by itself.)

**Foreshadowing:** Where future events in a story, or perhaps the outcome, are **suggested** by the author before they happen. Foreshadowing can take many forms and be accomplished in many ways, with varying degrees of subtlety. However, if the outcome is deliberately and explicitly revealed early in a story (such as by the use of a narrator or flashback structure), such information does **not** constitute foreshadowing.

**Hyperbole:** A description which exaggerates, usually employing extremes and/or superlatives to convey a positive or negative attribute; “hype.”

**Iambic pentameter:** A poetic meter wherein each line contains ten syllables, as five repetitions of a two-syllable pattern in which the pronunciation emphasis is on the second syllable.

**Imagery:** Language which describes something in detail, using words to substitute for and create sensory stimulation, including visual imagery and sound imagery. Also refers to specific and recurring types of images, such as food imagery and nature imagery. (Not all descriptions can rightly be called imagery; the key is the appeal to and stimulation of specific senses, usually visual. It is often advisable to specify the *type* of imagery being used, and consider the significance of the images themselves, to distinguish imagery from mere description.)

**Irony** (a.k.a. **Situational irony**): Where an event occurs which is unexpected, in the sense that it is somehow in absurd or mocking opposition to what would be expected or appropriate. Mere coincidence is generally not ironic; neither is mere surprise, nor are any random or arbitrary occurrences. (Note: Most of the situations in the Alanis Morissette song are *not* ironic at all, which may actually make the song ironic in itself.) See also **Dramatic irony**; **Verbal irony**.

**Metaphor:** A direct relationship where one thing or idea substitutes for another.

*Shakespeare often uses light as a **metaphor** for Juliet; Romeo refers to her as the sun, as “a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear,” and as a solitary dove among crows.*

**Mood:** The atmosphere or emotional condition created by the piece, within the setting. Mood refers to the general sense or feeling which the reader is supposed to get from the text; it does *not*, as a literary element, refer to the author’s or characters’ state of mind. (Note that mood is a literary *element*, not a technique; the mood must therefore be described or identified. It would be incorrect to simply state, “The author *uses* mood.”)

**Motif:** A recurring important idea or image. A motif differs from a theme in that it can be expressed as a single word or fragmentary phrase, while a theme usually must be expressed as a complete sentence.

**Onomatopoeia:** Where sounds are spelled out as words; or, when words describing sounds actually sound like the sounds they describe.

**Oxymoron:** A contradiction in terms.

*Romeo describes love using several **oxymorons**, such as “cold fire,” “feather of lead” and “sick health,” to suggest its contradictory nature.*

**Paradox:** Where a situation is created which cannot possibly exist, because different elements of it cancel each other out.

*A Tale of Two Cities* opens with the famous **paradox**, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

**Parallelism:** Use of similar or identical language, structures, events or ideas in different parts of a text.

**Personification (I)** Where inanimate objects or abstract concepts are seemingly endowed with human self-awareness; where human thoughts, actions, perceptions and emotions are *directly* attributed to inanimate objects or abstract ideas. (Not to be confused with **anthropomorphism**.)

**Personification (II)** Where an abstract concept, such as a particular human behavior or a force of nature, is represented as a person.

**Plot:** Sequence of events in a story. Most literary essay tasks will instruct the writer to “avoid plot summary;” the term is therefore rarely useful for response or critical analysis. When discussing plot, it is generally more useful to consider and analyze its **structure**, rather than simply recapitulate “what happens.”

**Point-of-view:** The identity of the narrative voice; the person or entity through whom the reader experiences the story. May be third-person (no narrator; abstract narrative voice, omniscient or limited) or first-person (narrated by a character in the story or a direct observer). Point-of-view is a commonly misused term; it does *not* refer to the author’s or characters’ feelings, opinions, perspectives, biases, etc.

**Protagonist:** The main character in a story, the one with whom the reader is meant to identify. The person is not necessarily “good” by any conventional moral standard, but he/she is the person in whose plight the reader is most invested. (Although it is technically a literary element, the term is only useful for identification, as part of a discussion or analysis of **character**; it cannot generally be analyzed by itself.)

**Repetition:** Where a specific word, phrase, or structure is repeated several times, usually in close proximity, to emphasize a particular idea.

**Setting:** The time and place where a story occurs. The setting can be specific (e.g., New York City in 1930) or ambiguous (e.g., a large urban city during economic hard times). Also refers directly to a description thereof. When discussing or analyzing setting, it is generally insufficient to merely identify the time and place; an analysis of setting should include a discussion of its overall impact on the story and characters.

**Simile:** An indirect relationship where one thing or idea is described as being similar to another. Similes usually contain the words “like” or “as,” but not always.

**Speaker:** The “voice” of a poem; *not* to be confused with the poet him/herself. Analogous to the narrator in prose fiction.

**Structure:** The manner in which the various elements of a story are assembled.

**Symbolism:** The use of specific objects or images to represent abstract ideas. This term is commonly misused, describing any and all representational relationships, which in fact are more often metaphorical

than symbolic. A **symbol** must be something tangible or visible, while the idea it **symbolizes** must be something abstract or universal. (In other words, a **symbol** must be something you can hold in your hand or draw a picture of, while the idea it symbolizes must be something you *can't* hold in your hand or draw a picture of.)

**Theme:** The main idea or message conveyed by the piece. A theme should generally be expressed as a complete sentence; an idea expressed by a single word or fragmentary phrase is usually a **motif**.

**Tone:** The apparent emotional state, or “attitude,” of the speaker/narrator/narrative voice, as conveyed through the language of the piece. Tone refers *only* to the narrative voice; not to the author or characters. It must be described or identified in order to be analyzed properly; it would be incorrect to simply state, “The author *uses* tone.”

**Tragedy:** Where a story ends with a negative or unfortunate outcome which was essentially avoidable, usually caused by a flaw in the central character’s personality. *Tragedy* is really more of a dramatic genre than a literary element; a play can be referred to as a tragedy, but tragic events in a story are essentially part of the plot, rather than a literary device in themselves. When discussing tragedy, or analyzing a story as tragic, look to the other elements of the story which combine to make it tragic.

**Tragic hero/tragic figure:** A protagonist who comes to a bad end as a result of his own behavior, usually caused by a specific character flaw. (Although it is technically a literary element, the term is only useful for identification, as part of a discussion or analysis of **character**; it cannot generally be analyzed by itself.)

**Tragic flaw:** The single characteristic (usually negative) which causes the downfall of the protagonist.

**Verbal irony:** Where the meaning of a specific expression is, or is intended to be, the exact opposite of what the words literally mean. (**Sarcasm** is a tone of voice that often accompanies verbal irony, but they are not the same thing.)

Modified from <http://mrbraiman.home.att.net/lit.htm>

More extensive lists and definitions: <http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/LiteraryTermsTOC.html#RhetLang>  
<http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/allam/general/glossary.htm>