

# TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION: RELIGION 30893-035

## CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS

Spring 2000, 11:00 a.m.--12:20 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday, TBH 205.

### Instructor

Dr. Darren J. N. Middleton, Texas Christian University, TCU Box 298100, Fort Worth, TX 76129.

E-mail: [d.middleton2@tcu.edu](mailto:d.middleton2@tcu.edu)

### Institution

Texas Christian University, a major teaching and research university associated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

### Course level and type

Upper-division (3000 level; mostly sophomore upwards). The course is part lecture, part discussion. Hours of instruction: 3 hours/week over a 12 week term (36 hours).

### Enrollment and last year taught

18 students/Spring 2000.

### Pedagogical reflections

"Caribbean religions" is a "foreign subject" for most TCU students, and in more ways than one, so I decided to use recent Caribbean literary, visual, and musical art to make our study less intimidating, less distant, but no less demanding. We studied five novels, and each novel featured one or more of the five basic religions of the Caribbean. Our knowledge of the history of religions in the Caribbean came from two other sources, one primer on Caribbean religions, written by Dale Bisnauth, a Guyanese phenomenologist of religion, and one anthology of essays devoted to religion and the arts in the Caribbean.

Since I was eager to present Caribbean religions as neo-African religions, a background in traditional African religions was required. To assist me in this process, I made use of Henry Louis Gates, Jr's recent PBS series on "Wonders of the African World," which was well-received. For example, students professed a better grasp of Rastafari as a direct result of watching and hearing about Gates's trek through Ethiopia. In addition, his journey through Benin (Dahomey) helped students understand the origins of Vodoun.

Other audio-visual resources were useful: Maya Deren's classic video, The Divine Horsemen, gave students an insight into how various loa mount their devotees; Haitian flag art; and a special session on Rastafarian dub poetry (Benjamin Zephaniah, Mutabaruka, Mikey Smith). I plan to

locate additional multimedia sources when next I teach this course, and I intend to bring in some visiting speakers. New to Fort Worth, I have not been able to make connections with devotees of the various religions under study. I plan to correct this oversight in time.

In truth, I have to believe that using fiction helped expedite the process of understanding Caribbean religions. Such "flesh and blood" descriptions offer wisdom through accessibility. I recommend this "religion and the arts" approach to teaching and studying Caribbean religions.

Instructor: Dr. Darren J. N. Middleton, 228 Beasley Hall.

Contact Information: 257-6445 (Office); 922-0248 (Home); [d.middleton2@tcu.edu](mailto:d.middleton2@tcu.edu)

Office Hours: T-TR 9:00 a. m. -- 10:50 a. m. These are my official office hours; however, I want you to know that drop-ins and appointments outside these times are possible. If you are finding some aspect of the course difficult to understand, never be afraid to ask me for help--in-class, in my office, through e-mail, or over the telephone.

### Course Description

This course is an interdisciplinary survey of Caribbean religious beliefs. We will begin with an historical account of the origins and development of the multi religious community of the Caribbean, emphasizing how it is built from elements of indigenous (Caribs, Arawaks, and Amerindians), African, Asian, and European religions. We then turn to the analysis and discussion of particular religious traditions among Caribbean peoples, such as Vodoun, Shamanism, Santería, Rastafarianism, and Obeah. Throughout, we will consider the relationship between these Neo-African religions and the Christian Church (in both its Catholic and Protestant forms). With the assistance of multi-media (fiction, film, and popular music), we will explore some of the issues that dominate the Caribbean region: race, history, national and regional identity, family and kinship, home and exile, belief and ritual, social (in)justice, as well as postcolonial resistance and rebellion.

### Course Objectives

Through two examinations, twice-weekly journals, a term paper, and class discussions, you will be assessed on your ability to accomplish the following:

- 1: To trace, discuss, and outline the historical, social, and cultural development of religion in the Caribbean region, and to appreciate its challenging and varied nature.
- 2: To show understanding of particular Caribbean religions, such as Vodoun, Shamanism, Santería, Rastafarianism, and Obeah, through explaining the distinctive beliefs and practices of each tradition.
- 3: To identify and explore questions about the purpose of existence, and to consider such questions in relation to Caribbean religious traditions.

### Texts

- 1: Bisnauth, Dale. History of Religions in the Caribbean. A Guyanese graduate of the United Theological College of the West Indies outlines the origins and development of religion in the Caribbean region. He celebrates the Caribbean as a multi-cultural, multi-religious site, and he

appreciates the inter-religious diversity and sensitivity that he finds in this part of our world.

2: Clitandre, Pierre. Cathedral of the August Heat. A Haitian novelist provides the reader with a sense of the moral, social, and religious (Vodoun) issues that arise out of the cut and thrust of everyday existence in the shantytown surrounding Port-au-Prince.

3: Fernández-Olmos, Margarite and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (editors). Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean. An anthology of interdisciplinary essays exploring Neo-African religions in the Caribbean. The essayists concentrate on three major traditions, giving heed to the claims they make, showing how they have affected local and global culture (fiction and film), and noting how they have been (mis)understood in the West.

4: Mais, Roger. Brother Man. A celebrated Jamaican novelist crafts a tale about a Rastafarian trying to practice his faith in the hostile projects of Western Kingston.

5: Montero, Mayra. The Messenger. Written by a Cuban woman, this acclaimed novel combines Santería with an historical "faction" involving Enrico Caruso, his Chinese-Cuban mulatta mistress, and the orishas (gods) of Cuba.

6: Nunez-Harrell, Elizabeth. When Rocks Dance. One of Trinidad's leading novelists portrays a heroine, Marina Heathrow, caught on the metaphorical borderlands between Africa and "the New World." Here Nunez-Harrell presents the religion of Obeah in the context of the Africanization of Trinidad.

7: Schwartz-Bart, Simone. The Bridge of Beyond. Depicting "the staying power" of the fiercely independent women of Guadeloupe, this novel explores the role of "Woman as Shaman figure" as well as the redemptive (healing) power of the spirit world.

## Course Requirements

1: Attendance, Preparation, Participation. Attendance is expected in order to do well. After three unexcused absences, a half letter grade will be deducted from your course grade for each additional unexcused absence. By definition, the only excused absence is one that is documented, due to illness, emergency or official university business. Have the day's assignment read before class and be ready to participate actively in class discussion. Periodically, you may be asked to complete in-class writing assignments or to lead the discussion. While these assignments will not be individually graded, they will help serve as a tool for determining the level of class preparation. Overall, preparation and participation counts toward 10% of the final grade.

2: Twice-Weekly Journals. The emphasis here is on personal response to assigned readings. You are expected to make one entry (one hand-written page) for each class period on the reading assigned for that day. Journals will be taken up on five specified dates (see course outline) during the semester, covering 5 entry periods. In other words, there are 5 journal units, and 5 entries for each unit. You should begin your journals Tuesday, January 25. Each entry will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. A passing grade must demonstrate a thoughtful reading of the material as a part of your personal response. (Five passes for one journal unit equals 100, four passes equal 80....) The five journal unit grades will then be averaged at the end of the semester and count towards 15% of the final grade.

3: Term Paper. Specific details will appear at a later date. Basically, the writing assignment is a

seven page essay response to an assigned question. The paper is due on Thursday, April 20. The term paper counts 25% of the final grade.

4: A Midterm and a Final Exam. All testing will be based on the reading assignments. Both exams will have short answer and essay sections. The Final Exam will include a comprehensive essay section. A study guide will be distributed prior to both examinations during a review session. Scheduled for Tuesday, March 7, the Midterm counts towards 25% of the final grade and the Final Exam, scheduled for Thursday, May 11, is worth 25%.

### Written Examinations: A Cautionary Note

No make-up examinations will be given, except for official university absences. Further information on this policy may be found on p. 73 of the TCU Undergraduate Studies Bulletin 1999-2000/2000-2001.

Please notify me in advance if you plan to miss an examination because of an official university absence. Please inform me as soon as possible if you must miss an examination due to serious illness or family emergency; ordinarily, you will have until the day after the scheduled test to inform me of your situation.

Permission to reschedule the final examination should be sought only if your examination schedule requires you to take more than two finals in a twenty four hour period. If you are in this situation and wish to reschedule your final examination, please see me no later than Tuesday, April 25.

### Grading

The final grade will be determined based on the following ratio and scale:

Attend./prep./participation = 10%

Journals = 15%

Term Paper = 25%

Midterm Exam = 25%

Final Exam = 25%

### Course Outline

#### HISTORICAL SURVEY: TRACKING CARIBBEAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

18 January Arawaks and Caribs: The Beliefs of Indigenous Peoples

Introductory notices; outline of the syllabus.

A map of the Caribbean islands.

Bisnauth, 1-10.

20 January Spanish Catholicism in the Caribbean

Bisnauth, 11-30.

25 January Other Christians Challenge Spanish Catholicism

Bisnauth, 31-69; 101-139.

\* Begin Journals.

27 January Africans and Africanism in the Caribbean

Bisnauth, 80-100.

1 February Like a Callaloo: Caribbean Religion and Culture

Bisnauth, 165-194.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 1-12.

## NEO-AFRICAN RELIGIONS THROUGH THE PRISM OF CONTEMPORARY CARIBBEAN FICTION

### 1: HAITI AND VODOUN

3 February Fortunes and Misfortunes in Port-au-Prince

Clitandre, 1-38.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 13-36.

8 February (J) The Voice of the Gods

Clitandre, 39-100.

10 February Documenting the Ceremonial Logic of Vodoun Religion

No reading today. Instead, students will meet to view the work of Maya Deren, ethnologist and experimental film maker, whose Divine Horseman: The Living Gods of Haiti (1985) contains footage of Vodoun rituals and Vodoun initiates undergoing ecstatic possessions.

15 February Haitian Art, Faith, and the Carnavalesque

Clitandre, 103-137.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 59-78.

Haitian flags.

17 February Woman as Zombie: On (Mis)Representing Religion

Clitandre, 138-159.

Excerpts from the movie, The Serpent and the Rainbow.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 37-58.

### 2: GUADELOUPE AND SHAMANISM

22 February Living Lives Beyond Africa

Schwartz-Bart, iv-xviii; 2-51.

24 February (J)      Unending Hardships: How to Endure, How to Grow

Schwartz-Bart, 52-94.

29 February      The Healing Power of the Spirit World

Schwartz-Bart, 95-132.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 231-247.

2 March      The Love and Wisdom of Elders

Schwartz-Bart, 133-173.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 248-266.

7 March      Midterm Examination

### 3: CUBA AND SANTERÍA

9 March      Santería: Major Beliefs and Rituals

Montero, 1-17.

21 March      A Tale of Two Worlds: Cuba and Italy!

Montero, 20-80.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 101-121 (photo-essay).

23 March (J)      Listening to the Orishas (Gods)

Montero, 81-124.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 79-88.

28 March      Basic Traits of the Lucumí Divinities

Montero, 126-187.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 88-100.

30 March      Trans-Caribbean Identity: Redrawing Religious Boundaries

Montero, 190-218.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 267-282.

### 4: JAMAICA AND RASTAFARIANISM

4 April      God Through Ethiopian Spectacles: The Origins of Rasta

Mais, v-xxi; 1-41.

Middleton, "Rastafarianism: A Ministry for Social Change?"

6 April Good and Evil in the Projects of Western Kingston

Mais, 41-81.

11 April (J) The Impact of the Rasta Novel

Mais, 81-131.

Middleton, "Fictional Dread: Two Early Novels About The Rastafarians."

13 April Jah Live!

Mais, 133-191.

Movie Night. It is hoped that those students who are interested and are able will meet to view The Harder They Come (1973), which is a tale about a Jamaican Rastaman who travels from his home in the country to the bright lights of Kingston, the capital, in order to make it as a reggae singer.

### 5:TRINIDAD AND OBEAH

18 April The Fractured Nature of African Identity in the New World

Nunez-Harrell, 1-75.

20 April Obeah as an Elusive Category in the Study of Religion

Nunez-Harrell, 76-130.

\* Term Papers are due today.

25 April Spells and Healing

Nunez-Harrell, 131-210.

Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 195-215.

27 April (J) Obeah as a Form of (Postcolonial) Resistance

Nunez-Harrell, 211-260.

2 May An Underground Spirituality

Nunez-Harrell, 261-368.

11 May Final Examination, 11:30a.m.--2:00p.m.

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barrett, Leonard. The Rastafarians. London, New York and Port of Spain: Heinemann, 1977.

Bastide, Roger. African Civilizations in the New World. London: C. Hurst, 1971.

Bisnauth, Dale. History of Religions in the Caribbean. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1995.

- Brandon, George. Santeria from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Brown, Stewart and John Wickham (editors). The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Chevannes, Barry (ed). Rastafari and other African-Caribbean Worldviews. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998.
- Chevannes, Barry. Rastafari: Roots and Ideology. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994.
- Clarke, Peter. Black Paradise: The Rastafari Movement. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1986.
- Clarke, Sebastian. Jah Music: The Evolution of the Popular Jamaican Song. London, New York and Port of Spain: Heinemann, 1980.
- Curtis, James Roberto. Shango. Miami, FL: Arte Publico Press, 1996.
- Davis, Kortright. Emancipation Still Comin': Explorations in the Caribbean Emancipation Theology. Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1990.
- Dayan, Joan. Haiti, History, and the Gods. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.
- Deren, Maya. Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti. Kingston, NY: McPherson, 1970.
- Desmangles, Leslie. The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Dobbin, Jay D. The Jombee Dance of Montserrat: A Study of Trance Ritual in the West Indies. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1986.
- Donnell, Alison and Sarah Lawson Welsh (editors). The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature. London: Routledge Press, 1996.
- Ecun, Oba. Ita: Mythology of the Yorunba Religion. Miami, FL: Obaecun Books, 1989.
- Erskine, Noel. Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998.
- Gonzalez-Wippler, Migene. Legends of Santeria. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1994.
- Gonzalez-Wippler, Migene. Santeria: The Religion, Faith, Rites, Magic. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1994.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.
- Khan, Ismith. The Obeah Man. Toronto, Canada: TSAR Publications, 1995.
- King, Noel. African Cosmos: An Introduction to Religion in Africa. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1986.
- Métraux, Alfred. Voodoo in Haiti. New York: Schocken, 1972.
- Metuh, Emefie Ikenga. God and Man in African Religion. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981.



Moorish, Ivor. Obeah, Christ and Rastaman. Cambridge, England: James Clarke, 1982.

Munroe, Andrew. Caribbean Stories: Supernatural Tales of Guyana. Miami, FL: Golden Grove Publishing, 1994.

Munroe, Andrew. Obeah Woman May: A Caribbean Novel of Mystery and Magic. Miami, FL: Golden Grove Publishing, 1998.

Murrell, Samuel (et al). The Rastafari Reader. Temple, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.

Nunez, Luis Manuel. Santeria: A Practical Guide to Afro-Caribbean Magic. New York: Spring Publications, 1992.

Olmsó, Margarite-Fernandez (et al). Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santeria, Obeah and the Caribbean. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Owens, Joseph. Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica. London, New York and Port of Spain: Heinemann, 1976.

Simpson, George. Religious Cults of the Caribbean: Trinidad, Jamaica, Haiti. Rio Pedras: Institute of Caribbean Studies/University of Puerto Rico, 1980.

Smorkaloff, Pamela Maria (editor). If I Could Write This In Fire: An Anthology of Literature from the Caribbean. New York: New Press, 1996.

Wilson-Tagos, Nana. Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature. Miami, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999.

Witvliet, Theo. The Way of the Black Messiah. London: SCM Press, 1987.

Witvliet, Theo. A Place in the Sun: An Introduction to Liberation Theology in the Third World. London: SCM Press, 1985.

Zephaniah, Benjamin. The Dread Affair: Collected Poems. London: Arena Publications, 1985.

## CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS: INTERNET RESOURCES

1: General Caribbean History and Culture

<http://www.netcom.com/~hhenke/links.htm>

<http://wwwFOUNDERS.howard.edu/caribbean.htm>

<http://www.siu.edu/~carib/culture.html>

<http://luna.cas.usf.edu/~alaing/jfolk.html>

[http://www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/circle/CL\\_afc.html#african](http://www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/circle/CL_afc.html#african)

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/africana/Library/CLinks.html>

<http://www.funkandwagnalls.com/encyclopedia/low/articles/a/a002000588f.html>

## 2: Caribbean Religions: General Information

<http://www.nando.net/prof/caribe/caribbean.religions.html>

<http://www.hist.unt.edu/09w-blk4.htm>

<http://www.yorku.ca/research/cerlac/crp/welcome.htm>

<http://schoolsite.edex.net.uk/49/Afro-caribbean.html>

## 3: Caribbean Music: A Cyber-Primer

<http://worldmusic.about.com/entertainment/music/worldmusic/msub4.htm>

<http://www.bobmarley.com/life/rastafari/origins.html>

<http://abracad.users.netlink.co.uk/benjz.html>

<http://www.caribbeanmusic.com/>

<http://wmbr.mit.edu/~reggae/>

## 4: Books on Afro-Caribbean Traditions

[http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?  
site=http://www.amphigory.com/voodoo\\_books.htm](http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.amphigory.com/voodoo_books.htm)

## 5: An On-Line Dictionary of Afro-Caribbean Deities

[http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?  
site=http://www.nando.net/prof/caribe/Dictionary.html](http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.nando.net/prof/caribe/Dictionary.html)

## 6: The Religion of Santería

[http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?  
site=http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~maryc/Santeria.html](http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~maryc/Santeria.html)

[http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?  
site=http://www.religioustolerance.org/santeri.htm](http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.religioustolerance.org/santeri.htm)

[http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?  
site=http://www.iac.net/~moonweb/Santeria/TOC.html](http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.iac.net/~moonweb/Santeria/TOC.html)

[http://www.newageinfo.com/res/santeria\\_data.htm](http://www.newageinfo.com/res/santeria_data.htm)

<http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?>

[site=http://www.seanet.com/Users/efunmoyiwa/ebo.html](http://www.seanet.com/Users/efunmoyiwa/ebo.html)

<http://altreligion.about.com/culture/religion/altreligion/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?>

[site=http://www.megastories.com/cuba/glossary/santeria.htm](http://www.megastories.com/cuba/glossary/santeria.htm)

<http://www.iac.net/~moonweb/Santeria/Intro.html>

<http://www.eyeofatum.com/SANTERIA.htm>

## 7: Voodoo and Haitian Art

<http://www4.nando.net/prof/caribe/voodoo.html>

<http://medalia.net/Links.html>

<http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/vodou/>

<http://www.iac.net/~moonweb/NOSVT/VoodooResources.html>

<http://encarta.msn.com/index/conciseindex/05/0051A000.htm>

<http://ucl.broward.cc.fl.us/pathfinders/voodoo.htm>

<http://members.spree.com/lascivia/voodoo.html>

<http://www.whimseys.net/whimlinkmain.htm>

## 8: Rastafarianism

[http://www.stthomas.edu/www/juspce\\_http/rasta10.htm](http://www.stthomas.edu/www/juspce_http/rasta10.htm)

<http://www.kheper.auz.com/topics/religion/Rastafarianism.htm>

<http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/nrms/rast.html>

<http://home.computer.net/~cya/cy00081.html>

<http://hem1.passagen.se/perdavid/marcus.htm>

<http://aros.net/~hempower/angels/rasta.html>

<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~bill/students/marley/history/rastafar/>

<http://eci2.ucsb.edu/~billbeer/rasta.html>

<http://www.premamusic.com/CyberTemple/rastafarian.html>

<http://www.ritesofpassage.org/g-rasta.htm>

<http://www.csd.uu.se/~d97hah/lockseng.html>

<http://www.preferred.net/niahbingi/contents.htm>

<http://members.theglobe.com/Masquel/>

<http://www.maxho.com/~kazakov/exodus/>

9: Obeah

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/5599/obeah.html>

10: Caribbean Literature

<http://authors.about.com/arts/books/authors/msub20cbn.htm>

<http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/~chernandez/carbooks.htm>

<http://www.freenet.hamilton.on.ca/~aa462/cariblit.html>

<http://www.westindiesbooks.com/>

11: Glossary of Specialized Terms

<http://www.in.tu-clausthal.de/~wallner/marley/patois.html>