

**CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS**  
**840:333**  
**Monday/Thursday 12.35pm-1.55pm-12.15pm**  
**Douglass Campus, Ruth Adams Building 208**  
**Spring 2018**

**Instructor:** Hilit Surowitz-Israel

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 11:30-12:30 116 Loree or by appointment

**E-mail:** hilit@religion.rutgers.edu

**Course Description:**

This course will examine the history and role of the diverse religious components of the Caribbean basin from Indigenous practices to Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and the emergence and development of creole belief systems and practices such as Santeria, Vodou and Rastafari from the 18th century to the present. This exploration of Caribbean religions will engage the intercultural and interreligious conflicts and convergences that occurred throughout the Caribbean basin from the colonial to the post-colonial periods. We will focus on some the following themes that pervade Caribbean religion, such as race, kinship, exile, diaspora, ritual and resistance. Some areas for consideration are: the power of Afro-creole religions in the Caribbean socio-political sphere, music as a subversive space, the place of marijuana in religious ritual, and the transformation of racial identity based on religious affiliation.

**SAS Core Code:** Contemporary Challenges (CC), Social Analysis (SCL), Writing and Communication, Revision (WCr)

**Objectives:** By the conclusion of the course participants should be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with major themes, and figures in Caribbean Religion,
- Demonstrate familiarity with questions regarding the intersection of race and religion in the Caribbean,
- Demonstrate familiarity with the various methodologies and approaches in the study of Caribbean religions, and
- Demonstrate familiarity with major trends and themes in the development and intersection of Caribbean Christianities and Afro-Caribbean religions.

The **Required Texts** for the course:

Textbooks are available at the Rutgers Bookstore, a Barnes & Noble College Bookstore.

❖ Fernandez-Olmos, Margarite & Paravisini-Gebert, Lizabeth. *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santeria to Obeah and Espiritismo*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York University Press, 2011. **(CRC)**

ISBN-10: 081476228X; ISBN-13: 978-0814762288

❖ McCarthy Brown, Karen. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., University of California Press, 2011. **(ML)**

ISBN-10: 0520268105; ISBN-13: 978-0520268104

❖ Sensbach, Jon. *Rebecca's Revival*. Harvard University Press, 2005. **(RR)**

ISBN-10: 0674022572; ISBN-13: 978-0674022577

❖ Articles and primary sources will be available on SAKAI.

❖ Other readings or media may be assigned during the course of the semester.

### **Attendance & Participation**

Students are expected to attend each class on time. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. You are permitted three unexcused absences. Following the third unexcused absence 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted for each unexcused absence. Students who encounter any extended problem with absences, for example, for medical or family emergencies, or religious reasons, must inform me in writing about the reason and duration of the absence. Decisions on excused absences will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Short quizzes will be given on a regular basis. There will be no make-ups for in-class quizzes or exams.

Student participation is an integral component for the success of this class. Course participants will be expected to arrive to class on time, and prepared to discuss the assigned readings. **Please bring assigned readings to class as we will frequently consult the text, particularly the primary sources.** Participation not only means asking questions and involving oneself in the classroom discussion, it also means actively listening to others.

## Requirements:

- ❖ Participation, in-class assignments, pop quizzes (5%)
- ❖ Exam I (20%) – March 22<sup>nd</sup>
- ❖ Exam II (30%) – May 3<sup>rd</sup> 8-11am (during Rutgers Designated Final Exam Period)
- ❖ Essay I: Primary Sources and the study of religion, due 2/5 at the beginning of class in both hardcopy and via SAKAI (20%)
- ❖ Essay 2: Race and Religion in the nineteenth and twentieth century Caribbean due 4/26 at the beginning of class in both hardcopy and via SAKAI (25%)
- ❖ All students must come to office hours at least once during the semester.

**Written work** will be graded on the basis of content, clarity of argument, quality of writing, and how well it analyzes the material and answers the questions. Written work, except for that which is a classroom assignment, must be typed (double-spaced, 12 pt. font), and spell-checked. One letter grade per day will be deducted for late papers unless you have a written medical excuse.

## Classroom Policies:

❖ Plagiarism and cheating will be penalized according to the full extent of University policy. Please consult Rutgers University's *Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students*:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml#plagiarism>

❖ Students with disabilities who require accommodations should provide me with their “accommodation letter” from the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Please consult the website of the Office of Disability Services for further information:

[http://sas.rutgers.edu/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=117](http://sas.rutgers.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=117)

❖ Note that I do not accept assignments submitted by email. All assignments must be submitted in hard-copy on the day that they are due.

❖ Evaluations will cover all course material, even if it is not specifically covered in class.

## -Schedule-

\*\*\*Please note, reading should be completed prior to the class period for which it is assigned.

### Week 1

#### **Introduction & The Challenges and Marginalization of Caribbean Studies**

##### **Thursday 1/18**

- Syllabus and Introduction
- Russell McCutcheon, “The Academic Study of Religion,” – to be read and discussed in class (also available via SAKAI)

### Week 2

#### **Monday 1/22**

- CRC, “Introduction” 1-19
- Ennis Edmunds and Michelle Gonzalez, “Introduction” in *Caribbean Religious History*. Pgs. 1 – 15. Available on SAKAI or google books:  
[https://books.google.com/books?id=oFQ65RzBm5wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=caribbean+religious+history&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwibvrSgnN\\_YAhVRI6wKHYNJBVwQ6AEIKTAA#v=onepage&q=caribbean%20religious%20history&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=oFQ65RzBm5wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=caribbean+religious+history&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwibvrSgnN_YAhVRI6wKHYNJBVwQ6AEIKTAA#v=onepage&q=caribbean%20religious%20history&f=false)

##### **Thursday 1/25**

#### **The Slave Trade and an overview of post-colonial studies**

- CRC, “Historical Background,” pages 20-32
- “Caribbean Religions: History of Study.” *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2005. 10023-10029. (SAKAI)

### Week 3

#### **Monday 1/29**

##### **Santeria**

- Joseph M. Murphy. “Santeria.” *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2005. 8107-8109. (SAKAI)
  - CRC, 33-51
- film: *Voices of the Orishas*

##### **Thursday 2/1 - Santeria**

- CRC, 52-70
- visual sources as texts; in-class material culture analysis (reading TBA)

### Week 4

#### **Santeria cont.**

##### **Monday 2/5 – Essay I due**

- CRC, 70-87

## **Thursday 2/8**

### **Vodou**

- CRC, 116-131

▪ Chpts 1 & 2 (pages 1-47) from Hebblethwaite, Benjamin, and Joanne Bartley. 2012. *Vodou songs in Haitian Creole and English*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

## **Week 5**

### **Monday 2/12**

- CRC, 132-154
- Vodou fieldwork documentary (in-class)

### **Thursday 2/15**

- Karen McCarthy Brown. "Afro-Caribbean Spirituality: A Haitian Case" pgs. 1-17.
- Karen McCarthy Brown. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* pgs. TBA

## **Week 6**

### **Monday 2/19**

- Karen McCarthy Brown. *Mama Lola* pgs. TBA

### **Thursday 2/22**

- Karen McCarthy Brown. *Mama Lola* pgs. TBA

## **Week 7**

### **Monday 2/26**

- Karen McCarthy Brown. *Mama Lola* pgs. TBA

### **Thursday 3/1**

- Karen McCarthy Brown. *Mama Lola* pgs. TBA

## **Week 8**

### **Monday 3/5**

#### **Rastafari**

- CRC, 183-202
- cultural appropriation: find and bring visual sources on cultural appropriation to class (guidelines will be distributed)

### **Thursday 3/8**

#### **Rastafari & Material Culture**

- Benard, Akeia. "The Material Roots of Rastafarian Marijuana Symbolism." *History and Anthropology*, 2007 18:1, 89-99.
- Rommen, T. "Protestant Vibrations? Reggae, Rastafari, and Conscious Evangelicals." *Popular Music* 2006 25: 235-263.

**\*\*March 10-17 - Spring Recess – NO CLASS\*\***

**Weeks 9-11**

**Christianity/Evangelicalism**

**Week 9**

**Monday 3/19**

**Christianity**

- “Catholicism in the Caribbean” from Bisnauth, Dale. History of Religions in the Caribbean. LMH Publishing Company, 2006. 11-30. (SAKAI)
- “Christianity: Christianity in Caribbean Religion.” Encyclopedia of Religion. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2005. 1706-1708. (SAKAI)

**Thursday 3/22**

- **Exam I**

**Week 10**

**Monday 3/26 (with guided reading assignment)**

- “Evangelicalism in the Caribbean to 1838” from Bisnauth, Dale. History of Religions in the Caribbean. LMH Publishing Company, 2006. 101-139. (SAKAI)
- “Africanisation of Christianity” from Bisnauth, Dale. History of Religions in the Caribbean. LMH Publishing Company, 2006. 165-194. (SAKAI)

**Thursday 3/29 (Guided reading assignment)**

- Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*, pages 1-44
- primary source: selections from Oldendorp, C.G.A. History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John (1770). Arnold Highfeld and Vladimir Barac, translators and editors, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Karoma Publishers, 1987.

**Week 11**

**Monday 4/2 – You MUST bring the text to class**

- Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*, pages 45-100

**Thursday 4/5**

- Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*, pages 101-161
- primary source: selections from Oldendorp, C.G.A. History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John (1770). Arnold Highfeld and Vladimir Barac, translators and editors, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Karoma Publishers, 1987.

**Week 12**

**Monday 4/9**

- Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*, pages 162-248

**Thursday 4/12**

TBA

**Week 13**

**Monday 4/16**

- “Introducing Rara” & “Rara and ‘the Jew’: Premodern Anti-Judaism in Postmodern Haiti” from McAlister, Elizabeth. Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora. University of California Press, 2002. pp. 1-24 & 113-134. (SAKAI)
- *Rara! CD from author in class*

**Caribbean Religions in Diaspora**

**Thursday 4/19**

- Hepner, Randal. “The House the Rasta Built.” Gatherings in Diaspora—Religious Communities and the New Immigration. ed. R. Stephen Warner & Judith G. Wittner. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.197-234. (SAKAI)

**Week 14**

**Caribbean Religions in Diaspora cont.**

**Monday 4/23**

- Thomas A. Tweed, “Diasporic Nationalism and Urban Landscape—Cuban Immigrants at a Catholic Shrine in Miami,” pgs. 497-513 (SAKAI)
- Curtis, James R.(1980) 'Miami's Little Havana: Yard Shrines, Cult Religion and Landscape', *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 1: 1, pgs. 1-15. (SAKAI)

**Week 14 – Essay II due at the beginning of class**

**Thursday 4/26** (in-class with guided viewing questions)

Film: *The Other Side of the Water: The Journey of a Haitian Rara Band in Brooklyn*

**Monday 4/30**

- McAlister, Elizabeth. “The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street Revisited: Vodou and Haitian Catholicism in the Age of Transnationalism.” Gatherings in Diaspora—Religious Communities and the New Immigration. ed. R. Stephen Warner & Judith G. Wittner. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.123-160. (SAKAI)

**Tuesday 5/1 (place and time TBA)**

- Concluding class/review