

BLST23 : The Afro-Postmodern

Clark House 100
Monday-Wednesday, 12:30-1:50

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office hours: MW 2:00-3:00 or appt website: jdrabinski.com

Books for the course: Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (Duke), Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphael Confiant, *In Praise of Creoleness* (Gallimard), Mark Bessire, *William Pope.L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America* (MIT), Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Michigan) and *Collected Poems* (Minnesota), and Paul Miller *Rhythm Science* (MIT).

All books are available at Amherst Books in downtown Amherst.

In this course, we will examine the meaning of "the postmodern" in contemporary Caribbean and African-American philosophy, cultural theory, and the arts. What is the postmodern? And how does the experience of the Americas transform the meaning of postmodernity? Four basic concepts guide our inquiry: fragmentation, nomad, rhizome, and creoleness. Short readings from European theorists will provide the backdrop for our treatment of how the experiences of the Middle Passage, colonialism, and postcolony life fundamentally transform postmodern ideas. In tracking this transformation, our readings and reflections will explore the possible meanings of the Afro-postmodern in the works of Édouard Glissant, Antonio Benitez-Rojo, Wilson Harris, and the founders of the *créolité* movement. As well, with such theoretical considerations in place, we will examine the specifically Afro-postmodern significance of aesthetic practices in dub, sampling, graffiti, and anti-racist irony. Lastly, as a broad and encompassing issue, we will consider how Afro-postmodern conceptions of mixture, counter-narrative, and syncretism offer an alternative to dominant accounts of modernity and globalization.

The requirements for this course are simple. You are required, of course, to attend and participate (20%). Upon your third absence, subsequent absences will draw down your *final grade* by 1/3 for each missed session.

There will be two 8-10 page essays, each comprising 30% of your grade. The midterm essay is due 26 March. The final essay is due 12 May. Each student will make a significant contribution to the course wiki project (20%). Details to come under separate cover.

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25 January
Introduction to the course

27 January
Walcott, "The Muse of History"

01 February
Walcott, "The Antilles"

03 February (add/drop)
Walcott, "The Sea is History"

08 February
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1-44)

10 February
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1-44, cont.)

15 February
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (45-88)

17 February
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (89-130)

22 February
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (131-182)

24 February
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (131-182, cont.)

01 March
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (183-210)

03 March
Glissant, "Black Salt" in *Collected Poems*

08 March
Glissant, "Yokes" in *Collected Poems*

10 March
Discussion of Glissant's work

15 March (break)
17 March (break)

22 March
Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (1-32)

24 March
Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (33-84)

29 March
Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (263-271)

31 March
Harris, "Creoleness"

05 April
Bernabé, et. al., *In Praise of Creoleness* (entire)

07 April
Bernabé, et. al., *In Praise of Creoleness*

12 April
Interview with créolité authors from *Transition*

14 April
Discussion of creoleness and creolization

19 April
Paul Miller, *Rhythm Science* (1-60)

21 April
Paul Miller, *Rhythm Science* (61-113)

26 April
Discussion of Miller and Afro-postmodern

28 April
. Bessire,
"Foreword" and "The Friendliest Black Artist"

. Stiles,
"Thunderbird Immolation: Burning Racism"

. C. Carr,
"In the Discomfort Zone"

03 May
Discussion of "Bocio" and William Pope.L's
visual and performance art

05 May
Discussion of J-M Basquiat, graffiti, irony, and
the Afro-postmodern