Topics in Imperial, Transnational, and Postcolonial StudiesWinter 2012

**Black Atlantic Fictions**

ENGL 181D Tuesday 3-5.50 Humanities A60

Professor: Yogita Goyal

Office Hours: Thursday 9.30-11.30

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**Course Description:**

In recent years, we have come to understand race as a global construct, characterized by the increased circulation of ideas, bodies, and objects. This course reads a range of literature from Africa, the Caribbean, Black Britain, and the United States outside of the confines of national borders, as part of what Paul Gilroy has termed the Black Atlantic. Focusing on the ways in which black writers like Jamaica Kincaid, Toni Morrison, Caryl Phillips, Ama Ata Aidoo, Chris Abani, Paule Marshall, and Zakes Mda represent the experiences of slavery, migration, and colonialism, the course examines the relationship between politics and aesthetics, history and memory, and tradition and modernity. Readings include not only texts that highlight transnational mobility, but also those that take up the conceptual core of the idea of diaspora: the loss of home, the meaning of memory, and the struggle to find a usable past. Requirements: Active class participation, presentation, and two 7 pp. papers.

**Course Requirements**:

**Texts:**

1. Toni Morrison, *Tar Baby* (1981)
2. Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983)
3. Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988)
4. Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (1990)
5. Caryl Phillips, *Crossing the River* (1993)
6. Zakes Mda, *The Heart of Redness* (2000)
7. Chris Abani, *Graceland* (2004)

**Films**:

1. Cheryl Dunye, *Watermelon Woman* (1997)
2. Stephanie Black, *Life and Debt* (2001)
3. Stephen Frears, *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002)

All additional readings marked with an asterisk are available on the CCLE website: <http://ccle.ucla.edu/>

Please bring a printout of the reading to class.

**Assignments**:

Mid-term paper: 30%; due February 9; 7 pp.

Final paper: 40%; due March 20; 7 pp.

Class participation (including attendance, discussion, and class presentations): 30%

[Optional: 15-20 pp. research paper instead of two papers; 10 pp. draft due February 21, Final draft March 20]

**Academic Integrity**:

UCLA has no tolerance for academic dishonesty of any kind. Please acquaint yourself with the university policies on plagiarism. Basically, any time that you use someone else’s ideas or words, you have to say so – otherwise it constitutes plagiarism. If you have any doubts as to what constitutes plagiarism, be sure to consult me before completing the assignment.

Please see the web site: http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html.

**Disability Accommodation:**

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible to make the required arrangements.

**SCHEDULE**

**Week One, January 10**:

Introduction

**Week Two, January 17**:

Toni Morrison, *Tar Baby*

Countee Cullen, “Heritage”\*

Paul Gilroy and Tommie Shelby, “Cosmopolitanism, Blackness, and Utopia”\*

**Week Three, January 24**:

Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow*

W.E.B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*\*

Robert Hayden, “Runagate Runagate”\*

**Week Four, January 31**:

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Screening, Stephanie Black, *Life and Debt*

**Week Five, February 7**:

Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*

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| **Mid-term paper, due February 9**(by 5 p.m. in my mailbox in Humanities 149) |

**Week Six, February 14**:

Caryl Phillips, *Crossing the River*

Langston Hughes, “The Negro Dreams of Rivers”\*

Stuart Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora: Home Thoughts from Abroad”\*

**Week Seven, February 21**:

Cheryl Dunye, *Watermelon Woman*

[also on reserve in Media Library; available on Netflix instant]

**Week Eight, February 28**:

Chris Abani, *Graceland*

**Week Nine, March 6**:

Stephen Frears, dir. *Dirty Pretty Things*

**Week Ten, March 13**:

Zakes Mda, *The* *Heart of Redness*

**Final Paper, due March 20**

(by 5 p.m. in my mailbox in Humanities 149)