

English 843: Studies in Colonial, National, and Diasporic Literatures
Summer 2023
Prof. David Chariandy
In the Wake

In this course, we will address contemporary Black thought and expressive cultures from the United States, the Caribbean, Britain, and Canada. We will focus on major literary and critical texts, but we will also assess film, visual art, popular culture, media imagery, and official political representation. Our goal will be to center and explore the diverse archive of Black art and thought today, in this urgent phase of Black struggle and Indigenous resurgence, and in the wake of ongoing anti-blackness, colonization, state violence, racial impoverishment, and 'post-racial' fantasies. Three books will serve as theoretical touchstones for the course: Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*; Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*; and Rinaldo Walcott's *The Long Emancipation: Moving Towards Black Freedom*.

We will begin by discussing the opening chapters of the aforementioned books, and by familiarizing ourselves more broadly with some of the major terms and 'moods' of contemporary Black art and thought. We will then examine a series of highly acclaimed texts -- Toni Morrison's *Beloved*; Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, and M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* -- each illustrating different representational strategies regarding the legacies of transatlantic slavery. In subsequent classes, we will engage a wide range of texts and topics: debt and neocolonialism as figured in Stephanie Black's film *Life and Debt* (a reworking of Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*); the theory and practice of 'diaspora' in contemporary Black art (particularly in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*); Black/Indigenous encounters and solidarities as represented in a variety of both canonical and recent texts; Black British Columbian history and culture as discussed in Wayde Compton's *After Canaan*; Black queer and trans representation as explored by theorists Keguro Macharia and C. Riley Snorton, as well as in filmmaker Barry Jenkin's *Moonlight*; the contemporary 'return' of James Baldwin in Raoul Peck's film *I am not your Negro*; Black women's migrations in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*; and Black speculative fiction or Afrofuturism in a number of texts, including Boots Riley's film *Sorry to Bother You*. Throughout the course, we will be discussing critical theory alongside both 'high' art and popular culture. We will also examine debates and discussion threads emanating from various media sources and 'publics.'

Required Texts

Baldwin, James. *I Am Not Your Negro*
Brand, Dionne. *A Map to the Door of No Return*
Coates, Ta-Nehisi *Between the World and Me*
Compton, Wayde. *After Canaan*
Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*
---. *Lucy*

King, Tiffany Lethabo. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*
Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*
Philip, M. NourbeSe. *Zong*
Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen*
Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*
Walcott, Rinaldo. *The Long Emancipation: Moving Towards Black Freedom*.

Mandatory films (viewed in class): *Life and Debt* (2001, Director Stephanie Black); *I am Not Your Negro* (2016, Director Raoul Peck), *Sorry to Bother You* (2018, Director Boots Riley).

Recommended films (to view on your own): *Get Out* (2017, Jordan Peele); *Us* (2019, Jordan Peele); *Moonlight* (2016, Barry Jenkins).

[Other mandatory readings and texts, chiefly critical, but also film and other media, will be added on the first day of class and as the course progresses.]

Course Requirements

15% Minor Classroom Presentation on a required reading + 4 page write up
25% Major Classroom Presentation on a required reading + 7-8 page write up
40% Final Paper (15-20 pages)
20% Participation

Notes on Course Requirements

Your *Participation* is based on active and informed engagement in classroom discussions, not simply attendance.

Your *Minor Classroom Presentation* should be approximately 10 minutes in length, and should culminate in a question or point of discussion directed to the class. You are free to bring to your presentation any special interests or theoretical dispensations you may have, but you are expected to engage with the required texts closely and thoroughly. The 4 page write-up is due in class, on the day you deliver your presentation.

Your *Major Classroom Presentation* should be approximately 20 minutes in length (the length of a typical conference paper). It should reflect your close engagement with the required text(s) and contexts, as well as your own independent research. This presentation should culminate in a question or point of discussion directed to the class, and you should be prepared to moderate this discussion for approximately 20 additional minutes after your presentation. The 7-8 page write up is due in class, on the day you deliver your presentation.

The final paper will address a required reading from the course involve several of the theoretical concepts and texts developed in the course, and demonstrate substantial independent research.