Caribbean Borderlands
Geography 335/Fall 2019
Cross listed with Topics in Latino and Caribbean Studies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>TIL-230 LIV</th>
<th>Instructor:</th>
<th>Kevon Rhiney</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course web:</td>
<td><a href="http://sakai.rutgers.edu">http://sakai.rutgers.edu</a></td>
<td>Office:</td>
<td>B-259 Lucy Stone Hall (LSH)</td>
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<td>Class time:</td>
<td>MTH 12:00-1:20pm</td>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kevon.rhiney@rutgers.edu">kevon.rhiney@rutgers.edu</a></td>
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Course Description
The Caribbean is one of the most diverse and complex regions in the world, given its unique and contrasting array of foods, languages, cultures, politics, landforms and geology. In fact, there is no single definition of the Caribbean – the term itself conjures diverse meanings, and is normally defined based on geography, geology, ethnography, politics and economics.

This course introduces students to the Caribbean, a global crossroads where disparate worlds meet. The course aims to unsettle taken-for-granted perceptions about the region and ‘island life’ – tropes of sun-soaked beaches and rum, ganja and reggae, poverty and parochialism. Instead, I seek to provide an intellectual space for us to rethink the Caribbean:

- As simultaneously a ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ place that has been ‘global’, ‘modern’ and ‘multi-cultural’ since the beginning of the colonial encounter (c. 15th century).
- As a place of complexity, conflict and intense creativity.
- As place stratified by colour/race, class and gender; with painful legacies of genocide, enslavement and indenture.
- As a small sea, whose people have deeply impacted world histories - produced sugar and profits that powered industrial revolutions; generated political revolutions that informed modern concepts of freedom.
- As a people whose migrations and cultural forms have had profound planetary influence.

The module thus provokes students to engage a critical conversation with the Caribbean: to interrogate their own imaginations of and contrasting experiences with its peoples; to reflect on their shifting perceptions of the region; to ask probing questions about the concepts devised to understand this complicated context. The main goal is to foster an appreciation and understanding of the uniqueness, contradictions and interactions of Caribbean societies, economies and physical landscapes.

Class Time and Venue
Mondays and Thursdays 12:00pm - 1:20pm, TIL-230, Tillet Hall (Livingston Campus)

Contact Information
Kevon Rhiney
email: kevon.rhiney@rutgers.edu
Phone: (848) 445-4375
Office: B259 Lucy Stone Hall Building
Office Hours: Mondays 3:00pm – 4:00pm or by appointment

Course Format
Course contents will be explored through lectures, readings, short video clips, and in-class exercises and discussions. There are two primary lectures each week. They will explore themes covered in assigned readings, and present a series of in-depth case studies. Students are expected to attend all lectures, should be familiar with the material covered in assigned readings and be prepared to participate during in-class discussions. Copies of lecture presentations and readings will be available on sakai.rutgers.edu under the course’s resources menu.
Grading Criteria
In order to succeed in this course, you will need to complete all readings and assignments in a timely fashion, as well as attend and participate in class. There will be no mid-term or final exams for this course. Students will be assessed through four short essays that will be related to the topics covered throughout the course. Each essay is worth a maximum of 25 points. Points earned for each essay will be added to ascertain a final grade for each student at the end of the course.

Final course grades will be calculated as follows:
- A (90-100)
- B+ (85-89)
- B (80-84)
- C+ (75-79)
- C (70-74)
- D (60-69)
- F (0-59)

Required Textbook and Required Readings
There are no prescribed textbooks for this course. Most of the required readings and materials for the class will be posted on the course’s Sakai website.

Policy regarding Missed Exams
Make-up exams will not be given except in the event of religious observance, documented illness, documented family emergency, or documented Rutgers team event.

Class Attendance
Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence.

Classroom Etiquette
Cell phones (including texting) must be turned off while you are in the classroom. Computers are not to be used for non-class-related purposes during class time.

Academic Integrity
Students are expected to understand and to act in accordance with the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/policy-on-academic-integrity

Student-Wellness Services
Just In Case Web App
http://codu.co/cee05e
Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)
(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ rhscaps.rutgers.edu/
CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students’ efforts to succeed at Rutgers.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)
(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / vpva.rutgers.edu/
The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.
**Disability Services**  
(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / [https://ods.rutgers.edu/](https://ods.rutgers.edu/)  
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form).

**Scarlet Listeners**  
(732) 247-5555 / [http://www.scarletlisteners.com/](http://www.scarletlisteners.com/) Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 - Introduction to Course (Sept. 5)**  
This class will be used to provide an overview of the course, including the topics we will cover and the course assessment. Will also be used as a space to get to know each other.

**Week 2 – Defining the Caribbean (Sept. 9, 12)**  
Cuban novelist and theorist Antonio Benitez-Rojo (1985) described this sea of over 1,000 islands and numerous coastal territories ‘as one of the least known regions of the modern world’. Composed of Amerindian, European, African and Asian peoples, coexisting under brutally unequal conditions of production that uprooted them from ancestral lands, Caribbean folks are arguably the first modern people in world history. Scholars have grappled to understand the vast and ever-changing complexity, diversity and hybridity of the Caribbean. This week we explore some of the scholastic attempts to comprehend this place: as ‘a socio-cultural area’, a ‘repeating island’, an ‘oikoumene’.

**Week 3 – Complicating Paradise (Sept. 16, 19)**  
When we think of the Caribbean what kind of images spring to mind? White sand beaches? Rum and Sunshine? Smiles and Reggae? The region is popularly marketed as a tropical paradise into which tourists of the global north can escape life’s stresses. But what is life like for the inhabitants of the Caribbean? In this introductory week, we complicate and unpack this idea of island paradise. We reconsider the Caribbean as a modern region, a global site of profound complexity and inequality. We ask how ethnography can reveal realities that are submerged beneath paradise narratives; whilst also avoiding equally simplistic narratives of destitution and violence.

**Week 4 – Caribbean Historico-Cultural Landscapes (Sept. 23, 26)**  
Scholars of modernity have turned to ‘creolization’ as a symbol of the cultural hybridity that is seen to typify the global present. Here we return ‘creolization’ to its Caribbean roots. We examine how the term emerges in the ‘continuity’ versus ‘creativity’ debates of the mid-twentieth century, as anthropologists and other scholars sought to understand the origins of ‘New World’ Afro-Diasporic cultures. Then we evaluate how useful theories of creolization are for understanding Caribbean life today, focusing on examples of Afro-Creole cosmologies (belief systems) and cultural practices.

****First essay due on Monday Sept 30****
Week 5 – Land and Agriculture (Sept 30, Oct 3)
For this section of the course we will look at the ways agriculture has developed throughout the Caribbean, particularly during the post/colonial period. We will look at some of the modern-day challenges affecting the regional agricultural sector, including the threats posed by neoliberal market reforms and anthropogenic climate change.

Week 6 – Impacts of Globalization (Oct 7, 10)
This week we will look at the ways Caribbean economies have been impacted by forces of economic globalization. We will explore the ways free trade zones and structural adjustment has impacted the lives of Caribbean people. We will also explore how the Caribbean has contributed to processes of globalization as well, through its culture and economic resources.

Week 7 – Caribbean Resource Geographies (Oct 14, 17)
For this week, we take a close look at the extractive industry in the Caribbean. We will look at a number of examples ranging from bauxite and gold mining to oil manufacturing. We will look at the social, economic and environmental ramifications associated with these industries and the ways they have been shaped by global consumerism.

****Second essay due on Monday October 21****

Week 8 – Tourism in the Caribbean (Oct 21, 25)
The Caribbean is regarded as one of the most tourism-dependent regions in the world, with the industry accounting for more than half of the GDP for some regional states. This week we will explore the significance of tourism for the Caribbean, particularly its contribution to employment and foreign revenue. We will trace its origin and evolution from class to mass tourism. We will also look at some of the challenges associated with the modern tourism industry and consider the potential for the region to transition towards more sustainable models of tourism e.g. ecotourism and health tourism.

Week 9/10 - ‘Natural’ Disasters in the Caribbean (Oct 28, 31 & Nov 4, 7)
The Caribbean has been in the spotlight in recent years owing to a series of ‘natural’ disasters. Most of these disasters have been induced by extreme weather events, particularly hurricanes. The 2017 hurricane season was particularly devastating, with several of the most powerful hurricanes on record wreaking havoc across the region. This section of the course will take a critical look at the disasters that have unfolded from these events, including the ways these disasters map onto underlying systems of post/colonial domination and non-sovereignty.

Week 11 – Crime and Security in the Caribbean (Nov 11, 14)
Several Caribbean states are listed amongst some of the most violent countries in the world. Cities like Kingston (Jamaica), Georgetown (Guyana) and Belize City (Belize) have recorded some of the highest homicide rates in the world, juxtaposed with high rates of political instability, urban decay, poverty and inequality. For this week, we will look at some of the factors contributing to crime and violence across the region and their associated impacts.

****Third essay due on Monday Nov 18****

Week 12 - Colour/Race, Class and Ethnicity Struggles (Nov 18)
The plantation systems of the Caribbean created diverse societies that were stratified according to categories of class, race/colour and ethnicity. These inequities left rooted hierarchies that are reproduced in the present day. This week we explore such social cleavages through both a historic and contemporary lens, whilst asking what happens when such categories are blurred and complicated in the everyday.

Thanksgiving Recess (Nov 21-24)
Week 13 – The Caribbean Soundscape (Nov 25, 28)
Carnival and dancehall are two of the most ubiquitous sites of Caribbean popular performance. Both are rich with competing cultural meanings: they originate as working-class spaces of gendered play, erotic creativity, linguistic skill and kinesthetic mastery. With these features in mind, this week we ask how these two spaces are to be ethnographically understood: as sites of transgression, subversion or catharsis?

Week 14 – Caribbean Diasporic Communities (Dec 2, 5)
The people of the Caribbean have a long history of migration: into the region, through it and beyond its waters. This week we chart the journeys of West Indians to the UK, USA and Canada. We look at the transformations from being ‘British colonial subjects’ to diasporic West Indians and Black Britons. We will consider the experience of West Indians who reside in the USA and Canada as well, and explore the ways they maintain connection to their roots/homelands.

****Fourth essay due on Monday Dec 9****

Week 15 – Revision and Reflections (Dec. 9)