

EN2F7-30 Literature and Empire: Britain and the Caribbean to c. 1900

23/24

Department

English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

John Gilmore

Credit value

30

Module duration

20 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

EN2F7-30 Literature and Empire: Britain and the Caribbean to c. 1900

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

This course examines the cultural significance of the Caribbean to Britain during the period when the “sugar colonies” enjoyed their greatest economic importance, as well as during their decline in the later nineteenth century, from the “rise of the planter class”, the white, land-owning oligarchy which dominated the colonies during slavery and its aftermath, to the introduction of Asian indentured labour and the beginnings of Afro-Caribbean nationalism. Each week’s seminar will be based around a single text, or small group of texts, as indicated in the list below. Texts by both Caribbean and British authors, ranging from the mid-17th century to the late 19th century, will be used to approach themes such as those of the “noble savage,” the “West-India Georgic,” and the ideological battle over slavery, and to show how the cultural traffic between the imperial power and the colonies was far from being only in one direction. Most works are in English (a few short works in Latin will also be discussed, but English translations will be provided). A wide range of genres is

included – travel narratives and memoirs, sermons, poetry, plays and novels – and the texts are definitely not all by dead white males.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Term 1

Week 1

Introduction to Britain's former Caribbean colonies and their significance.

Week 2

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* – slavery in the Caribbean and representations of the “noble savage” in English literature.

Week 3

Poems by early Barbadian writers – Christopher Codrington, John Alleyn (or Alleyne) and John Maynard – and how their works demonstrate the close connections between British literary culture and the Caribbean colonies.

Week 4

Racism and the idea of a “slave society” in Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774); the poetry of the black Jamaican Francis Williams as a challenge to Long's racist views.

Week 5

James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane: A Poem* (1764) and the idea of “a West-India Georgic”.

Week 6 – Reading Week, no seminar

Week 7

The colonial empire and fantasies about race and identity in the Inkle and Yarico story.

Week 8

Stereotypes of the creole in Richard Cumberland's play, *The West Indian* (first performed 1771).

Week 9

The earliest novel in English by a Caribbean-born writer: J. W. Orderson's *Creoleana* (1842).

Week 10

Thomas Thistlewood's diaries and the reality of plantation slavery.

Term 2

Week 1

Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*.

Week 2

Slavery and gender in *The History of Mary Prince* (1831).

Week 3

Christianity and slavery in William Marshall Harte's *Lectures on the Gospel of St Matthew* (1824).

Week 4

Caribbean Gothicism and belief systems of African origin in the anonymous novel, *Hamel, The Obeah Man* (1827).

Week 5

Slave resistance, the Haitian Revolution, and Matthew Chapman's poem “*Barbadoes*” (1833).

Week 6 – Reading Week, no seminar

Week 7

Authenticity and representation in Mary Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures* (1857).

Week 8

The decline of the “sugar colonies” in Frieda Cassin’s Antigua-published novel *With Silent Tread* (c. 1890).

Week 9

Indian indentureship and Guyanese sugar plantations in Edward Jenkins’s novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo* (1877).

Week 10

The racist travel narrative, an Afro-Caribbean response, and the development of modern Caribbean nationalism: J. A. Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (1888); J. J. Thomas, *Froudacity* (1889).

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- develop an abstract and detailed understanding of the cultural significance of Britain’s former Caribbean colonies, as manifested in the literature of the period from the mid-seventeenth to the late nineteenth century, informed by recent research/scholarship in the discipline.
- be able to discuss issues relating to race, gender and colonialism in the period, and assess critically their appearance in literary texts in different genres informed by recent research/scholarship in the discipline.
- Learn to accurately apply knowledge and understanding of the significance of a particular historical and cultural context in the understanding of literary texts.
- Learn to describe and critically comment upon issues relating to canon formation and changes in literary taste.

Indicative reading list

Examples of texts for study (exact list may vary year by year):

Anon. (ed. Amon Saba Sakana, notes by John Gilmore), *Hamel, The Obeah Man* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008).

Behn, Aphra, *Oroonoko* (London, 1688). Norton Critical Edition, ed. Joanna Lipking (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997).

Chapman, Matthew James, *Barbadoes, and other poems* (London, 1833).

Cassin, Frieda, *With Silent Tread: A West Indian Novel* (Antigua, n.d. [c. 1890]). Macmillan Caribbean Classics edition, ed. Evelyn O’Callaghan (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2002).

Cumberland, Richard, *The West Indian* (London, 1771).

Equiano, Olaudah, *The interesting narrative and other writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta. rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

Felsenstein, Frank, ed., *English Trader, Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race and Slavery in the New World – An Inkle and Yarico Reader* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

Froude, James Anthony, *The English in the West Indies: Or, The bow of Ulysses* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1888).

Grainger, James, *The Sugar-Cane: A Poem* (1764).

Hall, Douglas, *In miserable slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (Macmillan, 1989).

Harte, William Marshall, *Lectures on the Gospel of St Matthew* (2 vols., London, 1824). (Selections)

Jenkins, Edward (ed. David Dabydeen), *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life* (Caribbean Classics) (Caribbean Classics (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003)

Ligon, Richard, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011) (first pub. 1657)

Long, Edward, *The History of Jamaica* (3 vols., London : printed for T. Lowndes, 1774).

Maynard, John, Latin poem on the Asiento (1713); text and translation available in Gilmore, "Sub Herili Venditur Hasta".

Orderson, J. W. [Isaac Williamson], *Creoleana: or, Social and Domestic Scenes and Incidents in Barbados in Days of Yore* (London, 1842). Macmillan Caribbean Classics edition, ed. John [T.] Gilmore (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2002).

Prince, Mary, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* (Penguin Classics ed., 2000; ed. Sara Salih)

Seacole, Mary, *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (Penguin Classics ed., 2005; ed. Sara Salih)

Thomas, J. J. (John Jacob), *Froudacity: West Indian fables by James Anthony Froude explained by J.J. Thomas* (intro. C.L.R. James; biographical note by Donald Wood; London: New Beacon, 1969).

Subject specific skills

- Describe and critically comment upon issues relating to canon formation and changes in literary taste.

Transferable skills

- deploy accurately standard techniques of analysis and enquiry within the discipline;
- demonstrate a conceptual understanding which enables the development and sustaining of an argument;
- describe and comment on particular aspects of recent research and/or scholarship;
- appreciate the uncertainty, ambiguity and limitations of knowledge in the discipline;
- make appropriate use of scholarly reviews and primary sources;
- apply their knowledge and understanding in order to initiate and carry out an extended piece of work or project;

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour 30 minutes (9%)
Private study	273 hours (91%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

Reading & research.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Presentation 1 x presentation during seminar	20%	
Close Reading Exercise 1 x 2,000 word close reading exercise-- analysis of one of the primary texts listed for the module	30%	
Assessed Essay 1 x 3,000 word essay on a topic to be agreed with the module convenor, to include use of a range of appropriate secondary material.	50%	

Feedback on assessment

Detailed written feedback uploaded on Tabula; face to face meetings with students during office hours.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 2 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 2 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History

- Year 2 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- Year 2 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature
- Year 2 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-QQ37 Undergraduate Classics and English

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature