

HIST 4214/ 6214
Fall 2009
LeConte Hall #230
TR 2:00 - 3:15

Prof. Reinaldo L. Román
Office Hours: TR 3:30 – 4:30
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RELIGIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BRAZIL

Many of the world's religious traditions can be found in some form in the Caribbean and Brazil. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hindu traditions co-exist there with a large number of home-grown practices. Among the latter, few are as widely known, or as routinely maligned as Vodou, Santería, and Candomblé. Rastafarianism and Spiritism, for their part, are known superficially and are often trivialized. This interdisciplinary course examines the historical roots of these African-American religions and explores their impact as social and political forces in their own right. The goal is to arrive at an understanding of the making of religious practices as dynamic processes unfolding as Caribbean societies change form. Among other things, the examination of these religions will reveal that “tradition” and secular “modernity” constituted one another amid slavery and colonialism.

As we explore questions of origins, we shall compare and contrast competing models that seek to explain how African-American religions emerged and became systematized. We will examine such concepts as retentions and survivals, transculturation, syncretism, and creolization. When addressing the impact of these religions, we will pay close attention to the debate between those who see religion as encouraging marginalized peoples to resist, and those who understand religion as an instrument that served the powerful. Finally, we will explore the politics of culture, emphasizing nineteenth and twentieth-century developments in the Caribbean, Brazil, and diaspora communities in the United States.

Required readings

1. The following texts (available at UGA's Bookstore) are required: Karen McCarty Brown, *Mama Lola* (U. of California Press, 2001); Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, et al., eds. *Chanting Down Babylon* (Temple University Press, 1998); Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini, *Creole Religions* (NYU Press, 2003); and James H. Sweet, *Re-Creating Africa* (UNC Press, 2003). A course pack (designated below as “CP”) is available at Bel-Jean Copies on Broad Street.
2. Handouts and online sources will be distributed through Web CT. Please, sign up during the first week of classes.
3. Additional readings for graduate students enrolled in HIST6214 are specified in the class schedule below.

Grades and Policies

1. Grades - In addition to midterm and final examinations, students will write two (2) papers (7 pages each). Active participation is required. If you cannot prepare for every class, or if you anticipate difficulty speaking in class, this is not the course for you. The final grade will be calculated as follows: essays, 20% each; mid-term exam, 25%; and final exam, 30%. Participation will account for 5% of the final grade. (“Participation” means asking questions, answering queries, offering comments, and completing in-class exercises).

All exams and assignments will be scored on 1-100 scale: A (100-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-73), C- (72-70), D(69-60), F (59-0).

HIST 6214: Graduate students are expected to write two book reviews (10% of final grade each) and one historiographical essay (20 pp.; 50%). In addition, graduate students are expected to complete the midterm exam (10%), and deliver a 20-30 minute presentation of their research project, adapted for an undergraduate audience (10%). Participation will account for the remainder of the grade (10%).

2. Attendance - Students who miss five (5) meetings without valid excuse will be withdrawn from the class.

3. Withdrawals - Permission to withdraw will be granted as a matter of course only during the first two weeks of the term. After that date, I will determine whether a “wp” or a “wf” is appropriate.

4. Tests - Exams will be administered only once; no make-up assignments will be offered unless an emergency has occurred and has been documented.

5. Deadlines - Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade if submitted within 24 hours of the deadline. Late papers must be submitted via email as an MS Word attachment. Papers will not be accepted after 24 hours. (I will grant extensions only in exceptional circumstances. If you need an extension, please request it by email at least three days before the due date).

6. Scheduling - Keep in mind that it may be necessary to make adjustments to the syllabus. Any changes will be announced in class and Web CT.

7. Academic Honesty -As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty” found at: www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

Schedule

Definitions and approaches

- 8/18 TU Overview
Screening: Clips of *White Zombie* (1932). If you miss the screening, watch online at <http://www.archive.org/details/white_zombie>.
- 8/20 TH Historical approaches to regions and religions
(Is voodoo religion? Is it African?)
Laënnec Hurbon, "American Fantasy and Haitian Vodou," in Donald Cosentino, ed. *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, pp. 181-197 (CP); and Faustin Wirkus and Taney Dudley, *The White King of La Gonave* (New York: 1931), pp. 19-22, 48-55, 268-286, online at <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015028374299>.
- 8/25 TU Making the Caribbean
Listen to podcast of Speaking of Faith's "Living Vodou" at <http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/vodou/>; and read *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, introduction and chap. 1.

Vodou as practice

- 8/27 TH Screening: *Divine Horsemen* (US 1985)
Mama Lola, introduction and chap. 1-3; and watch "Vodou Brooklyn" at <http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/vodou/audiogallery/soundseen.shtml#slideshow>.
- 9/1 TU Serving the *lwas*
Mama Lola, chap. 4-7.

Vodou, origins, and politics

- 9/3 TH Vodou from slavery to revolution
Finish *Mama Lola*.
- 9/8 TU Vodou from Haiti to Brooklyn
Sidney W. Mintz and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Social History of Haitian Vodou," in Donald Cosentino, ed. *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, pp. 123-147 (CP).

Continuity and change in the Atlantic World

- 9/10 TH Modeling diasporas
No reading assignment; **paper due**.

Graduate students only: Kevin A. Yelvington, "The Anthropology of Afro-Latin America and the Caribbean: Diasporic Dimensions," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 227-260; and Stephan Palmié, "Creolization and Its Discontents," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006), 433-456.

Recommended: Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African American Culture* (Beacon Press, 1992)

Slaves, freedmen, and Candomblé

9/15 TU Screening: *The City of Women* (Brazil 2005)
Recreating Africa, introduction and chap. 1

9/17 TH Afro-Brazilian religions in revisionist perspective
Recreating Africa, chap. 4-5

9/22 TU Re-creating communities
Recreating Africa, chap. 6-8

9/24 TH Witchcraft as crime and treatment
Inquisition records on Web CT.

Midterm

9/29 TU Review

10/1 TH Midterm exam – Please, bring a blue book.

Santería

10/6 TU Screening: *The King Does Not Lie* (USA, 1993)
No reading assignment.

10/8 TH Lucumí ethnogenesis
Creole Religions of the Caribbean, chapter 2. Graduate students only: David H. Brown *Santería Enthroned* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), chap. 1-2

Santería and state-craft

10/13 TU The anti-witchcraft campaigns of the Cuban republic
Aline Helg, “Black Men, Racial Stereotyping, and Violence in the U.S. South and Cuba at the Turn of the Century,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (3) (2000), pp. 576 - 604 (CP). Recommended for graduate students only: Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists* (Duke UP, 2002), chap. 3

10/15 TH The orishas after the Revolution
Clips of Carnival; pilgrimage to El Cobre.
Christine Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution, and National Identity* (UP of Florida, 2004), pp. 100-136 (CP); and documents from Proyecto Orunmila on Web CT

Rastafarianism

10/20 TU Screening: *The Harder They Come* (Jamaica, 1973)
Chanting down Babylon, chap. 1 and 3

10/22 TH At war with Babylon
Chanting down Babylon, chap. 9; and listen to the NPR report on ganja in Jamaica: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1137546>.

Rastafari roots

10/27 TU Prophetic traditions
Listen to Benjamin Zephaniah's "The Roots of Rastafari," a BBC documentary at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/rastafari/history/history.shtml>; read *Chanting down Babylon*, chap. 21

10/29 TH Ethiopianism and Garveyism
Chanting down Babylon, chap. 7 and 8; and listen to Marcus Garvey at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/audiointerviews/profilepages/garveym1.shtml>

Rastafari travels

11/3 TU Reggae and the re-significations of Rastafari
Katrin Hansing, "Rasta, Race and Revolution," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 27 (4): 733-747 (CP); and listen to Benjamin Zephaniah's "A Local Jamaican Movement to a Global Faith," a BBC documentary at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/rastafari/history/history.shtml>

11/5 TH Class meeting canceled
Paper due

Spiritism and progress

11/10 TU Screening: The Spiritual Telegraph
Jeremy Stolow, "Techno-Religious Imaginaries: On the Spiritual Telegraph and the Circum-Atlantic World of the 19th Century" (CP).

11/12 TH Kardec in Cuba and Puerto Rico
Creole Religions of the Caribbean, chap. 7; and Allan Kardec, *The Spirits Book*, Book 1, chap. 1, Book 2, chap. 4 and 5 (CP), available online at: <http://www.spiritwritings.com/kardecspiritstoc.html>

11/17 TU Spiritism, healing, and modernization
Reinaldo L. Román, "Governing Man-Gods," *Governing Man-Gods: Spiritism and the Struggle for Progress in Republican Cuba*, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 37 (2) (2007): 212-241 (CP).

11/19 TH Spiritism and utopianism
Reinaldo L. Román, "Más allá de la Habana: On Spiritism and Corporate Aggregation from the Late Colony to the Early Republic," unpublished manuscript (CP).

11/24 -11/26 Thanksgiving break

Migrants and religion

11/27 TU Orixas in transit

J. Lorand Matory, "Surpassing 'Survival': On the Urbanity of 'Traditional Religion' in the Afro-Atlantic World." *The Black Scholar* 30, no. 3-4 (2000): 36-43 (CP). Graduate students only: J. Lorand Matory, "The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41(1) (Jan., 1999): 72-103. Recommended for grads only: Karen E. Richman, Peasants, "Migrants and the Discovery of African Traditions: Ritual and Social Change in Lowland Haiti," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 37 (2007): 371-397.

11/29 TH The Virgin Mary in Exile

Thomas A. Tweed, "Diasporic Nationalism and Urban Landscape: Cuban Immigrants at a Catholic Shrine in Miami," in *The Gods of the City: Religion and the Contemporary American Urban Landscape*, ed. Robert A. Orsi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 151-74 (CP).

12/1 TU Conclusions

12/3 TH Review

FINAL EXAM
TUE, DEC 11, 3:30 - 6:30 PM