

History 6214
Fall 2006
TR 3:30 - 4:45
LeConte Hall, Rm. 101

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RELIGIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BRAZIL

Most of the world's religious traditions can be found in some form in the Caribbean and Brazil. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism co-exist there with a large number of home-grown practices. Among the latter, few are as widely known, or as routinely maligned as African-derived Vodou, Santería, and Candomblé. Rastafarianism and Spiritism, for their part, are known superficially and are often trivialized in popular treatments. This course seeks to examine the historical roots of these neo-African religions and explore their impact as social and political forces in their own right. The goal is to arrive at an understanding of the making of religious traditions as a dynamic process unfolding as American societies took their present form. Put another way, our examination of these religions will reveal that “tradition” and “modernity” constituted one another.

As we explore the question of origins, we will compare and contrast competing models that seek to explain how these hybrid religions emerged and assumed their distinctive shapes. To that end, we will examine such concepts as “retention,” “transculturation,” and “creolization.” When addressing the impact of these religions, we will pay close attention to cultural politics, emphasizing nineteenth and twentieth-century developments in the Caribbean and Brazil and the diaspora communities of the United States.

Course Requirements

1. The following texts are required: Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari, Roots and Ideology* (Syracuse UP, 1994); Karen McCarty Brown, *Mama Lola* (U. of California Press, [1991] 2001); Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture* (Beacon, 1992); Rachel Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness* (Indiana University Press, 2003); Raquel Romberg, *Witchcraft and Welfare* (U. of Texas Press, 2003); and finally, a course reader (listed as “CP” below).

Note that some materials have been placed on reserve at the library. The password for electronic reserves for History 4214 is: <zombie>; the password for History 6214 is: <zombie2>.

Books are available at the Off Campus Bookstore (696 Baxter St). The course pack is available at Bel Jean Copy Center (163 E. Broad St).

2. In addition to two (2) review essays (4 pages each), graduate students will be responsible for leading one discussion session and will complete a research paper (approx. 20 pages). The research paper may be historiographical, or it may focus on a narrower research topic based on primary sources.

Grades and Policies

1. Grades: The final grade will be calculated as follows: two review essays, 10% each; presentation, 10%; participation, 10%; and research paper, 60%.

2. Attendance: Regular attendance is required. Students who miss four (4) class meetings without valid excuse will be withdrawn from the class. Note that grad students may be required to attend occasional discussion sessions. These will be scheduled on Tuesday or Thursday. Exact times and other details will be decided in consultation with students.

3. Course Withdrawals: Permission to withdraw with a “w” will be granted as a matter of course only during the first two weeks of the term.

4. Deadlines: Late assignments will be penalized one full letter grade if submitted within 24 hours of the deadline. No papers will be accepted after 24 hours. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis if requested in advance.

5. Changes to the schedule: Please, keep in mind that it may be necessary to make changes to the syllabus. These will be announced in class.

6. Academic Honesty: Students are responsible for knowing the University’s policies on academic honesty. All academic work submitted in this course must be your own unless you have received my permission to collaborate and have properly acknowledged receiving assistance. It is my responsibility to uphold the University’s academic honesty policy and report any appearance of dishonesty to the Office of the Vice President for Instruction. Please, consult “A Culture of Honesty” at www.uga.edu/ovpi.

SCHEDULE

Thursday 8/17 Course overview

Modern v. traditional in the Caribbean

Tuesday 8/22 Definition as a historical problem

Reading: Richard S. Hillman and Thomas J. D'Agostino, *Understanding the Contemporary Caribbean* (Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp. 51-83 (CP).

Thursday 8/24 Vodou through Western eyes

Reading: (1) Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), chap. 1 (Reserves & Electronic Reserves); and (2) Laënnec Hurbon, "American Fantasy and Haitian Vodou," in Donald Cosentino, ed. *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, pp. 181-197 (CP).

Contemporary Vodou

Tuesday 8/29 Screening: *Divine Horsemen*

Discussion Meeting

Reading: *Mama Lola*, introduction and chap. 1-3.

Thursday 8/31 Serving the *lwas*

Reading: *Mama Lola*, chap. 4-7.

Tradition and change

Tuesday 9/5 The making and re-making of Vodou

Reading: Finish *Mama Lola*.

Thursday 9/7 Vodou and revolution

Reading: Sidney Mintz and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Social History of Haitian Vodou," in Donald Cosentino, ed. *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, pp. 123-147 (CP).

Modeling change

Tuesday 9/12 Retentions, survivals, and the politics of culture

Reading: (1) Walter Jackson, "Melville Herskovits and the Search for Afro-American Culture," in George W. Stocking, Jr., ed. *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, pp. 95-126 (Reserves); and (2) Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture* (Beacon Press, 1992), chap. 1-3.

Thursday 9/14 Creolization, syncretism, symbiosis

Reading: (1) Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture* (Beacon Press, 1992), chap. 4-7; (2) Richard Price, "The Miracle of Creolization," *New West Indian Guide* 75 (1 & 2) (2001): 35-64 (Reserves); and (3) Desmangles, *The Faces of the Gods*, pp. 1-16 (CP & Electronic Reserves).

Candomblé

Tuesday 9/19 Brazil in comparative perspective
Reading: Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder*, chap. 1-3.

Thursday 9/21 Alternative spaces
Reading: Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder*, chap. 4-5

Midterm

Tuesday 9/26 Review
Reading: Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder*, chap. 6-8

Thursday 9/28 Exam

Post-emancipation Cuba: Yoruba, Lucumí, Santería

Tuesday 10/3 *The King Does Not Lie* (44 min.)
Read: (1) Ana María Figueredo, "A Year of Wearing White," *CLBA Journal* (2005), 4 pp; and (2) visit <http://www.church-of-the-lukumi.org/journal1.htm>.

Thursday 10/5 Religion and ethnogenesis in Cuba
Reading: David H. Brown, *Santería Enthroned*, chap. 1 (CP & Electronic Reserves).

Policing religion: Santería after independence and revolution

Tuesday 10/10 The anti-witchcraft campaign of the Cuban republic
Read: 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).

Thursday 10/12 The orishas after the Cuban Revolution
Read: Christine Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution, and National Identity* (UP of Florida, 2004), pp. 100-136 (CP); and (2) Juan Benkomo, "Crafting the sacred batá drums," in Pedro Perez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, *Afro-Cuban Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba* (Gainesville University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 147-153 (CP).

Rastafari Roots

Tuesday 10/17 Jamaica after emancipation
Thursday 10/19 Preachers, prophets, and revivalism

Read: Chevannes, *Rastafari Roots and Ideology*, selections TBA.

Thursday 10/24 Screening: *The Harder They Come*
Thursday 10/26 Fall Break

Rastafari to its own tune

Tuesday 10/31 Ethiopianism and Garveyism
Reading: Chevannes, *Rastafari Roots and Ideology*, selections TBA.

Thursday 11/2 Preaching the word

Reading: (1) Neil J. Savishinsky, "Transnational Popular Culture and the Global Spread of the Jamaican Rastafarian Movement," *New West Indian Guide* 68 (3-4) (1994), 259-281 (Reserves); and (2) the lyrics of Bob Marley's *Exodus* and Steel Pulse's *Marcus Garvey* (Handout).

Research and writing

Tuesday 11/7 Details TBA.

Thursday 11/9 Details TBA.

Spiritism and the quest for progress in Cuba and Puerto Rico

Tuesday 11/14 The rise of Spiritism

Joan D. Koss-Chioino, "Religion and Science Divinely Related: A Case History of Spiritism in Puerto Rico," *Caribbean Studies* 16 (1) (1976), pp: 22-43 (CP); and Allan Kardec, *The Spirits Book* (New York, 1976), pp. 1-13, 70-81, and 96-99 (CP).

Thursday 11/16 Genealogies of religions

Read: Report of the Havana Detectives' Bureau (CP); and Reinaldo L. Román, "Governing Spirits," *Journal of Religions in Africa* (forthcoming), pp. 1-57 (CP).

Witchcraft Reconsidered

Tuesday 11/21 Screening: *Buying the Spirit*

Thursday 11/23 Thanksgiving Break

Witchcraft goes global

Tuesday 11/28 Negotiations of power

Read: *Witchcraft and Welfare*, Introduction and chap. 4-5.

Thursday 11/30 "Glocal" religions

Read: *Witchcraft and Welfare*, chap. 6-8.

Tuesday 12/5 Closing remarks

Research paper due