

CAR332Y0

Caribbean Culture and Environment: Puerto Rico

Prof. Conrad James

Email : conrad.james@utoronto.ca

Course Description

This course will examine the cultural and environmental politics of the Caribbean Island of Puerto Rico. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the course will explore debates on colonialism, capitalist modernity, economic development, environmental sustainability, ecosystems, religion, and race, among other issues. A substantial aspect of the course engages with major political issues such as the island's continued colonization by the United States and its status as a 'free associated state', civil rights and civil conflicts, food policy, class struggles and policies on ethnic cleansing. We explore the wealth of Puerto Rico's musical cultures and incorporate live performances by contemporary artists whose music challenges the social and environmental injustices which have troubled this Caribbean country for centuries. Finally, we bring a transnational dimension to the course by examining the relationship of the island with its diasporic communities in US cities like New York and Chicago.

Evaluation:

- 3 critical reflection papers – 30%
- 2 partial exams – 50%
- Participation – 20%

Exams

The in-class partial exams will take place in the 2nd and 4th weeks. These will be open book exams consisting of short answer questions.

Reflection Papers

A critical reflection paper is a written piece (500-650 words) that analyzes your thoughts and questions on different readings each week.

Schedule

WEEK 1: Puerto Rican History and Cultural Identity

- DEWELL, JAMES D.: [Down on Porto Rico with a Kodak](#)
 - FERRÉ, ROSARIO: Excerpts from *Sweet Diamond Dust and Other Stories*
 - GONZÁLEZ, JOSÉ LUIS: “The Four-storeyed Country”
 - MALDONADO-DENIS: Manuel: *Puerto Rico: a Socio-historic Interpretation* [Chapter 1]
 - LLORÉNS, HILDA: Making *Livable Lives*: [Chapter 1]
 - NAGASHIMA, BELLURY, JOHNSON: “[Plena: A Music of the Puerto Rican People](#)”
 - SÁNCHEZ, LUIS RAFAEL: “Caribbeanness”
 - VEGA, ANA LYDIA: “Cloud Cover Caribbean”
- **Excursions:** Tour of Old San Juan and El Morro

WEEK 2: Environmental Sustainability in Puerto Rico

- BAVER, SHERRIE: “[Environmental struggles in paradise: Puerto Rican cases, -Caribbean lessons](#)” (2012)
 - BBC: “[Could solar power solve Puerto Rico’s energy nightmare?](#)” (14 May 2022)
 - “[Privatized Resilience: Puerto Rican Voices](#)” (dir. Juan C. Dávila, 2022)
 - GRACE-MCCASKEY, et al: “Negotiating Political and Moral Economies in the U.S. Caribbean after Hurricanes Irma and María” (2021)
 - KLEIN, NAOMI: “[The Battle for Paradise](#)” (2018)
 - LLORÉNS, HILDA: *Making Livable Lives* [Chapter 4]
 - MASSOL, ALEXIS: [Casa Pueblo: A Puerto Rican Model of Self-Governance](#) (2022)
 - NAVARRO, AQUINO, XAVIER: *Velorio* (2022)
- **Excursions:** [Casa Pueblo](#), [Bosque Escuela La Olimpia \(Adjuntas\)](#)

WEEK 3: Puerto Rico: Imperial Laboratory and Diasporic Histories

- APPEL, MOLLEY DOOLEY: 'Writing Out of the Obituary'
 - APPEL/NEGRON: "[The Vengeance of Unpayable Debts: Art, Activism, and Agitation in Puerto Rico and the United States](#)" (2022)
 - CINTRÓN, MINET: "[100 Years of Colonialism: How Puerto Rico Became Easy Prey for Profiteers](#)" (2017)
 - DUANY, JORGE: "The Nation in the Diaspora" (2003)
 - KINNEAR, OLIVIA: "[Sterilization: The Untold Story of Puerto Rico](#)"
 - MALDONADO DeOLIVIERA, DÉBORA: 'Problematic Ideas of Puerto Rico'
 - MITCHELL, TAMARA: 'Carving Place out of Non-Place'
 - MOLINA CASANOVA, LUIS: *La guggua aérea* (1993) [Film]
 - PÉREZ, MARVETTE: 'The Political Flying Bus'
 - PIETRI, PEDRO: *Puerto Rican Obituary* (1973)
 - PORTELLI, ALESSANDRO: 'Beware of the Signs'
 - RÚA, MÉRIDA, *A Grounded Identidad* [Chapter 3]
 - QUIROGA, José: "Imperial Laboratories" (1998)
 - RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ, LUIS: 'La guagua aérea' (1983) – Trans. 'The Airbus' [1992]
- **Excursions:** Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico ad [El Yunque National Forest](#)

WEEK 4: Puerto Rican Music and Foodways

- AMADOR DE JESÚS: 'The Plena's Dissonant Melodies'
 - CLAPP, JENNIFER: *Food* (2012). (Chapter 6)
 - FERRÉ, ROSARIO: Excerpt from *Sweet Diamond Dust and Other Stories*
 - FLORES, JUAN: Bumbún and the Beginnings of Plena Music
 - GRAF, C.: "[Meet the Farmers Reclaiming Puerto Rico's Agricultural History](#)" (2019)
 - GURRERO, PAULINA: 'A Story Told Through Plena'
 - RIVERA-RIDEAU, PETRA: 'From Carolina to Loíza: Race, Place and Puerto Rican Racial Democracy'
- **Excursions: 1)** Loíza - Piñones Forest and Centro Cultural Cueva María de la Cruz
2) Puerto Rican Hip Hop and Modern Dance Workshop