Islands and Islander Stories

Fall 2012

Course Description: TAMUCC is the only college campus in the U.S. that is located on its own private island. Islands are not only the world’s number one vacation destination, but they also serve as an apt laboratory for studying oceans, plant life, archeology, and migration patterns—both wildlife and human. In addition to their cultural prominence, islands occupy a large place in the literary imagination, beginning with Homer’s Odyssey, who we might consider our earliest island hopper. In this course we will read novels, poetry, and prose set on islands or written by islanders to study the opportunities and limitations of the island as a geographic space. Uninhabited islands offer a clean slate for restoring an old social order, for creating a new one, and for making discoveries, both scientific and personal. But islands can take a gothic turn when things go awry and there is no boat waiting in the harbor. As we read we will position our stories in their historical contexts to better understand the island as a contact zone between peoples and cultures of difference, and the results of that contact. Who gets to be king of the island and by what criteria? What literary forms are unique to island poetics and why? And how do the forces of race, gender, and class determine who gets to tell the island story?

Required Texts:
Chopin, Kate: *The Awakening* (Avon books)
Defoe, Daniel: *Robinson Crusoe*
Rhys, Jean: *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Shakespeare: *The Tempest*
Wells, H.G.: *The Island of Dr. Moreau*

Assigned readings will be placed on Blackboard
Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

• demonstrate an understanding of the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and political contexts;
• construct critical analyses of required readings;
• recognize the distinctions between literary periods, genres, themes and writers.

Grade Break-Down:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class writing (quizzes)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (midterm, final project)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Requirements:

Class Participation:

• Attendance Policy: Attendance everyday is required. However, because unexpected crises do occasionally occur, I will allow everyone three absences without penalty (other than a tiny dip in your daily work grade—you can not make up missed in-class work). More than three absences, however, will result in a 2-point deduction in your final grade point average for each day missed. Let’s say your final average is 94 and you have six absences; your grade lowers to an 88 and you make a B in the course. My best advice is to save your “free” absences for emergencies and be thankful if none arise! If you have to miss class, make sure you contact a peer to see what you missed (rather than contacting me). On occasion I assign out-of-class writings and sometimes make changes to the syllabus. It is your responsibility to keep up with these changes.

• Class Discussion: Because the class is designed to be interactive, your active participation in group work and class discussion is vital, for your own learning but also for the success of the class.

• Reading: I expect you to complete all of the readings by the date given on the syllabus; I also expect you to have the assigned texts with you in class.

• In-class writing: I will occasionally ask you to respond to a writing prompt in class that has to do with some component of the reading assignment for that day. These are not scheduled. Their purpose is: to introduce ideas and concepts; to provoke debate; to check the quality of your critical reading skills and your preparedness for class.

Group Presentation: Working in pairs or triads, each of you will make a presentation to the class to enrich the readings for that day. Your presentation might provide valuable
background material to help ground the literature in its historical context—for example, information about capitalism and its history to better understand Crusoe’s economic worldview; or the “new woman” debates of the late nineteenth century to understand Edna Pontellier “awakening.” You can use visuals, show film clips, play music or games, and/or for the theatrically minded, dramatize a particularly compelling scene from the reading. Try to think beyond power point presentations, but if you must, please no date dumping and no copy and pasting off of the internet. Your grade will be based on creativity, organization, relevancy, and how well you engage the class. You have a time limit of 15 minutes max--no exceptions. Please feel free to use me as a resource if you need help generating ideas.

Writing Assignments: You will write four formal essays during the semester and produce a creative project in which you imagine a nation into being through symbols (the form you take is optional). The essays are geared to help you strengthen skills in 1) building an argument 2) textual analysis 3) persuasive strategies 4) working with outside sources. While I do not accept late papers, I will make exceptions if you contact me at least two days before the due date with a late “plan.” More than one occurrence, however, will be penalized (one full grade docked each day late).

Exams and Research Project: There will be a midterm in which you demonstrate understanding of the lecture materials, the readings, and the concepts presented and utilized during class. For your final research project you will produce a 6 – 7 page essay that studies some aspect of islands/island life that is relevant to you, either professionally or personally. The Island Studies Journal http://www.islandstudies.ca/journal is a great resource to help you identify a topic. Your essay will have an argument that you support with research findings and ideas/evidence from the literature, which will function as your case studies. More of this to come…

Honors Program Standards: The instructor assumes that students enrolled in this course are good-faith honors students. Bona fide honors-program behavior is distinguished in the following ways:

- Students read assignments on time, completely, to the last page. They know that reading is only the first step; they work toward taking command of the material and come to class with serious responses and a willingness to learn.
- Students do not assume that an assignment is legitimate only if it will be “tested.” The work is done for its own sake. Students also make connections between the material at hand and what has been explored in previous classes.
- Students expect that they will attend 100% of the time and make home arrangements that this will happen. They don’t assume that there are a certain number of allowable “skips.” Barring natural catastrophes, faithful attendance and preparation are expected.
- Students assume that open and equitable discussion and critique is the soul of an honors course. Everybody listens attentively to the instructor and to each other. Everybody participates. Students don’t put the burden on the teacher or on other
students to originate or maintain discussion. They themselves take on the responsibility to keep some class members from dominating others, and they do it by offering their share of talk and thinking of questions that will help the class explore course content more deeply.

- Students “think out the box” and are not afraid to take risks and to try out new things.

Additional Info:

**Prerequisites:** You must have successfully completed English 1301 and 1302 to be eligible for this class.

**Keep copies of your work:** It is your responsibility to keep backup copies of all of your work in the case of an error or misplacement on my part.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Grade Appeal Process.** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism, “the presentation of work of another as one’s own work,” is only one form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism also includes falsification
(the intentional alteration of information), fabrication (the intentional invention of information), multiple submission (using the same material for two separate assignments or courses without permission from the instructors), and abuse of academic materials (the intentional destruction of resource materials.) Sometimes students commit unintentional plagiarism (by not citing sources properly, for example) because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Because plagiarism is such a dirty word on college campuses, please see me if you have a question about violations, however minor.

**Cell Phones, Laptops:** You must turn off your cell phones before class begins. Failing to abide by this classroom protocol can affect your grade. Laptops should only be used for taking notes—enough said. If you choose to leave class to answer a phone call, do not return—coming and going is very distracting.

**The Writing Center:** The writing center is a free service for students at TAMUCC to improve their writing skills. Writing consultants work one-on-one with writers at all stages of the writing process to help them find ideas, organize their thoughts, and formulate a thesis. You can get help with grammar and general mechanical problems too. The Writing Center is located in the Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA) in the Glasscock Building. Both drop ins and scheduled appointments are welcome. [http://critical.tamucc.edu/wiki/WC/Home/](http://critical.tamucc.edu/wiki/WC/Home/)

**Reading Schedule:** (Always subject to change. Works with asterisks (*) can be accessed from my blackboard page. Please print out, read, and bring to class).

**Thurs. Aug 23:** Introductions

**Tues. Aug. 28:** * Islands and Utopia (More, Horace, Ovid, Telecleides)

**Order in the Court**

**Thurs. Aug. 30:** *The Tempest* (intro, Acts I, II)

**Tues. Sept 4:** *The Tempest* (Acts III, IV)
From *Of the Cannibals* (de Montaigne)

**Thurs. Sept 6:** Shakespeare Debate
* Will and Greenblatt arguments

**Tues. Sept. 11:** Viewing of *Tempest, Gilligan’s Island*
Essay #1 due

**Building an Empire**

**Thurs. Sept 13:** *Robinson Crusoe* (3 – 64)

**Tues. Sept 18:** *Rob Crusoe* ((65 – 140)
Thurs. Sept 20:  *Rob Crusoe* (140 – 210)

Tues. Sept 25:  In-Class viewing of *Castaway*

Thurs. Sept 27:  *Robinson Crusoe* (to end)

**Island Dangers**

Tues. Oct 2:  *Galapagos Archipelago* from *Voyage of the Beagle* (Darwin)*

*Island of Dr. Moreau* (1 – 27)  
**Essay #2 due**

Thurs. Oct 4:  *Island of Dr. Moreau* (29 – 100)

Tues. Oct 9:  *Island of Dr. Moreau* (to finish)  
* Vivisection debates (Dickens, Hodgson, Huxley)*


Tues. Oct 16:  *The Awakening* (103 – end)

Thurs. Oct 18:  Midterm

**Islands and Empire**

Tues. Oct 23:  Clifford, “Travelling Cultures”  
Imagining a Nation (class activity)  
**Essay #3 due**


Tues. Nov 1:  *Wide Sargasso Sea* (87 – 148)


Tues. Nov 8:  *W. B. Yates, “The Isle of Innisfree,” Louise Bennett,  
“Colonization in Reverse,” “Dry Foot Bwoy”  
**Essay #4 due**

Thurs. Nov 10:  *Foe* (5 – 87)

Tues. Nov 15:  *Foe* (88 to end)

Thurs. Nov 18:  Creative Projects due  
Class presentations
Colonization in Reverse

Tues. Nov. 20:  *Lonely Londoners* (23 – 83)

Thurs. Nov. 22: Thanksgiving

Tues. Nov. 27:  *Lonely Londoners* (84 – end)
                “Blacks and Crime in Postwar Britain” (Gilroy)

Thurs. Nov. 19: * Derek Walcott: “Crusoe’s Island,” “A Far Cry from Africa”;
                  Linton Kwesi Johnson, “If I Woz a Tap natch Poet,” “It Noh
                  Funny,” “Reggae Fi Dada.”

Tues. Dec. 4:   Presentations of research findings

Thurs. Dec. 6:  Presentation of research findings
                Research project due