

Spanish 482
The Inhospitable Caribbean City
Spring 2021 ONLINE
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 am – 12:20 pm
Professor Natalie L. Belisle

Course Overview

In *La ciudad letrada*, a foundational text for Latin America literary studies, Ángel Rama provides the coordinates for reading and studying the Latin American city: the planning, ordering, and administration of the city in colonial Latin America was a task originally appointed to a corps of cultured and elite men (*letrados*), such that the development of the written word was linked to the formation of the region's local, national, and state power. The architecture of the lettered city, however, excluded the illegitimate, unlettered mass—namely, racialized, gendered, and classed minorities. Parting from this colonial legacy, we will turn our attention to present-day geographies—the so-called urban underbelly of postcolonial



Bundlehouses, Nguyen

Latin America—whose inhabitants are inhospitable to the lettered city. Specifically, this course will map an *Other* way of imagining the contemporary city and its inhabitants by way of the Caribbean archipelago. Through close readings of contemporary Spanish Caribbean literary, visual, and digital texts, we will explore how the Caribbean archipelago discloses a pattern of aesthetic practices that displace the orderly, exclusionary aesthetics of the lettered city. These texts will be placed in conversation with broader theories about geography, space, and place.

Among the topics we will explore, include:

- ◆ the formation of the Latin American literary canon in relation to the Law
- ◆ the city as an imagined and imaginary space
- ◆ literature as an alternate map
- ◆ peripheral geographies
- ◆ fugitive planning
- ◆ reading race and gender in the city

Required Texts

Texts to be acquired by student

Cualquier miércoles soy tuya, Mayra Santos Febres, ISBN-10: 6070736905

La catedral de los negros, Marcial Gala, ISBN-10: 9500530889

El Rey de La Habana, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, ISBN-10: 8433967673

La estrategia de Chochueca, Rita Indiana Hernandez, ISBN-10: 8492865407

El entierro de Cortijo, Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá ISBN-10: 0940238217

All the texts for the course can be purchased on Amazon.

Texts on Blackboard

“Emoticons” and “Bachata”, Aurora Airas

“Introduction: the Repeating Island”, Antonio Benítez Rojo

“Visualizing Sovereignty: Cartographic Queries for the Digital Age”, Yarimar Bonilla and Max Hantel

Poetics of Relation (selections) Édouard Glissant

“El país de cuatro pisos”, Jose Luis González

“Xroads Praxis: Black Diasporic Technologies for Remaking the New World”, Jessica Marie Johnson

La ciudad letrada (selections), Ángel Rama

Learning Goals

Work completed in this course will provide a solid foundation for more advanced study in Latin American and Caribbean literature, culture, and history. Although no prior knowledge of the Caribbean is necessary to participate in and enjoy this class, previous work in introductory literature courses and/or 300-level Spanish literature is highly recommended. All coursework will be conducted entirely in Spanish.

At the end of this course students will have:

- become familiarized with key texts, terms, and theories in Caribbean Studies, as they intersect with theories of space and place

- developed a conscientious, situated reading practice whereby they read texts with an understanding of *the original contexts* in which they were written in distinction *from our present context* as readers living and studying at a U.S. university (from our respective online locations)
- gained experience writing in different rhetorical registers, ranging from informal, short reader responses to longer analytical essays
- acquired the skills and confidence to make meaningful and compelling claims about a text through the practice of close reading
- learned to formulate and develop critical questions that form the basis of more advanced and original research projects in literary analysis
- studied and applied the conventions that inform the dissemination of research in the contemporary humanities
- composed polished prose pieces that use close reading as a tool in different cognitive contexts, ranging from synthesizing and summarizing information, to articulating critical questions, to communicating their views or findings;
- develop their capacity to listen to, respond, and dialogue mindfully with their peers about critical issues

Grading and Assignments

Your performance in this course will be graded on the following components:

1. Online Attendance and Participation (10%)

Although this course is formatted as an online lecture in order to share contextual information, there will also be a discussion component.

Protocols for Zoom classes

It is my goal to make our Zoom course a productive, seamless, stimulating, fun, and safe experience for ***everyone***. To ensure that we achieve this goal, the following protocols are in place for our class this semester:

- ◆ During the scheduled class meetings, you must be virtually present in the Zoom course at a given location that does not interrupt your ability to be mindfully present and participate in the class. Attendance will be taken at the start of every class—although, you are free to turn off your video after attendance is taken.
 - ▶ If on a given day you are at an event or location that is disruptive to the class, you will be promptly removed. **NO EXCEPTIONS** will be made.
- ◆ Please be respectful and mindful of your classmates. Make sure that your background, surroundings, and what you project on your video do not distract from your classmates' ability to focus and participate in the class.
- ◆ Please make sure that your audio remains muted in the class unless you would like to say something relevant to the class discussion or you are called on to participate.

Participation breakdown

Coming to class prepared with the texts and to contribute to class discussion is a key component of your attendance and participation grade. Your experience in this class will be a communal one; you will get out of it what you put into it. Participation grades are broken down accordingly:

◆ **Students who receive an "A"** in their participation grade (a maximum 10 points per week) have near perfect attendance, come prepared to work, actively participate in every class session, and bring their best effort and positive energy to small group breakout sessions in Zoom. They offer interesting contributions to the classroom discussion every session, and they prove themselves to be active listeners by the way they follow the discussion and build on the ideas and comments of other students. "A" students observe all of the course policies, at all times.

◆ **"B" level participation** (a maximum of 8.9 points per week) is characterized by solid attendance (less than three absences during the semester) and regular participation in Zoom classroom discussions. These students frequently volunteer ideas and comments and always show that they are actively listening and taking notes. They may not always have answers, but they do ask questions when they don't understand. They also actively participate in small group breakout sessions in Zoom and always observe the course policies given in the syllabus.

◆ **Students who receive a "C"** (a maximum of 7.9) in their participation grade only speak in the class if directly asked a question ". They are not disruptive, but they may miss several sessions or seem half absent when they do come to class (falling asleep, checked out, trying to do other work in class, is disruptive in Zoom, is logged in but clearly not present). These students may fail to observe course policies at times. Sometimes these students will come to class without their book or note taking materials.

◆ **"D" and "F" grades** in participation are for those students who regularly fail to show up for class physically or mentally. Their poor attitude about the course, class discussions, or group work brings negative energy to the classroom. When called upon these students decline sharing their ideas or thinking on their feet. They never ask questions. These students thus essentially refuse to contribute anything in the course.

Absences

◆ Participation points can only be obtained on the days a student is in class. This is only fair.

◆ You will be granted a total of two (2), no penalty absences that you can take for any reason such as sick days, personal matters, etc.

- ▶ In addition to the two no-penalty absences, religious observances will also be honored with no penalty, but you must let me know in writing a week in advance.

2. Weekly Critical Essay Questions (15 %)

Format

Beginning the second week of class, you will submit weekly, required short essay questions spanning 200-300 words to the course blog. **The essay questions must respond to the day's assigned reading for each week.**

Learning to ask meaningful, critical questions about a text will aid you in developing arguments and claims for the purpose of longer prose writing in the course. Your weekly essay questions should consist of three parts:

- ◆ identify a passage, theme, or character that catches your attention
- ◆ critically analyze and interpret the passage, theme, character : explain why it interests you, what it says and what it shows
- ◆ formulate a thoughtful question—that is not immediately obvious to the reader—regarding the passage, theme, or character.

What should you be asking?

Please read Kyla Wazana Tompkins “Some Notes on How to Ask a Good Question...” (posted on Blackboard).

Questions posed should be substantive enough to stimulate class discussion and invite deeper, more thoughtful reflection and analysis of the text beyond a surface level reading. Examples of questions include (but are not limited to):

- ◆ asking why the author has chosen to present an idea or theme in a particular format, through a particular character or viewpoint, or at a particular point in the text
- ◆ interrogating the ethical/moral/social/political consequences of a character's actions or the author's decision to present a topic in a certain way
- ◆ querying how the presentation of a theme, idea, or character impacts our interpretation of the text expanding on a classmate's question with another question

Weekly submission schedule

To ensure that an equal amount of questions are submitted for the Tuesday and Thursday classes of each week, the class has been divided into two groups that pertain to each day. (Note: this is not a group project.)

- ◆ **Group A (for Tuesday's discussion):** individuals assigned to this group must submit their questions by 7 pm on Monday.
- ◆ **Group B (for Thursday's discussion):** individuals assigned to this group must submit their questions by 7 pm on Wednesday.

You are required to carefully read each of your classmates' submissions for the purpose of class discussion.

Professor Belisle will select questions from each group to be discussed in the Tuesday and Thursday classes each week.

You will not receive any credit for late posts or posts about readings done in prior weeks of class.

3. In-class presentation (15%)

Public speaking is a vital component of many professions and academic disciplines, including advanced humanistic and literary studies. This course will help you develop your ability to discuss and present a theme and argument about a text through in-class presentations. In week 2 of the semester, you will sign up to present one of the assigned texts in class. You focus on one or a combination of any of the following topics:

- ◆ a deeper exploration of theme related to the day's reading
- ◆ an analysis of the development of a character
- ◆ a dissection of a space
- ◆ the use of language and/or discourse in the text

These are a few mere suggestions. You are free, of course, to explore other topics not listed here.

Format

Your presentation should span 10-15 minutes and incorporate a visual format or platform, including but not limited to:

- ◆ PowerPoint
- ◆ video
- ◆ Mapping software

4. Essays (40%)

You will write **two**, 5-page essays that respond to a topic and question related to the course topic. Detailed instructions, including the topics for each essay, will be provided by Professor Belisle two weeks before the due date.

- ◆ Essay 1: Annotated Bibliography (February 18)
- ◆ Essay 2: Literary Analysis (March 25)

5. Final Project (20%)

The final assignment for the course will consist of a hybrid research project that combines literary analysis and visual/digital cartography. Using ArcGis Story Maps, students will create a “literary map” based on one or two texts studied in class. The literary map should center on and elaborate a particular theme and argument identified by the student. Each student will present their literary maps on the last two days of class. More instructions will be provided during Weeks 4 and 12 of the semester. Students are required to schedule office hours with Professor Belisle during Week 12 to go over their project before the final presentation.

Grading Scale

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	less 60

General Policies

Online Office hours

All office hours for the course will be held online, via Zoom. Office hours must be scheduled 24-hours in advance. A link is available on Blackboard under the “Office Hours” section for you to schedule office hours.

If you have detailed questions about the material covered in class, the coursework, or your writing, please meet with me in during my office hours. So that you can get the most out of our meeting, please come prepared with specific questions. Office hours should not be used to make-up material that you did not study due to class absences. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to meet with me about your concerns. If you cannot attend my office hours due to a scheduling conflict with another course, please email me so that we may determine an alternative time to meet.

Communication

Please allow me 24 hours to respond to your emails during the week (from Monday through Friday). During the weekends, I will respond to emails within 48 hours. In order to protect your privacy, I only respond to messages sent from your official USC account (*YourNetID@usc.edu*), as I cannot verify your identity with other email providers. Please use professional language and forms of address in your communications to me.

Students with Disabilities and Special Needs

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. As stated on the DSP web site, “according to the **Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADAAA 2008)**, an individual with a disability is someone who experiences or lives with an impairment that **substantially limits** one or more major life activities, or who is regarded as, or has a history of being regarded as, an individual with a disability.” If you believe that you have a need or diagnosis that falls under this definition, please visit the DSP office sooner rather than later to receive accommodations. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. All accommodations will be kept confidential. DSP is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. For more information, please visit the DSP web site at <https://dsp.usc.edu/about-dsp/our-purpose-and-practice/>

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Course calendar

PLEASE NOTE: the schedule is subject to minor changes and adjustments, depending on the pace of readings and discussion for the week.

BB: Available on Blackboard

dates		themes, readings, assignments
Week 1	1/19	Introductions: The inhospitable city Tompkins, “Some Notes on How to Ask a Good Question...” (BB)
	1/21	The city imagined/the imagined city García Canclini, “What Is a City?” (BB) de Certeau, “Walking in the City” (BB)
Week 2	1/26	Colonial foundations Rama, “La ciudad ordenada” and “La ciudad letrada” (BB)
	1/28	Rama, “La ciudad escrituraria” and “La ciudad moderna” (BB)
Week 3	2/2	Archipelagic blueprints Benítez Rojo, “Introduction: The Repeating Island” (BB)
	2/4	Glissant, “Errantry, Exile” and “Expanse and Filiation” (BB)
Week 4	2/9	Rethinking the map Bonilla and Hantel, “Visualizing Sovereignty: Cartographic Queries for the Digital Age” (BB) Overview final project
	2/11	Literary geographies (I): Puerto Rico <i>Reading from the ground level</i> González, “El país de cuatro pisos” (BB) Johnson, “Xroads Praxis: Black Diasporic Technologies for Remaking the New World” (BB)
Week 5	2/16	Rodríguez Juliá, <i>El entierro de Cortijo</i>
	2/18	Rodríguez Juliá, <i>El entierro de Cortijo</i> Essay 1 due at 5 pm in Turnitin (Blackboard)
Week 6	2/23	The nocturnal city Santos-Febres, <i>Cualquier miércoles soy tuya</i> , “Miércoles a.m.” a “Factor Sambuca”
	2/25	<i>Cualquier miércoles soy tuya</i> , “A quemarropa” a “Charco”
Week 7	3/2	<i>Cualquier miércoles soy tuya</i> , “Mulato de abuela Maru” a “Una noche con Bimbi”
	3/4	<i>Cualquier miércoles soy tuya</i> , “Oró Mayuga” a “La promesa”

dates		themes, readings, assignments
Week 8	3/9	Literary geographies (II): Cuba Franco, “Liberated Territories” (BB) Bobes, “Visits to a Non-Place: Havana and Its Representations” (BB)
	3/11	<i>The fugitive city</i> Gutiérrez, <i>El Rey de la Habana</i> , pp. 9-61
Week 9	3/16	<i>El Rey de la Habana</i> , pp. 61- 126
	3/18	<i>El Rey de la Habana</i> , pp.126 - end
Week 10	3/23	WELLNESS DAY: NO CLASSES
	3/25	<i>Barrio Cuba</i> Essay 2 Due due at 5 pm in Turnitin (Blackboard
Week 11	3/30	<i>The Black city</i> <i>La catedral de los negros</i> , primera parte
	4/1	<i>La catedral de los negros</i> , segunda parte pp. 101 - 163
Week 12	4/6	<i>La catedral de los negros</i> , 163 - end
	4/8	Literary geographies (III): The Dominican Republic Martínez Lemoine, “The Classical Model of the Spanish-American Colonial City” (BB)
Week 13	4/13	<i>The delinquent city</i> Hernández, <i>La estrategia de Chochueca</i>
	4/15	<i>La estrategia de Chochueca</i>
Week 14	4/20	Arias, “Emoticons” and “Bachata” (BB)
	4/22	WELLNESS DAY: NO CLASSES
Week 15	4/27	FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION
	4/29	FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION/Wrap-up