

INTERSESSION IN THE WEST INDIES

BARBADOS JOURNAL

- Before coming to the West Indies, I had no concrete ideas of what it would be like. I am ignorant of the culture, language, and history.

- The oppressive humid heat, the vibrant colors of the flowers, and the redolent smell of decay announces your arrival in the tropics.

- Taxi drivers are on every street corner looking for prospective clientele. Pedlars looking for clientele to sell their commodities to are very insistent in their approaches, making it known that "times dey bad."

- On this second day, we take our first trip into Bridgetown and onto the University of the West Indies campus: I can't help but notice the attention such a large group of white people is attracting. I wonder if the African/Caribbean students in Fredericton ever feel this "attention," or if I'm just being self-conscious and over-sensitive to my own color.

- Takes a while to get used to the climate, but I am adapting. Food is great down here.

- Walking is a suicidal experience!

- First concern is for my personal safety. The main door of the hotel room, as well as the two leading onto the sundeck, are like a louvered closet door, with small sliding locks. Printed material in the room instructs patrons to ensure that doors are locked, adding in bold face print: "YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED". It seems ironic to me, considering their construction.

- While shopping one day, I notice an elderly lady buying her groceries. She kept her money in a handkerchief. When told the total, she gave all her money to the check-out girl to count. It took everything she had to pay. It made me feel very sad. This woman just gets by with the bananas or whatever she sells every day. It must be a very difficult life; it helps me to understand how they can look at the tourists the way that they do.

- I feel uneasy being in a foreign country, using foreign money, eating foreign food, listening to a foreign language (or so it seems). Suddenly, I realize that I am the foreigner!

- Frogs are calling as I sit on my patio. The waves are crashing below me and I watch them come rolling in with a power I have never seen before. It is through the personal observation of nightfall, rain showers, birds, and trees that descriptive passages in the novels I am reading become more memorable and meaningful to me.

- I am missing my family very much today. I can very much relate to the characters in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Both Antoinette and Rochester feel alienated when in a strange land.

- We are learning lots about the slave trade. The stories really wrench...

- It really gets irritating to have to continuously be dipping into our pockets for money for this and that, but this is usually the way, once one leaves Canada and the U.S. As Prof. Pool explains, we are all perceived as "rich."

ANTHROPOLOGY 3614 Interession, 1992: The Caribbean

Content

In this course we will examine the cultural and social roots of Caribbean islands and selected adjacent mainland areas. The current political and economic malaise of the islands is hidden by the common picture of them as a tourist destination which thousands of Canadians flock to each year. Crises from time to time affect the people profoundly and have many of their roots in colonialism which will be explored in detail.

Lectures provide a general background to the history of the colonial period focusing on a number of special topics (slavery, indentured movements, peasant development, migration). Emphasis is given to the Anglophone Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad and Grenada in particular) but the Francophone islands (Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe) and the vast changes brought about by the Cuban revolution are also considered.

We will examine how anthropologists and other social scientists have examined the regions societies and cultures. Emphasis is on the reactions of Caribbean peoples to colonialism, the meaning of oppression, and ways of coping with poverty and dependence.

Interession in the West Indies

Evaluations

The faculty members developed an evaluation questionnaire which was mailed to all participants the month following our return from the West Indies. Ten completed questionnaires were analyzed, and the results are summarized below.

A. Academic Program

All three courses were given first-class marks for good organization, interesting and appropriate reading materials, and competent instructors.

B. Accommodation

Hotel facilities at Rostrevor Apartment Hotel in Barbados were rated good, and at Halcyon Beach Hotel in St. Lucia very good, with the exception of classroom space. This was rated only fair-to-good in both locations. Noise and heat were the main complaints.

C. Administration

Three key components of the administration of the program are the Coordinator, the Department of Extension, and a travel agency, in this case Goliger's Travel.

English 3963

Studies in West Indian Literature

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Interession 1992
Barbados & St. Lucia

1. Objectives

This course will explore the work of selected Anglophone writers from the West Indies. It is expected that students will have had some prior experience with university-level literature (for example, English 1000).

2. Methods

A selection of poems, one play, and four novels will be studied in both their socio-historical and literary contexts. There will be special emphasis placed on recurrent post-colonial themes such as home and homelessness, exile, identity, and race relations.

A number of critical methods will be employed: biographical, comparative, feminist, historical, textual, and so on. Class meetings will incorporate lectures, discussions, and seminar presentations. Student participation in all class meetings will be encouraged and expected. It is desirable to have the primary works read before our May departure. For the specific poetry selections, please see the attached syllabus for week three.



E. Suggestions and Comments

A number of students stressed the need for more free time; others proposed a quiet room for study; a break between arrival in the tropics and the start of the study program to adjust to the climate; several referred to the desirability of a "buddy system" as outlined above.

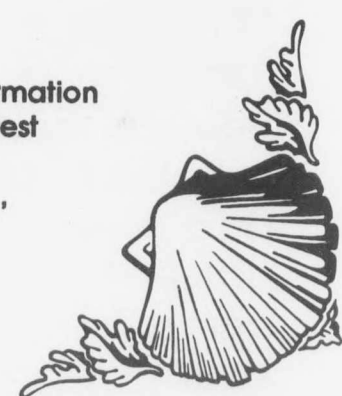
F. Conclusions

Most students were extremely pleased with Interession in the West Indies, calling it a wonderful opportunity and experience, and noting that it had changed them personally in some significant way. The journal assignments captured the flow of their changing perceptions and sometimes conflicting impressions. These have been edited into a collage or composite journal and are attached. The concluding page is particularly revealing of the depth of their appreciation.

It should be noted that faculty members found this experience to be one of the high points of their teaching careers; as well, numerous West Indians involved in the program at the University of the West Indies, the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, the National Research and Development Foundation of St. Lucia, the Canadian High Commission, and elsewhere praised the initiative. Ken Corsbie, the director/narrator of the acclaimed "Caribbean Eye" series, has written: "You deserve the highest praises for quite an incredible job of visualization, planning & execution. I hope everybody else and the University appreciate your work and they feel it was worth it. I know you do, & I too." So favorably impressed was Simon Wade, Acting High Commissioner of the Canadian High Commission, that he requests that a number of his staff be permitted to register as students when next the Interession in the West Indies occurs.



For more information
about the next West
Indies Interession,
contact Professor Noel,
Department of
Spanish



D. Activities

The various tours, videos, and meetings with other students received special commendation. Students expressed the desire to have a "buddy system" set up so that they could spend much more informal time with their West Indian counterparts. The choice of May, exam period, posed time problems.

Saint Lucia Journal

- "I wonder if they feel that the hotel represents a plantation and that they are still enslaved."

- As the plane arrives in St. Lucia, the difference in landscape from Barbados is startling. The mountains, the lushness, the many shades of green - this is what I call a tropical paradise!

- I've noticed that the hotel personnel look so depressed - there are no smiles or bubbly personalities.

- I have just learned that a waiter/waitress receives less pay in one week than the cost of one evening meal. No wonder everyone looks depressed.

- Religion is very important to the citizens. Maybe not so much a concrete religion, but the fact that there is a God and heaven. Something better!

- Today, 14 of us went on a trip to the tropical rain forest. In the forest I felt miniature - everything is huge - the trees, mushrooms, even the ants. Nature certainly is in control.

- We poked around the market and various stalls. I purchased cocoa sticks and the saleslady suggested various ways that I could prepare it. The women are the backbone of society, as we've discussed in our literature.

- We went to the laundromat in town today. The receptionist here at Halcyon Beach Club describes the part of town it is situated in as "the slums."... I see poverty blatantly exposed in the "slum" part of town. The people here seemed friendly and sincere as they greeted us with smiles and hellos. Music was playing everywhere and children in their dirty, torn clothes were dancing on the sidewalk beside tiny dilapidated houses.

- We plan to go to a street dance at Gros Islet but it pours rain and I almost cancelled. However, I went along and found it a well worthwhile experience. Many people, mostly male, very loud music, very crowded - hot and steamy bodies. We all dance but take Wendy's advice and stay together. I believe this is a sample of what Carnival is like. Our bus waits and we're home before 2 a.m. a Bachanal!

- I enjoyed the entire trip, but on the group excursions I found we saw only "touristy" things; the things that I will remember in years from now are the experiences I sought out for myself.

- I've learned plenty of things and have a store of information to think about and share. I think I've grown a little and changed some. I hope this trip has been as eye opening for others as it has been for me.

- I really feel lucky to be a Canadian.

- I think the best part of any experience is the memories that are left to reflect on for years to come. Thank you Wendy, Tony, Gail, and Dexter for three very memorable, educational weeks!

University of New Brunswick Third World Studies TWS 3901

Music of the West Indies

1. Objectives (Interession 1992)

This course, designed to examine the ethno-cultural roots, emergence, development and scope of the music of the West Indies will focus on the Calypso, one of its oldest and most popular musical forms. The musical form will be treated as a psycho-sociological document which will enable students to better understand the people of the region. In addition, the other musical forms like Reggae, Cadence etc., will be touched upon but not at any great length.

2. Methods

The key here is active learning. During each session recorded material will be listened to, analyzed, and discussed. Formal lecturing will be kept to a minimum and only to supplement and elucidate reading material.