



## **LCUL 0220 – Envisioning the Americas (CORE: Social Understanding/Global Diversity)**

Puerto Rico is the smallest of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean islands. In the centuries since the “Encounter” that remade three different and opposing worlds – the indigenous Americas, Spain and Africa – beginning with Christopher Columbus’ first voyage in 1492 and later, his heralded return in 1493, Puerto Rico can be characterized by an era of intense imperial rivalry. The island is not ethnically or culturally homogenous. In fact, its major cultural characteristic is diversity itself. In race, gender, sexuality, culture and politics, the element of diversity makes Puerto Rico an extremely heterogeneous region and its diversity is best reflected in its literature – innovative and revolutionary – exposing the dilemmas faced not only by individuals but also by the island itself. The political, cultural and social conditions facing Puerto Rican society concerning specific attitudes toward non-conformity and traditional patriarchal/heteropatriarchal/hetero-normative values with regards to the role men and women play in Puerto Rican society will be of particular interest for this course. What does it mean to be a man or a woman? What is acceptable/non-acceptable behavior? Can someone who deviates from the established norms of gender and sexual behavior be considered a Puerto Rican? This course will focus on the intersections of race, class, gender and sexual beliefs and practices in the processes of colonialism in Puerto Rico. We will examine how colonialism used constructions of sexuality to create political, cultural and social dynamics that have pervaded the lives of the colonized, and influenced the sensitivities, beliefs and perspectives of Western cultures and practices in general. These goals will be accomplished through a close reading of three of Puerto Rico’s best known literary works that reflect those political, cultural and social changes that the island has undergone since it was ceded to the United States as a direct result of the Spanish-American War (1898). In this course special emphasis will be placed on the change of national sovereignty at the end of the Spanish-American War of 1898, its current political status and the military conflict over the island of Vieques (which the United States abandoned on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2003).

By the end of the semester, the student should be able to identify and recognize the historical processes that have contributed to defining the cultural and national make-up of Puerto Rico in more than 500 years of history as portrayed by some of Puerto Rico’s leading literary figures.

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Enrique Morales-Díaz

Department of World Languages, Multicultural and Gender Studies

[emoralesdiaz@wsc.ma.edu](mailto:emoralesdiaz@wsc.ma.edu)

413-572-8193

