

Department of World Language Studies
LLIT 310: Politics through Literature (ONLINE)
(CORE: Literary and Philosophical Analysis / Global Diversity)



COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Three islands constitute the Spanish-speaking Caribbean: Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. One of the historical aspects that these islands share is 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. In the centuries that followed an era of intense imperial rivalry characterized these nations.

Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico are not ethnically or culturally homogenous. Their major cultural characteristic is diversity itself. In race, gender, sexuality, culture and politics, the element of diversity makes the Spanish-speaking Caribbean one of the most heterogeneous regions in the world. Literature reflects this diversity – innovative and revolutionary – exposing the dilemmas faced not only by individuals but also by the nations themselves. The political, cultural and social conditions facing these societies concerning specific attitudes toward non-conformity and traditional patriarchal/heteropatriarchal/heteronormative values toward the role men and women play 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 a Puerto Rican, a Dominican or a Cuban?

This course will focus on the intersection of race, class, gender and sexual beliefs and practices in the processes of colonialism and postcolonialism in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. We will examine how colonialism used constructions of sexuality to create political, cultural and social dynamics that pervade the lives of the colonized, and influenced the sensitivities, beliefs and perspectives of Western cultures and practices in general.