

Lost but Found: Shipwrecks, Plane Crashes, and "Deserted" Islands
Arts & Sciences 138.03, Freshman Seminar
Autumn Quarter, 2 Credits
M: 3:30-5:18 PM

Instructor
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Office Hours
MW 1:00-3:00 PM

Course Description

Where would human civilization be without tropical islands? They inspire dreams of possession, particularly when imagined by outsiders as deserted. In such narratives, verbal and imagistic, islands are objects of fancy and of imagined limitless reward for paltry efforts. When adventurers are stranded on them, islands abbreviate the most carefully planned ambitions and provoke the goriest imagination of terrible tendencies, cannibalism being the worst. The representations reach a full circle in the way Caribbean countries lure their North American neighbors with images of splendid beaches, gently swaying palms, completely restful vacationers, and happy-go-lucky natives. The images seem to say "the island is yours, come possess it." In all, islands mediate imaginations of unconstestable sweet beginnings, endless middles, or nightmarish endings. Islands serve as screens on which all sorts of desires are projected. But if the projections are mere images, there would be no problem at all; all we need to do is go around them to touch the reality behind the image. Unfortunately, projected images nurture realities in crazy ways such that we cannot simply cast one as real and the other ephemeral.

In this course, we will analyze the real world functions of island located beginnings, middles, and endings. Our primary texts will be films, travelogues, scriptures, and episodes from a television series.

Text

Course Packet

Course Policies

Our readings cover centuries. We are going to sort out the cultural and socio-historical importance of the difficulties addressed by each text. The only way we can all benefit would be for each person to complete the reading assignment before class and also to reflect on how the text succeeds or fails to condense existence into an island: e.g., who is stranded, why is he or she stranded, what is the fate of the "natives," what features of the island are emphasized and why? If we all think about the reading and viewing, we should have vigorous discussions about how stories write the world.

Grading

Class participation: 33%
Five 2-page reports: 67%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT)

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion

(unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. (URL: <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>)

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Intro: Islands and Islanders

Week 2: Enchanting Beginnings
From Christopher Columbus, The Four Voyages

Week 3: Enchanting Beginnings
From Christopher Columbus, The Four Voyages

Week 4: Wrecked Dreams
From Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe

Week 5: Meeting the Native
From Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe

Week 6: Plane Crash, Loss and Recovery
"Castaway"

Week 7: Plane Crash, Nightmares
"Lost"

Week 8: Plane Crash, Mortality
"Lost"

Week 9: Middle Age and Endless Bliss
Television Commercials: Hawaii, Jamaica, and The Bahamas

Week 10: Review and Adieu

Biographical Sketch

My undergraduate and graduate teaching and research interests are, in no particular order of importance, Yoruba Literature, literary theory, African American Literature, and Anglophone literatures of Africa, south Asia, and the Caribbean. At OSU, I have taught English 281 (African American Literature), AAAS 251 (African Literature), and English 296H (Postcolonial Literatures). I am the author of Proverbs, Textuality, and Nativism in African Literature (1998) and The Slave's Rebellion: Literature, History, Orature (2005). My ongoing research projects are "Animist" Poetics in African American Poetry" and "Praise Culture in Lagos, Nigeria."