

## **Discovering Caribbean Diversity Teacher Institute**

*January 23 and February 6, 2010*

*Orange Park, FL*

### **The Caribbean: A Region in Motion**

Presented by Andrea Jean Queeley, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Anthropology and African and African Diaspora Studies, Florida International University

What is the Caribbean? What is *a* Caribbean? Though there are certainly vestiges of the indigenous presence in the region, the pre-Columbian population was decimated within a few decades of the “discovery”. Thus, the region has been created through movement and the coming together of peoples from all over the globe. Colonized primarily by the English, French, Dutch and Spanish, it was a theatre for European contests over power, wealth, and dominance. Peopled by the enslaved Africans who represented a plethora of language groups, religions, nations, and empires, the region and its inhabitants were key to the conceptualization and realization of freedom and the Rights of Man. A magnet for Chinese, Indians, Jews, Syrians, and Lebanese who arrived as indentured laborers and merchants, the region has unrivaled cultural complexity. Thus, as Haitian anthropologist Michel Rolf-Trouillot states, “Caribbean societies are inescapably heterogenous”, which begs the question: what are the ties that bind its people and cultures? How does the Caribbean inform our understanding of human cultural diversity? How does it help us to understand the continuities and ruptures that evolve through constant movement and migration? Arguing that hybridity is a key characteristic that binds Caribbean societies and in fact constitutes Caribbean culture(s), this presentation will provide an overview of the peoples, languages, religions, music, ideas, and movements that have occupied, developed in, and emerged from the Caribbean. It will begin with a brief orientation to Caribbean geography and move on to highlight the ways in which particular cultural phenomena across the region are the product of movement and the dynamic interaction of diverse peoples.

### **Limbo, Literature, and all that Jazz: an Introduction to Caribbean Literature**

Presented by Heather Russell, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Literature, Florida International University

This presentation will examine certain thematic threads that shape contemporary Caribbean literature and its foundations. Such themes include: migration, identity, language, ethnicity, color, class, history and economics. Of course, the aforementioned themes cannot be fully grappled with outside of an understanding of the colonial legacies and the postcolonial realities that shape the region and its literary production. I will introduce the teachers to a few key theoretical elements that help to frame our understanding of Caribbean literature: Derek Walcott’s “Archipelago;” Wilson Harris’s “Limbo Imagination;” Kamau Brathwaite’s “Nation Language” and use of “Jazz” as a theoretical model; Carole Boyce-Davies’ and Elaine Savory-

Fido's concept of "quilted discourse;" and I will conclude with a discussion of theories around migration. By introducing teachers to these models, they will be able to apply them to their primary source readings and translate them to, and for the appropriate grade level. Using select excerpts from prose and poetry I hope to demonstrate the applicability of these constructs to the reading of Caribbean literatures, be they Anglophone, Francophone, or Hispanophone in origin.

### **The Caribbean and the United States: Historical Perspectives**

Presented by Chantalle F. Verna, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of History and International Relations, Florida International University

In what ways has United States history shaped and been shaped by world history? And, what significance, if any, has the Caribbean played in that process? This presentation begins with the premise that the best and most appropriate way to teach U.S. history is to incorporate that history's international dimensions. Instructors of U.S. history serve their students best by emphasizing the ever-present and significant links between domestic and foreign developments. Exploring the historical connections between the Caribbean and the United States is essential to any effort to internationalize the study of U.S. history. Three historical themes effectively illustrate this point across several time periods and across the region: 1) anti-colonial and anti-slavery revolutions in the Caribbean during the late 18th thru 19th centuries; 2) interest in U.S. domestic and foreign expansion during the 19th century; and, 3) geopolitics during the post-WWII/Cold War era. With an emphasis on these themes and eras, this presentation offers instructors of U.S. history an opportunity to develop their capacity to teach about the Caribbean and its centrality to the historical evolution of the U.S. state and society.

### **Folk religions of the Caribbean: Media stereotypes vs. Anthropological Realities**

Presented by Gerald Murray, Ph.D.

Professor of Anthropology, University of Florida

Though most Caribbean migrants to Florida practice either Catholicism or one of the denominations of Protestantism, some continue to practice as well Afro-Caribbean religious traditions. These include rituals that are treated either negatively or inaccurately in the media. The workshop will first propose to the participating educators a simple anthropological framework for helping their students to understand religions in neutral terms and will then use this framework for presenting an anthropological synopsis of two Afro-Caribbean religions – the Vodou of Haiti and the Santeria of Cuba. We will focus on the controversial rituals of animal sacrifice, spirit possession, spirit healing, and sorcery, showing how these apparently exotic afro-Caribbean practices have in fact had parallel manifestations in Christianity and Judaism. The intellectual goal is to remove religion from the realm of the exotic and to show students instead the structure and logic of religious systems that at first blush seem strange and alien.