

Tales of the Caribbean

Paradise, slavery, sugar and the wind

Course #	20FTA
Format:	Seminar
Moderator:	David Neelon
Date and Time:	Tuesday, 1:30-3:30 10 weeks, starting September 22
Location:	Smith College, Lilly Hall, 308
Maximum number of participants:	16
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: Join us to go beyond your memories of that vacation in paradise to explore the complexity of our neighboring islands. We'll look at cultural, natural, historic, and economic features from the earliest times to the 20th Century.

Description: Your interests will guide our seminar curriculum. The list of suggested topics for participant presentations already numbers nearly forty, and you may add your own. We'll study how natural forces shape the Caribbean island chain, the unique features of individual islands and groups, the exploration, colonization, and mercantile development of the islands by competing European monarchies, the place and practice of African slavery in the sugar plantation economy, along with its legacy of sub-cultures, languages, arts, music, spirituality, and revolutionary politics. We'll look at the naval significance of the islands from the 18th to the 20th Century. We can study the economic history of rum, the effects of ocean warming on coral ecosystems, and tell the sailing yarns of modern yachtsmen. We can learn the dynamics of hurricanes, earthquakes, and the volcanoes that are making new islands even as we speak. Bring your ideas and curiosity about this fascinating part of the world.

Role of participants: Participants will receive reading lists and suggested presentation topics well before the beginning of term. Each participant will choose and discuss presentation topics with the moderator, who will suggest resources and schedule presentations early enough for you to begin your research. Presenters will assist in leading group discussion.

Resources: Read either: *From Columbus to Castro, the History of the Caribbean*, Eric Williams, Vintage/Random House or *Freedom Roots, Histories from the Caribbean*, DuBois and Turits, University of North Carolina Press.

Other suggestions include: *The Black Jacobins*, Toussaint; *L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, second edition, C.L.R. James, Vintage/Random House; *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, Brown/ Wickhams, eds. Oxford Univ. Press.

About the Moderator: In LIR, I've moderated seminars on Andrea Barrett's fiction, the Mississippi Flood of 1927; and participated in literature, history and writing seminars. Published work includes a biography of the 17th C. Quaker, James Nayler. Turi MacCombie and I have written and produced four original plays since our recent marriage. Before that I sailed and lived aboard my boat, "Unity", in the Caribbean islands for parts of the last twenty years.