Environmental Cultural Studies in the French Caribbean

Martinique, a former French sugar colony and present-day French overseas department, is the ideal site to study the interaction between “nature” and “culture” through the study of the island's literature, cinema, social and environmental movements, museums of natural and cultural history, tourism industry, nature preserves, and “lieux de mémoire” (monuments). Located in the middle of the chain of islands stretching from Puerto Rico to the northern coast of Venezuela, Martinique corresponds in many ways to our idea of the island paradise: swaying palms trees, white-sand beaches, and a picturesque volcano towering over it all. But Martinique's natural ecology has been profoundly reshaped by human cultures, and most notably by the cultures of slavery, plantation life, and their aftermaths. We will read (that is to say, interpret) on site the narratives that Martinican authors, filmmakers and other cultural actors produce about the relation between human activity and the natural environment, with the aim of understanding the island's environment not as historical “natural wonders” simply to be enjoyed or consumed, but as markers of Martinique's cultural history.

Program Status: Inactive/Archived

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