For every action there is a counteraction and Jamaica's music has always recorded "counteraction" to the social and political experiences of the downpressed, the sufferer, and the poor. This course is designed to explore the last one hundred years of Jamaica's music by analyzing lyrics as poetry. In doing so, we will explore some of the driving themes present in reggae lyrics (urban/rural, class, postcolonialism, globalization, belonging, Africa, religion, gender, love, ganja, race, color, social justice, humanitarianism). This course encourages us to consider what social and political concerns motivate reggae song-writers/poets. This course also begs the questions: where did reggae come from (what is the history and what are the folk traditions that feed reggae), where is reggae today (locally and globally), and where is reggae going (will it survive into the future)? We begin with a survey of the development of reggae music, employing selections from Reggae Routes: The Story of Jamaican Music then we move to Kwame Dawes reggae poetry anthology which we will read alongside the music. We will examine in detail various song-texts created by some of reggae music’s major song writers/performers: Mighty Sparrow, Ernie Smith, Harry Belafonte, Burning Spear, Peter Tosh, Bob Marley, Mutabaruka, Tanya Stephens, Buju Banton, Vybz Kartel, Protoje, Jah9, Ishawna, Blvk H3ro, and many more.

Level: II
Credits: 3
Prerequisite: None
Instruction: Two lectures and one tutorial per week
Assessment:
One 3,000-word research paper 30%
Two tutorial presentations 10%
Final 2-hour exam 60%

Prescribed Texts:


Optional:
