Given the rich and diverse literary and cultural traditions of French-speaking regions of the world, as well as the growing interest in and importance of Francophone countries and cultures, as educators, we must address the question of how la francophonie can be incorporated into the French undergraduate curriculum. In response to this question, I would like to give a very brief description of a few of the recent curricular revisions made in the French program at East Carolina University. Without threatening the traditional canon of courses on French literature, culture and civilization, the French curriculum committee added more course choices in Francophone literature and cultures. In the courses required of French majors and minors, the most significant change was in the sequence of culture and civilization courses at the second-year level. By replacing a one-semester course on French-speaking regions of the world with two courses—one dealing with French-speaking regions of the Americas (Quebec, Louisiana, Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane) and one dealing with Francophone Africa—students now have more choices. These curricular revisions also allowed for more special topics courses in Francophone literature and culture at the upper levels.
Another significant revision included updating and revising the course on Francophone literature in translation. Often the domain of English departments, “literature in translation” courses provide a unique opportunity for faculty in foreign language departments to teach literature outside the foreign or second language classroom in a context relatively free from language barriers. Furthermore, because the course fulfills specific university and program requirements such as general education, diversity, humanities, ethnic studies, this course allows foreign language faculty to reach across the curriculum to a different audience and to introduce students from diverse majors and backgrounds to Francophone literatures and cultures.

In 1995, I was hired at East Carolina University as the Francophone specialist. I found a listing for a Francophone literature in translation course in the catalog. The course was listed as a “banked” or inactive course under the title “French Black Literature in Translation.” Given the potential importance of the course to the curriculum, I felt it merited review and reactivation. After some searching, I found the original description of the course in departmental files: it was as dated as the title and did not include any works published later than the 1970’s. Content focused primarily on the poetry of the Negritude movement, ignoring a vast segment of the literary production of Francophone African and Caribbean regions. In revising this course, which I taught for the first time in 1997, I focused on Francophone Caribbean literature. As far as course content was concerned, one of my primary goals was to select a body of representative works by writers from the French-speaking Caribbean (Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique) that included women writers and that also illustrated important themes, movements or currents of thought (Négritude, Antillanité, Créolité; Negritude, Caribbeanness, Creoleness). But, perhaps, my most important criteria in the selection of readings was to choose texts that would not only introduce students to other cultures and ways of seeing but works that would inspire them to question their own culture and society. In the three semesters that I have offered this course, no
other work has engendered more discussion and debate than the novel *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (*Moi, Tituba sorcière noire de Salem*, 1986). What I would like to propose here are two approaches to the novel. The first I would describe as thematic in nature and the other, intertextual and comparative. For each work studied in class, I distribute a set of questions. I use these questions to guide class discussions and as the subject of paired or group work during the class period.

In *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, the Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé is inspired by historical accounts of the Salem witch trials and the brief references to Tituba, a slave woman from Barbados who was the first to confess to being a witch. Part of her “American cycle” of novels, in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Condé focuses on the common history shared by the Caribbean and the United States, as she states in an interview with Françoise Plaff: “I want to stress that the African diaspora in the West Indies and the Americas has a common history and shares the same heroes, dreams, and aspirations” (69). Moreover, as a Francophone writer who sets her fiction in the English-speaking Caribbean, Condé further emphasizes the shared history of the Caribbean. To illustrate this point in class, I integrate the ideas of the Martinican writer, Edouard Glissant, who describes in his seminal work on Caribbean identity, *Caribbean Discourse* (*Le Discours antillais*, 1981), how this common Caribbean history with its origins in Africa has been obfuscated by colonization:

But in fact colonization has divided into English, Dutch, Spanish territories a region where the majority of the population is African: making strangers out of a people who are not. (5)

Furthermore, I point out to students that Condé firmly grounds her work in New World history from the very first page of the novel with her heroine’s brutal conception aboard the slave ship:
Abena, my mother, was raped by an English sailor on the deck of Christ the King one day in the year 16** while the ship was sailing to Barbados. I was born of this act of aggression. From this act of hatred and contempt.(3)

Thus, Tituba’s journey, like the history of her people in the New World, begins with the harrowing middle passage from Africa to the Americas.

I emphasize to students that the underlying theme of all French Caribbean literature is the quest for identity. This quest can be expressed in universal terms of the heroic quest: the hero who leaves his homeland to seek adventure and gain knowledge which he brings back to his community. I demonstrate this point with the example of the Haitian novel Masters of the Dew (Les Gouverneurs de la rosée, 1944) in which the character of Manuel is built upon the archetype of the Hero-Redeemer who sacrifices himself for the common good.5 In this course, the exploration and discussion of the quest motif in these novels provides a thematic framework for my classroom approach. For each novel, I usually begin the discussion by comparing, or by asking the students to compare, how the quest is expressed in each work. In the French Caribbean, the quest without exception manifests itself as a quest for origins (such as Negritude’s emphasis on a lost African motherland) and the continuing search for and articulation of Caribbean identity as articulated in the manifesto In Praise of Creoleness (Eloge de la Créolité, 1989) by Martinican writers Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant.

One activity I find helpful in assisting the students develop their ideas on Condé’s novel is to have them compare the geographic movement within the novels Black Shack Alley and I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem. In Black Shack Alley, we discuss the linear movement from a rural to an urban space that parallels the protagonist’s pursuit of an education. The movement can be illustrated as follows (either on the board or on a handout):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plantation</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Shack Alley</td>
<td>Fort de France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Petit Bourg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In small groups of three or four students, I ask them to describe and illustrate the movements they find in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*: What kind of movement(s) do you find in the novel? How would you describe and illustrate this (these) movement(s)? Do they correspond to specific events in the narrative? In Condé’s novel, Tituba’s quest consists of numerous journeys that take her progressively further and further away from her homeland to which she will return before her death, with a greater awareness of her place within her community and within the history of her community.

Because Condé emphasizes Tituba’s spiritual growth as an integral part of her journey, I devote a considerable amount of class time to this aspect of Tituba’s quest. At her mother’s death, Tituba must leave the plantation and is taken in by Mama Yaya, a spiritual healer and medicine woman both feared and admired for her mystical abilities. I point out that the character of Mama Yaya is one of the recurring “ancestor” figures within the tradition of French Caribbean fiction. The ancestor figure represents a vital spiritual link with what Edouard Glissant calls le pays d’avant, “the land before”—Africa and the new world America. Like Papa Longoué in Glissant’s novel *The Ripening*, Médouze in Joseph Zobel’s *Black Shack Alley*, Man Cia in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *Wind and Rain on Télumée Miracle*, and, within a larger African-American context, Pilate in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, Mama Yaya carries with her knowledge of the land, medicinal herbs, and most importantly the history of people. Mama Yaya initiates Tituba into the “upper spheres of knowledge” (10) and enables her to communicate with the dead: “The dead only die if they die in our hearts. They live on if we cherish them and honor them and honor their memory. . . . A few words are enough to conjure them back” (10). This
initiation into the spirit realm is an essential segment of Tituba’s journey to selfhood and exemplifies what Margaret Moore Willen describes as the valorization of the supernatural, community and orality in Black Francophone writing (763)—a quality it shares with African-American literature, and that according to Toni Morrison, falls outside Western tradition:

In the Third World cosmology as I perceive it, reality is not constituted by my literary predecessors in Western culture. If my work is to confront a reality unlike that received reality of the West, it must centralize and animate information discredited by the West—discredited not because it is not true or useful or even of some racial value, but because it is information held by a discredited people, information dismissed as “lore” or “gossip” or “magic” or “sentiment”. (388)

Through class discussions, I attempt to clarify how the real and the supernatural exist on the same plane; the barriers between the physical and the spiritual realms are broken down. Tituba suffers the most in America because she is far from her home in Barbados and therefore unable to communicate with her dead loved ones. To elicit student ideas, I divide them into pairs and ask them to list, describe and/or compare the following: Tituba’s spiritual mentors; Tituba’s spiritual and geographical journeys; Tituba’s spirituality and Puritan religious beliefs; the “ancestor” figures in all novels.

To further emphasize the cultural and historical specificity of Tituba’s journey, I focus on her quest in terms of marronnage: the marrons or maroons were rebel slaves who escaped to freedom in the mornes or hills. They have been reclaimed and rehabilitated in Caribbean fiction as folk heroes who embody refusal of colonial authority. According to Pascale Bécel, Tituba more accurately embodies the practice of la petite marronne:

While the grand marron elects the mornes as the locus of resistance to slavery, the petit marron or practitioner of petite marronne inhabits an interstitial space between the plantation system and its outside ‘where the runaway absents himself partially and temporarily, and usually at no great distance, from the plantation and continues to live in
ambivalent symbiosis with it until he returns. (612)

My second approach to the novel is an intertextual reading that encourages students to see, to paraphrase one of my former professors, “the way in which texts speak to each other across time and space”. Henry Louis Gates gives another useful definition in his work Figures in Black: he defines intertextuality as “the nonthematic manner by which texts respond to each other” (41). In class discussions, I concentrate on four possible “intertexts”: the historical, the literary, folklore as text and the social (con)text. These items can be introduced by lecturing and discussed with the class as a whole or in small groups. The latter gives students the opportunity to work through and articulate their ideas in a relatively stress-free atmosphere. I always follow up group work with an open class discussion.

Historical text: The very pretext for writing *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* is a response to what Condé saw as a void in written historical documentation. When asked by her publisher to write the story of a female heroine from her region and while in the process of researching the topic, Maryse Condé explains how she "came across" the character of Tituba:

I just felt interested by the story and curious to see what happened to Tituba. It is only when I started asking people and historians around me, and did not discover anything factual about her, that I decided I was going to write her story out of my dreams. I felt this eclipse of Tituba's life was completely unjust. I felt a strong solidarity with her and I wanted to offer her her revenge by inventing a life such as she might perhaps have wished it to be told. (199)

Because Condé tells this story from the perspective of the oppressed other, her view is essentially revisionist: Condé revises and rewrites history by writing her story. This desire to revise what is perceived as an incomplete history continues with Condé’s inclusion of the Jewish character of Benjamin Cohen D’Azevedo, who becomes Tituba’s owner, friend, and lover and ultimately, the
one who grants her her freedom so that she can return to her homeland. Thus, Condé underscores the history of racism and oppression shared by the Black and Jewish communities. The historical aspect of Condé’s work further emphasizes and illustrates for the students the importance of history in Francophone Caribbean literature. Because this novel is last novel we read, I ask students to compare how each author deals with history.

Folklore as text: Throughout the novel, Condé reclaims and rehabilitates, to quote again Toni Morrison, information “discredited” by the West through her emphasis on the supernatural, spirituality, magic, and oral tradition. The intertext becomes intratext when Tituba returns to Barbados and learns that her story has become part of the community’s history, inscribed in the collective memory. She is recognized on the ship by one of the sailors as “the daughter of Abena, who killed a white man?” to which Tituba responds:

Having someone recognize me after ten years of absence brought tears to my eyes. I had forgotten this ability our people have of remembering. Nothing escapes them! Everything is engraved in their memory!” (136)

Folklore, magic, and oral tradition play a significant role in other novels we read in class, such as Bridge of Beyond by Simone Schwarz-Bart. I have the students compare and discuss the use of folklore in these two novels, focusing in particular on the role of women in the transmission of oral history and spiritual knowledge.

The literary text: The most interesting intertext is perhaps the inclusion of Hester Prynne from Hawthorne’s Scarlet Letter. Hester befriends Tituba in prison. But this is a new Hester, one who, to quote her character, was raised to believe in sexual equality. During one of their many conversations she describes her feminist utopia:

I’d like to write a book, but alas, women don’t write books! Only men bore us with their
prose. I make an exception for certain poets. Have you read Milton, Tituba? Oh I forgot you don’t know how to read. Paradise Lost, Tituba, a marvel of its kind . . . . Yes, I’d like to write a book where I’d describe a model society governed and run by women! We would give our names to our children, we would raise them alone. . . . (101)

If students choose this topic for their research projects, I encourage them to present their ideas to the class. Another work that may be discussed in this context is Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*.

The social (con)text: The novel, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* is also part of Condé’s reponse, along with *The Last of the African Kings* and *Tree of Life*, to the rags-to-riches narrative of the great American dream. In these three novels, America is portrayed as a land of broken promises and shattered dreams. For Tituba, America is a dark land that inspires not hope but fear: she was “banished” to America, separated from her loved ones: “. . . America? Who had ever gone to America?” (35) To show how Condé exploits this positive image of America, I prompt students to list positive stereotypes of America and Americans and to compare these ideas with the dismal images portrayed in the novel.

Condé also expresses her views on contemporary American society as she gives a voice and tells the untold story of her heroine. Setting the novel during this early period of American history allows Condé to express her ideas about contemporary American society. She adeptly transposes Tituba’s fear of the “dark continent” of America to a twentieth-century context, as she states in her interview with Anne Scarboro:

> Writing Tituba was an opportunity to express my feelings about present-day America. I wanted to imply that in terms of narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy, and racism, little has changed since the days of the Puritans. (202)

She continues her critique of American society:

> Every black person living in America will tell you that racism still exists. A few success
stories that are told over and over again for propaganda reasons must not hide the fact that for the majority of blacks, life is still hell. As a foreigner and French-speaking person, I don't suffer directly from it. On the contrary, I am still a curiosity; but I am too lucid not to see how the society works. (200)\textsuperscript{9}

By including \textit{I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem} in this course, I attain my previously stated course objective of introducing the students to other ways of seeing the world and their own society. We usually conclude the discussion of the novel with a debate on the social context—a debate which consistently provokes the most controversy and heated discussions. Condé’s novel exemplifies Edouard Glissant’s concept of questionnement\textsuperscript{9}—a profound questioning of history and society. In this social interpretation of \textit{I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem}, students confront a scathing critique of American society. Whether they agree or disagree with Condé’s ideas on racism in the United States, most students feel compelled to question and respond to this vision of America. Their act of reading thus becomes an act of questionnement that will hopefully reach beyond the classroom.
Appendix I: Sample syllabus

Course: FORL 2622-01: Francophone Literature of the Americas in Translation: Francophone Caribbean Literature

Description and objectives:
This course is an introduction to the literature and cultures of the French-speaking regions of the Caribbean and will focus on the question of racial and cultural identity in works by writers from Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. Through readings, films, class discussions, and independant research, we will examine the historical and political contexts (colonization, slavery, decolonization) of Francophone Caribbean literature as well as issues of gender and the role of women.

Texts: Mayotte Capécia  
Aimé Césaire  
Patrick Chamoiseau  
Maryse Condé  
Jacques Roumain  
Simone Schwarz-Bart  
Miriam Warner-Vieyra  
Joseph Zobel  
The White Negress/I Am a Martinican Woman  
A Tempest  
Childhood  
I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem  
Masters of the Dew  
Bridge of Beyond  
Juletane  
Black Shack Alley

Grades:  
Class participation and class work (oral and written) 10%  
Quizzes 30%  
Essays (2) 20%  
Final project and presentation 20%  
Final Exam 20%

A=100-90%; B=89-80; C=79-70%; D=69-60%; F=below 60%

Attendance:  
Punctual and regular attendance is required. Regular class attendance is a major component of your participation grade and is essential to your successful completion of this course. Continuous preparation is absolutely necessary. Excessive absences (more than 2) will result in a lower grade. Quizzes are mandatory and must be taken as scheduled. Exceptions will be granted only in extreme cases. You should come to class prepared to discuss the work assigned.

Essays:  
You will prepare 2 essays on the readings. The topics and dates for essays will be announced in class.

Reports:  
During the semester, you will prepare a research project and present your findings to the class. (See handout for detailed instructions.)
Appendix II

FORL 2622       Topics for presentations / project

As indicated on the syllabus, each of you will make one presentation on a topic of your choice. Your presentation should be a sort of “progress report” of your research for your final project. Choose a topic that you are interested in—this should be an enjoyable learning experience.

Possible topics for projects:

Past topics:

- *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (the novel and film)
- *The Color Purple* (the novel and film)
- Du Bois, Washington and Zobel: the role of education
- Interracial relationships and marriage
- Racism in the military
- Black entrepreneurs
- Haiti and the United States

Other ideas:

- Portrayal of minorities in television and film (Example: Portrayal of minorities in movies; “Black” sitcoms and racial stereotyping; controversial series or episodes in TV history).
- Cultural identity and nationality
- Race and politics
- Literature and history
- Racism (in the US, at the university, in France, etc.)

You may have other ideas you would like to develop and research. The only criteria are

- Your topic should be something you want to learn more about.
- It should be related to the course.

How will you be graded?

- Presentations: Credit or no credit. The only things you need to turn in for presentations are your notes and outline.
- Project: Your grade will be based primarily on content and organization. You should begin thinking about a topic soon. Length: 6-10 pages (typed, double-spaced). Sources: at least 5 different sources. You should follow *MLA* guidelines for format and citations.
Appendix III

Sample Discussion Questions for Chapters 1 and 2
I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem

Chapter 1

1. How does the novel begin? What effect does it have on you as the reader?

2. Describe Tituba’s relationships with the following characters:
   - Darnell
   - Jennifer
   - Abena
   - Yao
   - Mama Yaya

3. Describe Tituba’s childhood. What are her feelings toward her mother? How does her mother feel about her?

Chapter 2

1. What feelings does John Indian arouse in Tituba? How does he feel about her? Why does Tituba call for Mama Yaya’s assistance?

2. Who is Susana Endicott? Describe John Indian’s relationship with her.

3. Compare John Indian’s religious schooling with Tituba’s spiritual education.

4. When Tituba’s mother appears to her, she groans, “Why can’t women do without men?” Does Tituba heed her mother’s warning?

5. What does Tituba give up for love? Do you agree with her actions?

Sample Composition Topics

1. I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem: Describe “America” as it is presented in the novel. Do you agree with Condé’s comments on contemporary American society (see “Afterword”)? Have things changed so little?

2. Bridge of Beyond, Juletane and I, Tituba: compare these characters. Choose one of the following pairs.
   a. Télumée and Juletane.
   b. Juletane and Hélène
   c. Tituba and Télumée
   d. Mamadou and John Indian

3. Bridge of Beyond, Juletane and I, Tituba: How are men portrayed? (You may concentrate on one or two of these novels.)
Notes

1 From Maryse Condé’s foreward to the intermediate reader Diversité: la nouvelle francophone à travers le monde.
2 For a list of works covered in the course, see the sample syllabus I have included in appendix I. The difficulty in obtaining books has been the greatest obstacle in compiling the course bibliography. Some works in translation are no longer in print, such as Edouard Glissant’s The Ripening (La Lézarde), or difficult to find. In addition to these works, I also include the films Sugar Cane Alley by Martinican director, Euzhan Palcy, Chocolat by French director Claire Denis, and the documentary of Franz Fanon’s life and work, Black Skin, White Masks. For their class project, students choose a topic for a research project early in the semester. I encourage comparative and interdisciplinary studies (for examples, see appendix II).
3 I have included sample discussion questions and composition topics appendix III.
4 For a record of the Salem Witch Trials, see the website: www.umkc.edu/famoustrials
5 See Beverley Ormerod’s An Introduction to the French Caribbean Novel for a complete study of The Masters of the Dew.
6 The discussion of the ancestor figure can be introduced as part of the lecture or as a small group discussion or activity.
7 Unfortunately, this allusion slips by many students unrecognized. To fill in this gap, I might assign a short research activity to be completed before beginning this class discussion. A comparative character study of Hester in the Scarlet Letter and in I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem would also be an interesting project topic.
8 In an interview with Barbara Lewis, Condé sustains her negative portrayal of American society but she also acknowledges the symbolic importance of America as a role model:

. . . the Caribbean people see America as a place where a black person can be successful. But those of us from the Caribbean who come here regularly, we know there’s another reality. We tell our people that there are black people begging and living in the streets, and they don’t believe us. We don’t want to destroy all their hopes, because people have to hope for something. America is a positive symbol. We have to admit that. If a black person has energy and talent and works really hard, he or she can succeed in America. (544)
9 In Caribbean Discourse, Glissant states: Knowing what happened (why—that is, for what “valid” reason—the whites exterminated the Indians and reduced blacks to slavery, and whether they will be held accountable) is the question that one (yes, that Faulkner) cannot afford not to ask. A question that will require no active reply. The important thing is, not the reply, but the question. (80-81)
Works Cited


