This seminar will provide a comprehensive introduction to the poetry of the Occitan troubadours, their language, and their reception among later writers. The troubadours flourished in the south of France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, producing a dazzlingly varied and innovative corpus of lyrics, which exercised a profound influence on the emergence of lyric poetry in other European vernaculars. In addition to studying troubadour lyrics and the cultural contexts that produced them, we will also think critically about the role of textual reception and canon formation in the function of literary traditions, both medieval and modern. This course will include a basic introduction to the Occitan language as well as an opportunity to work closely with medieval manuscripts.
In this course, we examine the powerful innovations of form, style, subject matter, and ideology that have marked Haitian literature from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries in relation to the cultural legacy of the nation’s revolutionary founding. Against the view that modern Haitian literature has evaded historical concerns in favor of more pressing contemporary social and political problems, we explore how the revolution itself generated a rhetorical, literary, and ideological foundation for the emergence and continuous renovation of an intellectual and aesthetic tradition in Haiti, as well as the degree to which several subsequent aesthetic revolutions in Haitian literature have been a response to perceived repetitions of the historical past. Beginning with a reading of foundational Haitian political writings together with theoretical texts by authors such as C.L.R. James, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Sibylle Fischer, Étienne Balibar, Jacques Rancière, and René Girard, we go on to analyze the twentieth-century literary and artistic movements that were catalyzed by the first U.S. occupation of Haiti and the rise of the Duvalier dictatorship. These include Indigenism (Jacques Roumain), Marxism (Jacques-Stephen Alexis, René Depestre), Negritude (Depestre), Magical Realism (Alexis), and Spiralism (Jean-Claude Fignolé). Throughout, we will pay close attention to gender and sexuality in mediating representations of Haitian history, as well as the role of women authors (Virgile Valcin, Annie Desroy, and Marie Chauvet) in innovating radical critiques of both neocolonialism and the operations of violence, desire, and domination within Haitian society, writing from the interstices of black and mulatto, public and private, individual and collective, and psychoanalytic and historical materialist perspectives. Taught in French.