

ENG 571: MODERN WORLD LIT: POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

Prof. Shemak

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Office Hours: 11:00-12:30 Tues/Thurs in Huntsville and by appt. before and after class

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Required Texts

Potiki, Patricia Grace

Ways of Dying, Zakes Mda

Shame, Salman Rushdie

Krik? Krak!, Edwidge Danticat

At the Full and Change of the Moon, Dionne Brand

The Glass Palace, Amitav Ghosh

Train to Pakistan, Khushwant Singh

Maps, Nuruddin Farah

Nervous Conditions, Tsitsi Dangarembga

Electronic Reserve:

Unless otherwise noted, most of the theoretical essays will be posted on electronic reserve. You should print these essays to bring to class discussion.

Course Objectives

What is postcolonial literature?

In this course we will examine literature by and about peoples living in regions that were formally under European colonial rule. European colonialism governed much of modern world from the 16th to 20th centuries (85% by 1914). Thus, colonialism greatly influenced governmental structures, politics, economies, language, education and other cultural aspects in the colonized region. We will briefly look at how Europeans (mainly British) writers represented non-Western peoples and societies. However, our main focus will be the work of contemporary non-Western writers. We will investigate how these writers represent their experiences. What are the methods and aesthetic choices they make in doing so? How do these writers address the legacies of colonialism? We will read writers from a variety of locations--the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia and the Pacific--keeping in mind both the links between colonized places as well as the significant local differences. Since graduate study in literature involves engaging in the critical scholarship, we will also read a

number of theories that present key ideas in the field of postcolonial studies. We will grapple with the ongoing debate of how to define the term “postcolonial” and interrogate the usefulness of the term in categorizing this body of literature.

Objectives include:

- Developing an understanding of the field of postcolonial literature.
- Developing an understanding of the critical concepts and theories coming out of postcolonial studies: colonialism, postcolonialism, nationalism, hybridity, creolization, tradition vs. modernity.
- Developing written critical analysis skills and oral presentation skills.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation: Discussion is the driving force of this course. You should come prepared to discuss issues raised in the readings, bring questions, etc. Try to make connections between the theoretical readings and the literary texts. You are allowed 1 absence during the semester. Part of the class participation grade will include:

Discussion List Postings: As a way to generate discussion, each week students will post a 250-word response (1 double-spaced page) to the week’s readings on the discussion list on Blackboard. These responses will need to be posted by 12:00 pm the day of class. The rest of the class will be responsible for reading and printing out the response to bring to class. These responses are meant to be exploratory; you can use them as a place to raise questions, to respond to a theme or issue related to the reading, etc. You do not need to respond to all of the reading for the week. You can choose to write about one piece (literary or theoretical), a chapter, a character, etc. Each student will be responsible for 3 discussion list postings throughout the semester. 1 of these responses must be on a theoretical reading. Please let me know if you would like to do a response for next week. Otherwise, I will bring sign-up sheet next week (we’ll do the sign-up orally over ITV to allow everyone an opportunity to sign-up). Ideally, I would like no more than 4 responses per week so that they are spread out throughout the semester.

30-minute presentation: You will each choose a week to present on one of the literary works that we will be reading. You will need to do outside research and provide an annotated bibliography of 12-15 sources. The bibliography must be posted on Blackboard the day of your presentation (under “Course Documents”). The sources for the bibliography should include scholarly studies of the author, a study of a specific work or works, interviews with the author, studies that are particularly relevant to the historical context that an author addresses in his/her work, etc. Book reviews are not appropriate for an annotated bibliography. You will

be graded on the quality of the sources. For information on writing an annotated bibliography see <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/annotatebib.html> Please also post any handouts that you will use during your presentation so that everyone has a chance to look at them outside of class. Your presentation should cover not only factual information (background on an author, history of the place they write about), but also themes, theoretical questions and other issues raised in the author's writings. You should end your presentation with a few discussion questions to pose to the class. Please email me the date that you would like to present. Ideally, I would like to have no more than 2 presentations per week.

Paper Proposal: (2 pages) This paper should outline the proposed topic (of your choosing) for the final research paper. Include which texts you will be using, theoretical framework, your approach, possible argument, etc. You should list at least 5 sources that you will be using. Sources should include articles from scholarly peer-reviewed journals and books (accessed via a number of databases including MLA Bibliography, ProjectMuse, or JStor). You should not rely upon book reviews or websites as sources. You may need to order books through inter-library loan (if SHSU does not have them).

Final Research Paper (18-20) pages: The paper should include a bibliography of at least 20 sources.

Note: It is possible to do the presentation/annotated bibliography, paper proposal and final paper as linked assignments. In other words, if you present on Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*, you could also do your final paper on that novel (and you will have already begun your research). This is one option – you may find that you are tired of an author/work after your presentation and want to do something entirely different for your final paper.

Submit all papers in hard-copy and in electronic format via email attachment (as a word document).

Grading

Participation (includes discussion list postings)	20%
Presentation (30 minutes)	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Midterm	25%
Paper Proposal	5%
Final Research Paper 18-20 pages	30%

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: You are responsible for any and all changes to the syllabus.

Thurs. 1/17 Introduction

Th. 1/24 Intro. to Colonial/Postcolonial Studies

Elleke Boehmer, "Imperialism and Textuality"

Edward Said "Orientalism"

Ania Loomba, "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies"

McCauley's "Minute on Indian Education, February 2, 1835"

Jamaica Kincaid, "Columbus in Chains"

Chinua Achebe, "My Home Under Imperial Fire"

KEYWORDS: postcolonial, imperialism, colonialism

Th 1/31 Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (Zimbabwe)

Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (e-reserve)

Ngugi Wa Thiongo "The Language of African Literature" (e-reserve)

KEYWORDS: colonial education, feminism and postcolonialism

Th 2/7 N. Farah's *Maps* (Somalia)

Tejumola Olaniyan, "Africa: Varied Colonial Legacies" (electronic reserve)

See <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/maps.html>

KEYWORD: cartography, nation/nationalism

Th 2/14 *Krik? Krak!* (Haiti)

Gayatri Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Th 2/21 Dionne Brand *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (Caribbean/Trinidad)

Stuart Hall, "Thinking Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad" (e-reserve)

KEYWORDS: diaspora, creolization

Th 2/28 Caribbean Poetry
Selected poetry from Kamau Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, and M. Nourbese Phillip, Louise Bennett, (handouts)
Walcott, "Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory" (Bboard)
Supriya Nair, "Creolization, Orality and Nation Language in the Caribbean." (Bboard)

KEYWORDS: nation language, orality

Th 3/6 MIDTERM

Th 3/13 SPRING BREAK

Th 3/20 *Train to Pakistan* (India/Pakistan)
Partha Chatterjee *The Nation and Its Fragments* (excerpt on e-reserve)

Th 3/27 Amitav Ghosh, *Glass Palace* (India)
secondary article TBA

Th 4/3 Amitav Ghosh, *Glass Palace*
Secondary article TBA

Th 4/10 Salman Rushdie *Shame* (India/Pakistan)
Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (excerpt on e-reserve)

DUE: PAPER PROPOSAL

Th 4/17 *Potiki* (New Zealand/Maori)
Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Imperialism, History, Writing, and Theory"
(e-reserve)

KEYWORDS: settler colony, indigenous, cartography

Th 4/24 Zakes Mda *Ways of Dying* (South Africa)
Apartheid and Beyond (excerpt on e-reserve)

Th 5/1 Class Canceled (I will be at a conference)

Th 5/8 "The End of Postcolonial Theory?" PMLA Roundtable (Blackboard)
Last Day of Classes

FINAL PAPER DUE BY Thursday, May 15th