

Université de Montréal
Département d'études anglaises
ANG 6650 Post-Colonial Literatures in English
Winter 2012

Instructor: Professor Heike Härting
Class: Wednesday 1pm to 4 pm
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 Thursdays 11 to noon, or by appointment

Postcolonial Theory: From Anti-Colonial Theory to Popular Cosmopolitanism

Course Description:

This course introduces students to a wide range of theoretical and literary debates that make up the field of postcolonial literary studies. The course follows a historical and theoretical trajectory that seeks to trace the development of postcolonial studies as an academic discipline and a form of literary critique. We will examine the field's constitution at the intersection of anti-racist and liberation theories, poststructuralism, Marxist literary criticism, and gender studies. Given the field's own colonial or Western origins of institutional formation, we will pay specific attention to the field's epistemological limits and its own haunting dialectic of imperial Self and colonial Other, and its persistent infatuation with the nation-state as a redemptive form of social and political organization. Since its academic origins, often related to the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the field has gone through multiple political crises and forced itself to reconsider its dominant theoretical frameworks, its mode of cultural address, and thus, was forced to reinvent itself. Thus, over the last decade, the field moved from a critical emphasis on colonial discourses analysis to an often neglected materialist critique of postcoloniality (rather than postcolonialism). Moreover, recent articulations of postcolonial or popular forms of cosmopolitanism, along with a heightened awareness of postcolonial environmentalism, suggests that the field remains fluid and dynamic. This course, then, will provide students with a firm sense of a) the historical and theoretical constitution of postcolonial literary studies and b) the various cultural and political controversies that point to the field's serious limitations and transformative potential. What, we will ask, is the critical and political purchase of postcolonial literary studies in a materially polarized world structured by media-generated images and social networks? How do we read for a more equal planetary future?

Texts and Films:

Aimé Césaire: *Discourse on Colonialism*
Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*
Wilson Harris's *The Palace of the Peacock*
Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*
Caryl Phillips's *In the Falling Snow*
Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*

Film:

Pontecorvo, Gillo. *The Battle for Algiers* (1967)

Haneke, Michael. *Code Unknown* (2000)

Course Reader:

There will also be a critical course reader including works by Fredric Jameson, , Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Pheng Cheah, Frantz Fanon, Timothy Brennan, Tamara Sivandan, Paul Gilroy, Charles Mills, Wole Soyinka, Chinweizu, Chandra T. Mohanty, Jacques Rancière, Stuart Hall, Rob Nixon, Anthony Appiah, David Harvey, and others.

Assignments:

2 In-Class Presentations	30 % (15% each)
Short Paper	20 %
Research Paper	40 %
Participation	10 %

In-Class Presentations

In this class, students are required to prepare two short presentations on the theoretical texts assigned for our meetings. Each presentation must discuss the *theoretical* texts at hand and establish—wherever meaningful or necessary—connections with the literary text assigned for the day of his or her presentation. By way of a careful reading of the texts in question, the presentation should outline the logic and validity of the texts theoretical argument. Your presentation should also draw attention to the relevance and validity of the argument for the reader's development of a critical framework through which to contemplate the historical, political, and cultural relationships and conceptual intersections between war, violence, and/or postcoloniality. Finally, presentations are designed to generate discussion among course participants. Thus, each presentation must propose three relevant questions about the texts under examination. Whenever possible, your questions should open up a dialogue between literary and non-literary texts.

Short Paper

Your short essay must be a critical reflection on one of the issues or texts you prepared for one of your in-class presentations. Your paper should be a critical reflection rather than expository summary of the essays or literary texts you discussed in one of your in-class presentations. Your paper may or may not address the ways in which class and group discussions helped you expand, rethink, and/or research particular thoughts you had on a theoretical text. However, your paper may also be a way of developing your creative reading skills and mediate the ways in which a literary text can be read to question or shift some of the assumptions and arguments made in one of the theoretical texts you discussed in your presentation. A careful, close reading of the text at hand will help you sharpen the argument of your critical reflection.

You may write your short paper on one of your presentations and expand it into your final essay. Note, however, that short papers must be handed in the week following your presentation.

Research Paper

In this course you will have to write a 15-page research essay on a given topic or on one of your choice. All essays must be persuasive rather than expository essays and adhere to the MLA style of academic writing and quotation. Essays will be graded for their originality of thought, their

appropriate use of secondary sources, their logical organization and argumentation, and their writing style.

Students may also incorporate a creative component into their final essays (e.g., photography, film stills, storyboards, short stories, poetry, visual arts etc.). However, students who wish to include a creative element into their essays or choose their own topic must discuss their essays with me in advance. Moreover, all creative elements must be properly theorized and/or conceptualized with a view to the central argument of the main body of the essay. Further instructions will be given in class.

Tentative Reading Schedule*

January 11: **Introduction:** From Commonwealth to Postcolonial Reading Habits

Field I: Anti-Colonial and Anti-Race Theories

January 18: Liberation Wars and *The Wretched of the Earth*

Film: *The Battle of Algiers*

Readings: Fanon, Frantz. “Concerning Violence”; “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” (CR)
Sivanandan, Tamara. “Anticolonialism, National Liberation, and Postcolonial Nation Formation” (CR)

January 25: Race and Postcolonial Thought

Texts: Aimé Césaire: *Discourse on Colonialism*

Charles Mills: *The Racial Contract* (Overview, CR)

Paul Gilroy: “The Crisis of Race and Raciology” in *Against Race* (CR)

February 1: Writing the Colonial, Writing Race

Texts: Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*

Wole Soyinka: “Neo-Tarzanism” (CR); Chinweizu: “Prodigal’s, Come Home!” (CR);

Chinua Achebe: “The Novelist as Teacher” (CR)

Field II: Colonial Discourse Analysis Redux

February 8: Reading for Imperialism, Reading for Modernity

Texts: Wilson Harris’s *The Palace of the Peacock*

Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (CR)

February 15: Deconstructing Colonial History?

Texts: *Palace of the Peacock* continued

Gayatri Spivak’s “History” in: *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (CR)

Homi Bhabha’s: “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse (CR)

Field III: Marxism and Postcolonial Theory

February 22: The Post-Colonial Nation-State

Texts: Yvonne Vera’s *The Stone Virgins*

Frantz Fanon’s “On National Culture” (CR)

Talpade Mohanty’s “Under Western Eyes” and “Under Western Eyes Revisited” (CR)

Cheah, Pheng. *Spectral Nationality. Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*. New York: Columbia UP, 2003. 381-395. (CR)

February 29: Aesthetics and Postcolonial Genre

Texts: Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*

Fredric Jameson's "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (CR)

Peter Hitchcock's *The Long Space. Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form* (Chaper 1, CR)

E. San Juan Jr.'s "Globalized Terror And the Postcolonial Sublime" (CR)

March 7: Reading Break

Field IV: Postcoloniality, Diaspora, and Identity

March 14: Making Diasporic Subjects

Film: Michael Haneke's *Code Unknown*

Stuart Hall's "Thinking Diaspora. Home-Thoughts from Abroad" (CR)

Rey Chow's "Where Have All the Natives Gone?" (CR)

Jacques Rancière's "The Distribution of the Sensible" (CR)

March 21: The Global and the Postcolonial

Texts: Caryl Phillips's *In the Falling Snow*

Arif Dirlik's "The Postcolonial Aura:Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" (CR)

Timothy Brennan's "Postcolonial Studies and Globalization Theory" (CR)

Saskia Sassen's "The Many Scales of the Global" (CR)

Field V: Popular Cosmopolitanisms

March 28: Cosmopolitanism and Postcolonialism

Texts: Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*

Simon Gikandi's "Between Roots and Routes: "Cosmopolitanism and the Claims of Locality" (CR)

Rob Nixon's "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism" (CR)

April 4: New Cosmopolitanisms? Whereto now?

Texts: *Oil on Water* continued

David Harvey's "The Banality of Geographical Evils" (CR)

Anthony Appiah: "Rooted Cosmopolitanism" (CR)

Spivak, Gayatri. "Terror: A Speech after 9-11." *boundary 2* 31.2 (2004): 81-111. (CR)

April 11: Buffer session and Review

*The Tentative Reading Schedule is subject to change according to students' participation in and pace of the class. We will finalize our reading schedule during the first week of the term.