

The University of Florida.

Department of English.

LIT 6236 (Section: 8022): Postcolonial Studies

Fall 2020

Times: Tuesdays Periods 6- 8
(12.50- 3.50pm)

Location: Remote Learning

Instructor: Apollo O. Amoko

Office: 4350 Turlington Hall

Office Hours: W: 2- 4pm

or by appointment

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Course Description:

This course will examine canonical theories and fictions in postcolonial studies. The field refers to an effort by scholars in diverse disciplines to come to terms, from a global perspective, with the legacy of European colonialism. In the wake of the voyages of exploration and “discovery” from the fifteenth century onwards, a handful of European powers (England, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands), came gradually to exercise sovereignty over vast territories covering roughly eighty percent of the world. In political, social, economic and cultural terms, the colonial situation effected epochal transformations of not only the conquered societies but also imperial Europe. The colonial encounter resulted in the consolidation of the idea of a European or Western modernity at the apex of human civilization. It also resulted in incomplete, chaotic, and traumatic attempts forcibly to transform other societies in the image of Europe. By the end of the twentieth century, virtually all formerly colonized territories had become independent nations, but the effects of colonial rule continue to be powerfully felt at multiple levels. For example, the practice of everyday life in vast sectors of the both the imperial and the colonized worlds continue to be governed, often with devastating consequences, by ideas about racial, national, continental, gender, sexual and other identities invented in the context of the colonial encounter. As well, the political economies of many formally independent nations continue to be characterized by fundamental contradictions, inequalities and dependencies brought about by colonial rule. Finally, the global economic, political and cultural order continues to be organized in terms of a contest pitting the interests of a handful of wealthy and disproportionately powerful nations against a multitude of poor and relatively powerless nations. A central focus of inquiry will be vexed connection between nationalism, as a peculiar but ubiquitous discursive formation and the novel, as a particular aesthetic formation. These historically entwined discourses emerged in the age of modernity and the shadow of empire.

Course Goals:

The course aims to introduce students to various canonical postcolonial writers from a wide range of cultures, nationalities, regions and aesthetic formation. As well, we will examine foundational issues, debates and concepts in the field including the vexed nexus between nationalism and novel. Moreover, the course will address a wide variety of theoretical and critical perspectives with respect to reading aesthetic objects derived from and critiquing diverse political, cultural, social, economic and other perspectives with which they may generally be unfamiliar, at least at the outset. Through close readings of fourteen diverse novels, students will be empowered to engage critically with the dizzyingly diversity of the vast postcolonial library.

Disability Accommodations:

In line with federal law, the university strives to provide reasonable accommodations for students with either physical or mental disabilities (including learning disabilities such as ADHD or dyslexia). Accordingly, it is essential that you call my attention to any disabilities as soon as possible. In addition, it

is imperative that you contact the Office of Students with Disabilities in order to obtain not just the required documentation, but also, support on an ongoing basis. Especially in light of the challenges of remote learning, kindly endeavor to arrange for any disability assistance as early in the semester as possible.

On a different, but related note, let me underline my commitment to provide all students with a rigorous but safe and respectful learning environment by providing specific protection against harassment including sexual harassment. That undertaking notwithstanding, it is imperative that you feel free to express all good faith opinions even or especially when we address charged issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, nationalism, violence and so on.

Course Requirements:

- I. **Assignment Policy:** You will be required to write a weekly response paper—no longer than 500—addressing a central aspect of the session’s assigned readings. These papers, along with participation in class discussions will comprise 40% of the final grade. As well, you will be required to submit a 12-page final paper. The paper will comprise 60% of the final grade. In this regard, it is imperative that you submit all written assignments in within specified time deadlines. Please be aware that I do not accept late papers except in instances of unexpected illnesses, family emergencies and other unforeseen contingencies. Should you miss a deadline without valid excuse, then, you will fail the assignment in question.

- II. **Attendance Policy:** Except in cases of medical, family and other emergencies, attendance is mandatory. Moreover, its essential that you complete all assigned readings in a timely and thorough manner, the better to facilitate active participation in class discussions. Participation will be singularly important in light of the small class size as well as the unconventional remote learning option. You will be excused from having to attend any class session in the face of unforeseen contingencies, including illness or family emergencies. In the event of an unavoidable absence, kindly arrange to provide the instructor written notice as far ahead of schedule as possible. To clarify, you will still be required to complete the assigned reading as quickly as feasible and thereafter submit a two-page response paper. Moreover, I recommend that you arrange to meet me in order to catch up.

- III. **Grading Criteria.** (This applies specifically to the final paper the topics of which will be determined individually in consultation with the instructor)

Grade A. Generally speaking, this grade will be assigned to an essay that formulates a cogent, coherent and plausible argument focusing on a critically significant aspect of the form and content of a particular primary text read in conjunction with any two of the theoretical ideas addressed during the semester. The paper will be of such quality that it could be revised into a conference paper or even provide the foundation for an elaborate publishable essay. I reward originality and reasonable intellectual risk-taking even in instances when the final argument remains limited, unrefined or flawed in some respects. However, I also place a high premium on lucid writing, substantive arguments and compelling evidence. I am less impressive with the sheer accumulation of unexplained and unexamined textual examples than a succinct close reading of one detailed examples.

Grade B. Such paper evinces many strengths in terms of addressing an original and potentially insightful topic; formulating a possibly cogent argument; and beginning to marshal the evidence to justify its conclusions. Nevertheless, the essay falters in some significant thus inhibiting the elaboration of a specific, sustained, in-depth and effective argument. To clarify, the flaws undermining the paper's potential extend beyond the occasional typo and other minor slips. For instance, the paper may hinge on a sound theoretical foundation and propose a plausible critique only to be compromised by the sketchiness of the analyses of salient passages. Alternately, the paper's overall soundness may be marred by a tendency to cite secondary sources uncritically. A B paper could conceivably be translated into conference paper or even methodically elaborated for eventual publication, but either task would entail substantial revision, if not, a fundamental rewrite.

Grade C At the graduate level, this grade would be problematic indicate, as it does, a substantially flawed effort. The paper may evince a satisfactory overall understanding of the topic as well as the texts in question, only to be rendered ineffective by persistently unclear writing, dubious premises, unsound arguments and unwarranted conclusions. Along the same lines, the paper's may be rendered ineffective by a persistent lack of critical focus, argumentative specificity and analytical depth. Alternately, the paper may outline a plausible line of argument but focus disproportionately, if not entirely, on thematic or sociological analyses; thus, it fails to address the primary text as a work of art or aesthetic object.

Grade D a paper deeply flawed paper, one that, for instance, fails to substantially and critically engage with any of the topics addressed during the semester. In addition, the paper in question may turn on questionable interpretations of a novel and/or a major scholarly argument.

Grade E will be assigned to a paper that entirely fails to address the essay topic presented and/or exhibiting fundamentally dubious understanding of the primary text or the pivotal concepts and ideas broached in the class. Moreover, the grade will be automatically assigned in instances of plagiarism.

Academic Honesty

As you are aware, the university places a high premium on academic honesty. Accordingly, severe penalties are imposed for plagiarism and other instances of intellectual deception or fraud. Examples of such dishonesty include: i) possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of research papers or exams, ii) submitting material that is wholly or substantially identical to material created or published by oneself or others, iii) making false claims regarding performance or work submitted for a class. The university's policies regarding intellectual honesty are detailed in the Academic Honesty Guidelines. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the guidelines and to ensure that all your work for this course is in compliance. If you are ever in any doubt regarding the appropriate use of research materials, please consult the instructor. **Class Schedule** (please note the schedule detailed above is not final and is subject to change).

Week 1: Tuesday, September 1:

- I. Introductions
- II. J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

III Bill Ashcroft, et. al., *The Empire Writes Back*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 2: September 8:

- I. Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
- II. Jonathan Arac, *Huckleberry Finn As Target and Idol*

Week 3: September 15:

- i. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
- ii. Frederic Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65- 88.
- iii. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (Selections)

Week 4. September 22:

- i. Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*.
- ii. Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Week 5. September 29:

- i. Ferdinad Oyono, *Houseboy*
- ii. Fanon, "Concerning Violence," in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Week 6. October 6:

- i. Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*
- ii. Abiola Irele, *In Praise of Alienation*."

Week 7. October 13:

- i. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*
- ii. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Week 8. October 20:

- i. Sembene Ousmane, *Xala*
- ii. Fanon, "Pitfalls of National Consciousness," in *The Wretched of the Earth*

Week 9. October 27:

- i. Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

Week 10: November 3:

- i. Joy Kogawa, *Itsuka*

Week 11: November 10:

- i. Alan Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country*

Week 12. November 17:

i. Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*.

Week 13. November 24. Witi Ihimaera, *The Whale Rider*

Week 14. December 1. Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing*; part i

Week 15: December 9: Gyasi, *Homegoing*, part ii