

ENG1131: WRITING THROUGH POSTCOLONIAL CITY MEDIA
Spring 2026 Syllabus



Anwar Jalal Shemza, *City at Morning, Noon and Night*, 1968-69

Instructor	Debakanya Halдар
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Class Meetings	MWF – Period 6 (12:50 PM to 1:40 PM) ONLINE
Screening Period	M - Period 9-11 ONLINE
Office Hours	MF – 1:45 PM to 2:45 PM ONLINE Or by appointment
Course Website	Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The city is a rich spatial location for studying the interactions of social, economic, political, and cultural transformations in society. It has become a particularly important point of entry for postcolonial studies, offering insight into key concepts such as displacement and memory. The postcolonial city space also becomes a marker of time as it transitions from colonial pasts to an identity rooted in belonging.

In this course, we will explore postcolonial city media and the narratives they present about the city and its inhabitants. We will learn about three postcolonial South Asian cities – Lahore, Calcutta, and Bombay – and investigate the different types of media that were being produced.

Texts will encompass multimodal media, including films like Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1998), Mrinal Sen's *Interview* (1970), Satyajit Ray's *The Adversary* (1970), and Anand Patwardhan's *Bombay: Our City* (1985). We will also engage with the artwork of Anwar Jalal Shemza and photographs of the cities. The course also includes shorter literary works, including essays by Mohsin Hamid and poems by Buddhadeva Bose, Allen Ginsberg, and Arun Kolatkar. Other media include short videos, StoryMap projects, newspaper clippings, podcast episodes, and radio broadcast footage.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of ENG1131, students will be able to:

1. Have a working knowledge of postcolonial theory and urban media
2. Engage with multimedia texts and make logical and nuanced interpretations.
3. Critically engage with academic writings and social theories.
4. Implement projects in digital and public humanities

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (i.e. grammar, punctuation, usage) and the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive, require multiple drafts submitted to the instructor for feedback prior to final submission, and fulfill 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirements. Course content must include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes, and contexts. Students are expected to learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims, and evidence and to analyze writing for errors in logic.

- The University Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication, and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the subject area.
- **Communication:** Students clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written or oral forms appropriate to the subject area.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the subject area.

ASSIGNMENTS:

(See the following section for word count and points.)

- Reflections: is one final reflection write-up. Students will answer open-ended and subjective questions based on the topics covered. This assignment will help students to reflect on their learning journey.
- Workshop Participation: This course will include a total of two workshop sessions for the final StoryMap project. Students are expected to participate in all of these sessions. Participation includes attendance, answering questions, completing the assigned short homework, and submitting workshop drafts for correction.
- Quizzes: There will be 2 quizzes comprising short objective questions and a few subjective ones. The questions will be based on the modules that have been covered.
- Response Papers: Students must complete all three response papers, in which they provide their critical speculations on the media covered for the three postcolonial cities.
- Discussion Posts: There will be discussion posts for almost all texts, totaling twenty 100-word posts. Students are expected to make observations on themes, positionality, language, and rhetorical devices implemented in the texts.
- StoryMap Project: As their final course project, students will work in pairs to create StoryMap projects on a postcolonial city not covered in class. The project will utilize peer-reviewed sources of audio-visual materials and textual information, incorporating critical training from the class.

- Presentation: At the end of each city module, two groups of 3-4 students each will choose a media focus and deliver presentations (15 minutes each group). Students are encouraged to include audiovisual materials to support their analysis. Presentations will be followed by a Q&A and class discussion.
- Attendance and participation: Your attendance and participation are necessary for holistic discussions on the topic and the given texts. Every student needs to talk about their experience of engaging with the texts.

ASSIGNMENT	WORD COUNT	POINTS
Discussion Posts (20)	100x20 = 2000	15x20 = 300
Workshops (2)	250x2 = 500	20x2 = 40
Reflection (1)	200x1 = 200	20x1 = 20
Presentation (1)	500x1 = 500	100x1 = 100
Response Paper (3)	600x3 = 1800	100x3 = 300
StoryMap (1)	1000x1=1000	100x1 = 100
Quizes (2)	-	20x2 = 40
Attendance and Participation	-	50x2 = 100
TOTAL	6000 words	1000 points

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All media texts will be available on Canvas. Check the course schedule for text lists.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Tentative):

Subject to change—watch for Canvas announcements or messages regarding any updates.

WEEK	DATE	AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS/ SCREENING
1	1/12	Introduction to the course	
	1/14	What is a Postcolonial City?	
	1/16	Postcolonial South Asian Literature and Media: Brief History	
2	1/19	HOLIDAY	
	1/21	What is positionality? Understanding positionality and the gaze	

WEEK	DATE	AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS/ SCREENING
	1/23	Introduction to StoryMaps as Critical Visual Media	
3	1/26	City 1: Lahore Introduction to Lahore as a Postcolonial City Discussion: Remembering the Walled City of Lahore https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cbb1bbcab9b843bcbd5a2f610a863fee Discussion: A tour through the streets of Old City Lahore, Pakistan https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d18d21cbe7a24a248a1e8f451c2f5cb6	Screening: <i>Earth</i> (1998) by Deepa Mehta
	1/28	Discussion: <i>Earth</i>	Discussion Post 1
	1/30	Discussion: “Lahore Journal; Pride of the Moguls and the Pride of Punjabis Still” by Barbara Crossette [newspaper article] Discussion: “Lahore as Kipling Knew It” by Robert D. Kaplan	Discussion Post 2
4	2/2	Discuss: “Art and the Postcolonial Imagination: Rethinking the Institutionalization of Third World Aesthetics and Theory” [Essay]	Discussion Post 3 Screening: Anwar Jalal Shemza Talk by Aphra Shemza - Blue Monkey Network https://youtu.be/BvfisK2v-5I?si=Lt3dkTtDmGO5OyMd
	2/4	Discussion: Artwork of Anwar Jalal Shemza, https://www.anwarshemza.com/publiccollections1.html	Discussion Post 4
	2/6	Discussion: Shemza, Mary (1989). <i>Anwar Jalal Shemza. Third Text</i> , 3(8-9), 65–78. doi:10.1080/09528828908576236 [essay]	Discussion Post 5
5	2/9	Discussion: Mohsin Hamid, “The Pathos of Exile” [Essay]	Discussion Post 6
	2/11	Discussion: Mohsin Hamid in conversation at <i>The Archive Project</i> [Podcast] https://literary-arts.org/archive/mohsin-hamid/	Discussion Post 7
	2/13	Presentation 1	Response Paper 1
6	2/16	City 2: Calcutta/Kolkata Introduction to Calcutta as a Postcolonial City Discussion: “Calcutta, A City in Transition Expectations and Anxieties of Freedom, 1947–50” by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay [essay]	Screening: <i>Interview</i> (1970) by Mrinal Sen

WEEK	DATE	AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS/ SCREENING
	2/18	Discussion: <i>Interview</i>	Discussion Post 8
	2/20	Discussion: "The Refugee" by Buddhadeva Bose [poem] Discussion: "Last Night in Calcutta" by Allen Ginsberg [poem]	Discussion Post 9
7	2/23	Discussion: "Calcutta is not one disaster, but many Can India Survive Calcutta?" by Joseph Lelyveld [newspaper article]	Discussion Post 10 Screening: <i>Kolkata with Sue Perkins</i> (2015) https://www.facebook.com/100045618607979/videos/kolkata-with-sue-perkins/1238736119491899/
	2/25	Discussion: <i>Kolkata with Sue Perkins</i>	Discussion Post 11
	2/27	Discussion: "The Eyes of The Street Look Back: In Kolkata with a Camera Around my Neck" by Ariadne van de Ven [essay]	Discussion Post 12
8	3/2	Discussion: <i>Calcutta Full Frame</i> by Thomas Patrick Kiernan [photographs] Discussion: <i>Calcutta</i> (1979-80) by William Gedney [photographs]	Discussion Post 13 Screening: <i>The Adversary</i> (1970) by Satyajit Ray
	3/4	Discussion: <i>The Adversary</i>	Discussion Post 14
	3/6	Presentation 2	Response Paper 2
9	3/9	"Building Nationhood through Broadcast Media in Postcolonial India" by Kripalani Coonoor	Discussion Post 8 Listening: Jawaharlal Nehru's Constituent Assembly Speech on Aug 15 https://youtu.be/MjM8TR9_oOo?si=jUwekf2eWthEX_6
	3/11	Workshop: Creating StoryMap project	
	3/13	Workshop: Library Research	
10	3/14-3/21	NO CLASS (Spring Break)	
11	3/23	City 3: Bombay/Mumbai Introduction to Bombay as a Postcolonial City	Screening: <i>Bombay: Our City</i>

WEEK	DATE	AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS/ SCREENING
		Discussion: Mumbai: India's Global Gateway by George Elliott https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/207ff03eb3d348c6a9084e817b460c47	by Anand Patwardhan
	3/25	Discussion: <i>Bombay: Our City</i> Discussion: Interview with Anand Patwardhan by Sean Cubitt [interview article]	Discussion Post 15
	3/27	Quiz 1	
12	3/30	Discussion: "Urbanism, mobility and Bombay: Reading the postcolonial city" by Bill Ashcroft [essay]	Discussion Post 16
	4/1	Discussion: "Bombay – The Gateway of India" [map project] https://hum54-15.omeka.fas.harvard.edu/exhibits/show/1958-bombay--gateway-to-india	
	4/3	Discussion: "Introduction: The worlds of Bombay poetry"	Discussion Post 17
13	4/6	Discussion: "We were like cartographers, mapping the city": An interview with Arvind Krishna Mehrotra by Laetitia Zecchini [interview article]	Discussion Post 18
	4/8	Discussion: "Pi-Dog" by Arun Kolatkar [poem]	Discussion Post 19
	4/10	Discussion: "We Were Looking for Our Violins" by Sonal Khullar [multimedia article]	Discussion Post 20
14	4/13	Presentation 3	Response Paper 3
	4/15	Course Conclusion	Reflection
	4/17	Final Quiz	
15	4/20	StoryMap Presentation Day	
	4/22	Writing Day	Final Creative Project Submission

GRADING SCALE AND RUBRIC:

A	4.0	94-100	940-1000		C	2.0	74-76	740-769
A-	3.67	90-93	900-939		C-	1.67	70-73	700-739
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899		D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	84-86	840-869		D	1.0	64-66	640-669
B-	2.67	80-83	800-839		D-	0.67	60-63	600-639

C+	2.33	77-79	770-799		E	0.00	0-59	0-599
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A	4.0	94-100	Shows an exceptional level of thoughtful engagement with the text(s), complex, creative and well-reasoned arguments, and a clear prose style. The paper uses several logical examples to fully develop a persuasive thesis and is organized in such a way that invites the reader to follow along. The prose is clear and interesting, and there are no errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling.
A-	3.67	90-93	
B+	3.33	87-89	Needs more attention to one or two of these areas: sophistication and nuance of arguments (a more arguable thesis statement, use of more evidence or analysis, qualification of arguments, etc.), prose style/formatting (sentence structure, diction, clarity), or organization (paragraph construction, flow of ideas).
B	3.00	84-86	
B-	2.67	80-83	
C+	2.33	77-79	Needs to push further in order to go beyond a surface-level interpretation. Needs more textual evidence and analysis to support them. The overall argument might not be clearly or convincingly articulated. A 'C' paper also needs improvement in clarity of prose and/or organization.
C	2.0	74-76	
C-	1.67	70-73	
D+	1.33	67-69	Indicates a superficial engagement with the text, and inattention to argument, prose style, and mechanics. The paper uses few or no examples, and the argument is unclear and unpersuasive. The organization is difficult to follow. The prose is unclear, and there are major errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling that impede comprehension.
D	1.00	64-66	
D-	0.67	60-63	
E	0.00	0-59	Shows little understanding of the assignment, is turned in extremely late, and/or shows extreme problems with argument and grammar. Or, you may have committed any one of the following failing errors: failure to meet the word count, plagiarism, or failure to address the prompt.