

The University of Florida.

Department of English.

LIT 4188: Introduction to Postcolonial Studies

Spring 2025

Time: T 4; R 4, 5.

Location: Turlington 2303
Phone: 352 682 3789.

Instructor: Apollo O. Amoko

Office: 4350 Turlington Hall

Office Hours: Friday 1-3pm by Zoom
or by appointment

Email: aamoko@english.ufl.edu

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 continues 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.

Course Objectives:

The course is predicated on the following three objectives:

- i) Enhance critical thinking and effective writing by facilitating close readings of wide-ranging, insightful, and thought-provoking creative and critical writing. As detailed below, it brings together diverse writers from such diverse contexts as Canada, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, South Africa and Sudan. For each text, we will critique not only the relevant substantive content, but also, form, rhetoric, perspective, and

persuasiveness/effectiveness. I will concretely model and thus cultivate lucid writing and sound argumentation. Accordingly, the course includes three essays, details of which are described below.

- ii) Familiarize students with diverse cinema from various 20th and 21st century contexts across Africa. In this regard, the course emphasizes wide-ranging themes, perspectives and aesthetics exemplifying the politics of everyday life in the continent. We will examine the work of such canonical figures as Sembene Ousmane as well as new figures like Wanuri Kahiu.
- iii) As elaborated in the foregoing description, the course turns on a comparative critique of cinema and written literature in the specific context of a continent defined by unequal access to literacy and literariness. In this connection, we will address cinema as an ostensibly democratic mass market genre in contrast to novels that are confined to an educated urban elite.
- iv) Finally, the course will introduce studies to foundational issues and concepts in African and/or postcolonial studies.

Provide students a substantive introduction an emerging field of compelling regional, national, and international interest, that is, to illness and disability studies. Predicated on a critique of what preeminent disability theorist Tobin Siebers terms “the ideology of ability,” the course highlights invaluable critiques of vitally consequential questions of public policy addressing invidious discrimination and insidious ableism on the one hand, and affirmative recognition, meaningful support, and reasonable accommodation on the other.

Requirements:

1. **Attendance** is mandatory for this class. The instructor will take attendance each day in class. Missing more than six class periods will result in a failing grade for participation; eight or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the class. Students may miss two 50-minute periods without penalty. Absences for medical and other emergencies will be excused with individual make-up arrangements devised by the instructor. These requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See [UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies](#).
2. **Participation** (15% 6 points per class) Students will be required to complete all assigned screenings and readings for the class period assigned and thereafter to participate meaningfully in class discussions including by asking and answering questions. The grade scale for participation is provided below.
3. **Response papers** (10 % 10 papers of 10 points each) You will be required to write a one-page response paper addressing a salient, compelling, or problematic aspect of each of the of the nine novels listed below. The papers will be due no later than 10 pm the day before each novel is to be studied for the first time. Focus on both the content and form of

each text. In lieu of a thesis or statement, you may also pose a question with an explanation of your question. This is meant to be a quick response, taking approximately 20 minutes. Responses are due by 10 pm the Monday night.

4. **First critical essay (20%- 200 points). 4-5 page (about 1000 words) due at no later than 5:00 pm on 14 February.** This essay entails a critical examination of a salient aspect of any one of the movies that we will have studied by Feb 4. For example, one could focus on the allegory of colonial relations at the heart of Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. I will provide a detailed handout in due course.
5. **Second critical essay (20%): 4-5 pages due not later than the beginning of class on Thursday 13 March.** This essay has the same format as the first one.
6. **Final critical Essay (35%). 7-8 pages due 29 April.** This essay entails a comparative critique of any two films we have studied in this class or of a novel and its film adaptation. I will provide a detailed handout.

Grades for Written Assignments.

- A. This grade denotes excellence, that is, a cogent well-written essay that meaningfully addresses all aspects of the assignment. Thus, it will include a succinct introduction with a well-defined topic and thesis; well-organized arguments justified using specific examples, sound logic and insightful analyses; and a strong conclusion briefly reiterating the substance and implications of the argument. The essay will demonstrate in-depth understanding of a salient aspect of the class while offering an original textual interpretation of the relevant primary and/or secondary texts. I reward intellectual risks even in instances of questionable conclusion if there is a diligent effort to construct a cogent argument and present evidence in a coherent and logical manner. While every effort should be made to proof-read and edit your work, minor grammatical or typological errors will not be penalized.
- B. This grade represents a good essay that is somewhat marred by some weaknesses. Such a paper will demonstrate a solid understanding of a good overall understanding of the assignment as well as the relevant texts. As it will include generally plausible interpretations and thoughtful arguments but falter in some of its details. For example, it may feature a well-defined topic with a sound thesis and some insightful well-developed examples, but also, instances of insufficiently specific claims or valid but uncritical textual analyses with no original insights. Finally, a potentially excellent argument can be undermined by repeated grammatical errors and other slips.
- C. Average paper, demonstrating as many strengths as weaknesses. This may reflect a potentially insightful argument that is marred by lack of focus, specificity, and depth because the author addressed too many examples. As well, inaccurate or incomplete citations and questionable interpretations will undermine an otherwise sound essay. Moreover, persistent grammatical errors and overly general or contradictory claims will render a well-defined argument ineffective.

- D. This grade signifies a flawed paper that misunderstands or disregards a critical aspect the assignment. Examples include falling short of the minimum page requirements, not elaborating claims beyond sketchy examples, or persistently rely on sweeping generalizations and flat assertions instead carefully constructed logical accurate. Further examples include fundamentally misunderstanding a central concept or entirely implausible textual analysis.
- E. A paper that fails to address any aspect of the assignment in terms of the specified topic and texts. The grade will also be awarded for a paper that persistently fail to engage with the texts in question with any specificity.

Grades for Participation:

- A. This grade will be awarded for timely completion of assigned readings, regular class attendance, and consistent attendance and regular contributions to class discussions. Students will be rewarded for probing questions and thoughtful ideas as well as for listening respectfully and responding meaningful to the ideas of others. There is no requirement to speak at each session.
- B. The grade will reflect regular class attendance with no more than four unexcused absences. Repeated instances of inattentiveness may also lower an evaluation from excellent to good. As well, it requires timely completion of assigned readings and meaningful participation in class discussions through thoughtful ideas and questions.
- C. This grade will be awarded for performances with many insightful contributions and thoughtful questions marred by four or more instances of inattentiveness and disengagement or up to six absences.
- D. The grade will be awarded in situations of erratic participation, that is, when the student's inattentiveness and absences significantly outweigh any positive contributions to class discussions. It will also apply when a student fails to complete more than a third of the assigned reading, is repeatedly dismissive of the opinions of others, or misses 7 sessions.
- E. A student will miss more than four classes or persistently fails to complete assigned readings.

Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. [See the "Get Started With the DRC" webpage on the Disability Resource Center site.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. On a related note, I undertake to provide all students with a rigorous but safe and respectful learning environment by providing specific protection against harassment including sexual harassment.

Grading Scale [This class uses the UF grading scale and policies.](#)

Student Evaluations Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period

opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies behavior that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

If you are ever in any doubt regarding the appropriate use of research materials, please consult the instructor before turning in the assignment in question. You are advised to retain all graded papers until you have been assigned a final grade.

Texts:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Purple Hibiscus*
J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*
Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*,
Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not*
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*
Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*
Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*
Salman Rushdie, *Shame*
Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1: Jan 14: i) Introductions.

Jan 16: Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, first half.

Week 2. Jan 21 and 23: Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, second half.

Week 3. Jan 28 and 30: Rushdie, *Shame*; first half.

Week 4. Feb 4 and 6: Rushdie, *Shame*.

Week 5: Feb 11 and 13: Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Week 6. Feb 18 and 20: Roy, *The God of Small Things*

Week 7. Feb 25: Roy, *The God of Small Things*

Feb 27: Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

Week 8. March 4: Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

March 6: Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Week 9. March 11 and 13: Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Week 10. March 18 and 20: Spring Break; no class.

Week 11. March 25 and 27: Kogawa, *Obasan*

Week 12. April 1 and 3: Kogawa, *Obasan*

Week 13. April 8 and 10: Adichie, *The Purple Hibiscus*

Week 14. April 15: Adichie, *The Purple Hibiscus*

April 17: Oyono, *Houseboy*

Week 15. April 22: Oyono, *Houseboy*