

Carleton University
Fall 2014
Department of English

**ENGL 4975A: *Issues in Postcolonial Theory*
"Key Terms in Postcolonial Theory"**

Thursdays 11:35-2:25
Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*

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Office hours: Thursdays 9:30-11:00

Course Description:

Postcolonial theory is a complex and contentious field. Since its emergence in the 1970s, both the parameters of postcolonial studies and the term "postcolonial" itself have been subject to debate. Provisionally, however, we may define postcolonial theory as the analysis of:

- aspects of Western culture and discourse that helped to sustain the colonial enterprise
- the cultural impact of imperialism on both colonizer and colonized
- the discursive forms of resistance that emerged during and in the aftermath of empire

In this course we will take a "key terms" approach, identifying 12 influential concepts in postcolonial theory as well as the major scholar(s) associated with each concept. The theoretical readings will span a variety of historical moments, from the anticolonial writings of the Negritude and nationalist independence movements of the era of decolonization to the postcolonial interventions of Said, Spivak and Bhabha. We will also consider postcolonial theory's relationship to the overlapping fields of diaspora and transnational studies and the alternative perspectives that each of these approaches offers.

In addition to weekly theoretical readings, students will read three works of postcolonial literature that will serve as reference points and examples upon which we will draw over the course of the term. **If possible, please read the plays and novel before the start of term.**

Please note that no particular background in postcolonial theory is required for this course.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

<p>attendance and participation 10%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of the seminar format of this course, attendance and participation are vital to students' success. The attendance and participation grade will reflect regular attendance (two absences maximum) and active involvement in the seminar discussions.
<p>weekly email responses 10%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one-paragraph response to the assigned reading by email will be due by 9:00 pm on the night preceding the class in which that text is being discussed. These responses should be brief but thoughtful, raising questions about the theoretical reading or identifying a passage that you found particularly striking or problematic. Responses should not only summarize the author's argument but should offer some interpretation or critique. • NB: If you are absent from class, you must still submit a response. Responses will not be accepted after the class in question has taken place. You do not need to write a response for a class in which you are presenting.
<p>presentation "A" 20%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the "A" presentation, the student will explicate the key term as it is put forward in the assigned reading. He or she will write a brief definition of the term and circulate it to the class at the beginning of the presentation. After defining the term and its significance for the reading as a whole (10 min.), the "A" presenter will pose 3 or 4 questions to the class about the term and its implications and lead a discussion. • NB: These questions should be included on your handout along with your definition of the term. The definition should not be a generic dictionary definition but should be drawn from the theoretical reading.
<p>presentation "B" 20%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the "B" presentation, the student will apply the theoretical concept under consideration to one of the three assigned works of postcolonial literature (Césaire, Friel or Smith) and lead a discussion. Which motifs, scenes, or other aspects of the literary text are illuminated by the theoretical concept in question? What are the limitations of this theoretical approach when applied to the play or novel that you have chosen? (10 min.) • NB: For the "B" presentation, you may also use a short literary or visual text (poem, film clip, painting etc.) of your own choosing provided you consult with me first and make the material available to the class.
<p>research paper 40%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-page research paper in MLA format (12 pt. font, double spaced) due in the last class (-1/3 of a letter grade per day late). Extensions will be granted only in cases of serious illness (with doctor's note), bereavement, or religious observance. • In this paper, you will apply one of the theoretical models that we have discussed to one of the assigned literary texts or to a literary text or film of your choosing (if you are using a text that has not been assigned, please run it by me first). • NB: For this paper, you should become familiar with the larger theoretical work from which the excerpt that we read was drawn. • Brief paper proposals will be due on Nov. 13

Readings:

Students are expected to come to class having prepared all of the required readings for a particular week.

The following required texts are available at Haven Books (43 Seneca St. at Sunnyside, (613) 730-9888):

- Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman Eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (Columbia UP)
- Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest* (TCG, Trans. Richard Miller)
- Brian Friel, *Translations* (Faber and Faber)
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (Penguin)

In addition, essays marked * will be available in electronic format via CULearn and the Ares Course Reserves system (<http://libares01.carleton.ca/>) or the library catalogue. *If you find that a required reading is not available for a given week, please notify me immediately by email.*

Recommended Background Guides:

When preparing your presentations and papers, you may wish to consult a guide to postcolonial theory. Here are a few that I would recommend:

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

In addition, more general guides to literary theory, such as M.H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms* or Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, may also be helpful in providing broader context and background for our course readings.

Tips for how to give an effective presentation on a theoretical text

- make an argument just as you would in an essay, and try to put forward an interpretation that other students can respond to (agreeing, disagreeing etc.)
- since theoretical texts can be quite dense, don't necessarily try to cover the entire text but instead be selective and go in depth into an aspect of the text that you think is especially important
- isolate key quotes from the text to help the class zero in on the theorist's key points, to support your interpretation of the text, and/or to stimulate discussion
- use your time economically and effectively
- rehearse your presentation beforehand to make sure it is neither too long nor too short

Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by the last official day to withdraw from classes in each term.

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offence, and all cases will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty. Plagiarism includes copying from a book, article, or another student, downloading ideas or material from the Internet, or otherwise submitting someone else's work or ideas as your own. See section 14 of the Undergraduate Calendar for further information and be sure to come see me during my office hours if you have any questions or concerns about the appropriate use of secondary or internet sources.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments (subject to revision)

date	key term	reading(s)	in Williams/Chrisman
Sept. 4	introduction		
Sept. 11	"postcolonialism"	Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress" Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-)colonialism?"	291-304 276-290
Sept. 18	"colonialism" "negritude"	Aimé Césaire, from <i>Discourse on Colonialism</i> Léopold Senghor, "Negritude" <i>finish reading both plays by today</i>	172-180 27-36
Sept. 25	<i>class cancelled</i>		
Oct. 2	"resistance"	Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture" Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture"	36-52 53-65
Oct. 9	"language"	Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language" Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature"	428-434 435-455
Oct. 16	"Orientalism"	Edward Said, from <i>Orientalism</i> <i>finish reading White Teeth by today</i>	132-149
Oct. 23	"the subaltern"	Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"	66-104 (read Parts II and IV only)
Oct. 30	<i>Fall Break</i>		
Nov. 6	"hybridity" "mimicry"	Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders"* Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man"*	
Nov. 13	"creolization"	Kamau Brathwaite, from <i>Creole Society in Jamaica</i> *; "Timehri"* Edouard Glissant, from <i>Caribbean Discourse</i> *	essay proposal due
Nov. 20	"diaspora"	Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" James Clifford, "Diasporas"*	393-403 (focus on pp 302-315)
Nov. 27	"transnationalism"	Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy" Pico Iyer, "The Airport"*	324-339
Dec. 4	conclusion	presentation of essays topics and findings	essay due