

Carleton University  
Winter 2014  
Department of English

**ENGL 4975A: *Issues in Postcolonial Theory***  
**Tuesdays 2:35-5:25**

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### **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.

### Tentative Course Requirements and Evaluation:

<b>attendance</b> 10%	regular attendance (max. 2 absences) and active participation in class discussion
<b>weekly email responses</b>  10%	A one-paragraph response to the assigned reading by email will be due by <b>9:00 pm on the Sunday preceding</b> 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. <b>NB:</b> Responses will <b>not</b> 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.
<b>presentation "A"</b>  20%	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 three or four questions to the class about the term and its implications and lead a discussion. <b>NB:</b> 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.
<b>presentation "B"</b>  20%	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) <b>NB:</b> 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.
<b>research paper</b>  40%	10-page research paper in MLA format (12 pt. font, double spaced) due in class on <b>December 5th</b> (-1/3 of a letter grade per day late). 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 of your choosing (if you are using a text that has not been assigned, be sure to run it by me first). <b>NB:</b> For this paper, you should become familiar with the larger theoretical work from which the excerpt that we read in class was drawn.

### Tentative Required Texts:

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)

coursepack (\*readings in coursepack will also be on reserve at the library)

## **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.

**Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments (subject to revision)**

date	key term	reading(s)	in Williams/Chrisman
	<b>introduction</b>		
	<b>"postcolonialism"</b>	Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress"  Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-)colonialism?"	291-304  276-290
	<b>"colonialism"</b>	Aimé Césaire, from <i>Discourse on Colonialism</i>	172-180
	<b>"negritude"</b>	Léopold Senghor, "Negritude"  <i>*read both plays by today</i>	27-36
	<b>"resistance"</b>	Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture"  Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture"	36-52  53-65
	<i>Thanksgiving</i>		
	<b>"language"</b>	Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language"  Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature"	428-434  435-455
	<b>"Orientalism"</b>	Edward Said, from <i>Orientalism</i>  Aijaz Ahmad, "Orientalism and After"  <i>*read White Teeth by today</i>	132-149  162-170
	<b>"the subaltern"</b>	Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"	66-104 (focus on 78-83 and 90-104)
	<b>"hybridity"</b>	Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders"	coursepack
	<b>"mimicry"</b>	Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man"	coursepack
	<b>"creolization"</b>	Kamau Brathwaite, from <i>Creole Society in Jamaica</i> ; "Timehri"  Edouard Glissant, from <i>Caribbean Discourse</i>	coursepack  coursepack
	<b>"diaspora"</b>	Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"  James Clifford, "Diasporas"	393-403  coursepack (focus on 302-315)
	<b>"transnationalism"</b>	Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy"  Pico Iyer, "The Airport"	324-339  coursepack
	<b>conclusion</b>	presentation of essays topics and findings	<b>essay due</b>