

MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE: POSTCOLONIAL FICTION

ENG 267
Law Hall 321
1:00–3:00 pm (and Zoom meetings)
Block 7
March/April 2024

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What happens after empire? The term “postcolonial” refers to the consequences of global imperialism. At one point in time, a handful of European nations controlled 84 percent of the world’s terrain.

This course will examine postcolonial fiction: how writers in some former colonies responded to these conditions, how they reimagined their lives and their countries. Our focus will be authors from the Caribbean, Africa, and India, with attention to issues such as gender and sexuality, race and consciousness, identity and hybridity.

Readings may be drawn from select critics, including Aimé Césaire and Edward Said, as well as novelists ranging from Chinua Achebe to Jhumpa Lahiri. Overall, the course is designed for students who want to encounter stories and narrative voices from around the world.



“This is perhaps the most beautiful thing literature can do: forge a kinship across identities, freed from partisanship, unbound by space or time.”

—Kathryn Shulz

REQUIRED READING:

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. 1959. New York: Penguin Books, 2017.
 Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John*. 1985. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.
 Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*. 2003. New York: Mariner Books, 2019.
 Rushdie, Salman. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. 1990. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Please use these editions so that we are all on the same page. New and/or used copies are available at the college bookstore. All other readings will be made available online.

ASSESSMENT:

- I. Attendance: 10 points
- II. Participation and group work: 20 points
- III. Procedural essay: 10 points
- IV. Midterm examination: 10 points
- V. Annotations: 10 points
- VI. Group presentation: 10 points
- VII. Final examination: 30 points

TOTAL = 100 points

EXPECTATIONS:*Attendance*

Marshall Brickman once told a reporter that 80 percent of success is showing up. In this course, attendance will count for 10 percent of your final grade. But attendance means more than just showing up. You must be fully *present*: awake, alert, attentive, engaged. Each student is allowed to miss up to three class meetings. There is no need to tell me your reasons: it's three for free, no questions asked. If, however, you miss four classes (23.5 percent of the course), you will earn zero points for attendance. If you miss more, then you are at risk of receiving a failing grade. Any student who misses eight classes will fail automatically.

Preparation

This is a course for readers: there is no way around it. If your perfect day would find you curled up with a book, then you are in the right place. If this sounds like a form of hell, then you need to find a different course. Your focus will be to read four novels in a sustained and attentive manner. You should read each assignment in its entirety before the class session listed. Be an *active* reader: underline words, scribble in the margins, write down questions, and make note of passages that confused you. It is also helpful to write a quick summary after finishing a reading assignment: spend two or three minutes noting key words and ideas.

Participation

We learn by articulating ideas and refining those ideas in conversation with others. Try to be a lively participant in each class discussion. Raise points, ask questions. Listen carefully and respectfully to what others are saying. It is okay to disagree with one another: disagreement does not mean disrespect. This course is designed be a seminar, and this works most successfully when every single member of the course participates during every meeting.

Group Work

Everyone will be assigned to a group of three or four students. This will be your group for the entire block. In each class, you will work with your group: discussing course material and solving problems. In order to perform well in this group, you have to read the assignments before the class session begins. You will help one another to learn the course material.

Group Presentations

Toward the end of the block, you will work with your group to offer a presentation of no more than ten minutes in length. Each group will present on one novel that we have studied. The format will be developed by each group. For example, a given group may choose to employ PowerPoint. In any case, each individual member must contribute in some tangible way. This assignment will help you to develop your research, public speaking, and collaboration skills.

Procedural Essay

This is a course on reading literary fiction; thus, we will not emphasize expository writing. There will be exactly one writing assignment. The grading is holistic; no letter grades will be given, no points deducted for errors or omissions. This assignment also requires that you show up for a one-on-one Zoom meeting with the instructor to discuss your essay. So if you write an essay and show up for your scheduled meeting, then you will earn 100 percent of available points.

Annotations

As stated above, you will develop the skill of becoming an active reader. One way to do this is to scribble in the margins and interact, in real time, with the printed page. For this assignment, you need to purchase *at least one* of three paperbacks: Achebe, Kincaid, or Rushdie. You will write all over this book as you read it and then hand the paperback to your instructor. If you have engaged in a lively way, then you will earn 100 percent of available points. If you refuse to purchase at least one book, then you need to rent a copy of Achebe, Kincaid, or Rushdie and write delicately with a pencil. Erase all markings at the end of the block. Any student who uses an electronic text (iPad, Kindle, pdf, etc.) for this assignment will earn zero points.

Late Work

The block schedule moves quickly. To succeed, you should complete all readings and assignments by the designated dates. Do not fall behind. Any assignment submitted late will lose 10 percent. Note that any work submitted after 10 April will receive a score of zero.

Electronic Devices

Because paying attention is one of the goals of this course, I ask that all phones and electronic devices are turned off and placed out of sight. Students texting in class will be marked absent for the day. If there is a genuine life crisis, please pretend that it is 1977 and that you have to go out to use a payphone *before* texting or making that urgent call.

Examinations

There will be an in-class midterm and a final examination. The aim of these examinations is to assess that you have read and understood all assignments. In the midterm, you will be asked to recognize memorable passages and write with some fluency about the context and significance of those passages. The final exam will focus on the four assigned novels. These novels *are* the course content, and you are expected to demonstrate mastery over that content. If you neglect to read one or two or three of the assigned books, you will find it difficult to perform well in this course. The final exam will be offered twice, for your convenience, on the last day of the block.

Learning Needs

You are welcome to schedule a one-on-one meeting (via Zoom) to discuss anything related to the course. If you require accommodation for a diagnosed disability, please notify me privately at the beginning of the block.

Academic Integrity

It is the assumption that the work you present in this course will be your own. If you incorporate someone else's words or ideas, you must cite that person, text, or source. If you do not know how to cite sources, read chapter 14 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or ask me for guidance.

SCHEDULE:

Reading assignments must be completed by the start of the class period mentioned. Items marked with an infinity sign (∞) will be found on the website adamabraham.info.

18–24 March

WEEK 1

Empire & Postcolonial

 Mon. 1:00 Course Overview & Imperial Introduction

18–24 March [continued] Empire & Postcolonial

Tue. 1:00 Colonial Encounters ∞

Wed. 1:00 Considering the Postcolonial ∞

Thu. NO CLASS (Conferences)

••• **PROCEDURAL ESSAY DUE** at your scheduled conference

Fri. 1:00 • *Things Fall Apart*, pp. 3–62

25–31 March WEEK 2 Africa & Caribbean

Mon. 1:00 • *Things Fall Apart*, pp. 63–209

Tue. 1:00 • *Annie John*, pp. 3–53

Wed. 1:00 • *Annie John*, pp. 54–107

Thu. 1:00 • *Annie John*, pp. 108–148
And a midterm exam review session

Fri. 1:00 ••• **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

1–7 April WEEK 3 South Asia & Diaspora

Mon. 1:00 • *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, pp. 15–156

Tue. 1:00 • *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, pp. 157–211

••• **ANNOTATIONS DUE** by 3:00 pm

Wed. 1:00 • *The Namesake*, pp. 1–51

Thu. 1:00 • *The Namesake*, pp. 52–103

Fri. 1:00 • *The Namesake*, pp. 104–153

8–10 April

WEEK 4

After Postcolonialism

Mon. 1:00 • *The Namesake*, pp. 153–310
 • Prep time for group presentations

Tue. 1:00 ••• **GROUP PRESENTATIONS**
 And a final exam review session

••• **FINAL EXAMINATION**

Wednesday 10 April

CHOOSE one of the following examination times:

9:00 am–12:00 pm

for those who want/need extra time on the exam

OR

1:00 pm–2:30 pm

for everyone else

(Show up for *one* exam time only)



SUPPLEMENT:

For the overachievers. If you want to learn more about the British Empire and its aftereffects, here are some memorable cinematic representations ...

TEN FILMS ABOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Clive of India (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1935) Richard Boleslawski
The Lives of a Bengal Lancer (Paramount, 1935) Henry Hathaway
The Bridge on the River Kwai (Columbia, 1957) David Lean
Lawrence of Arabia (Columbia, 1962) David Lean
Barry Lyndon (Warner Bros., 1975) Stanley Kubrick
Breaker Morant (Australia, 1980) Bruce Beresford
Gandhi (Columbia, 1982) Richard Attenborough
Earth (India, 1998) Deepa Mehta
Master and Commander (Twentieth Century-Fox, 2003) Peter Weir
Victoria and Abdul (Focus, 2017) Stephen Frears

COLLEGE BOILERPLATE:

Academic Honesty

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is their work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

AI Policy

The beta release of Dall-E-Mini in July 2022 and ChatGPT in November 2022 are among many tools using artificial intelligence. There is a good possibility that using tools like these are going to become an important skill for careers in the not distant future (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/07/chatgpt-bot-excel-ai-chatbot-tech>). In the meantime though, it's going to take a while for society to figure out when using these tools is/isn't acceptable.

- Work created by AI tools may not be considered original work and, instead, considered automated plagiarism. It is derived from previously created texts from other sources that the models were trained on, yet doesn't cite sources.
- AI models have built-in biases (ie, they are trained on limited underlying sources; they reproduce, rather than challenge, errors in the sources).
- AI tools have limitations (ie, they lack critical thinking to evaluate and reflect on criteria; they lack abductive reasoning to make judgments with incomplete information at hand; they make up or use inaccurate information and may "hallucinate" sources that do not exist).

Disability Statement

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Disability Services and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/student-success-center/disabilities/index.shtml>.

Masking Policy

The Safe Repopulation Task Force reviewed and significantly revised COVID-19 campus protocols. All mitigation strategies ceased as of May 15, 2023. No mask requirements are in place at this time. However, as a mask-friendly campus, mask-wearing remains accepted in all situations without question. A contagious illness monitoring group will replace the Safe Repopulation Task Force and will meet when needed.