

Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures

Professor: Sara Kazmi

E: kazmi@sas.upenn.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5 PM or by appointment

Course Description

How does literature contend with the legacies of empire, specifically, modern European colonial rule in the 20th century? How have authors interpreted and responded to decolonization, and relatedly, to emergent forms of neo-colonialism? How have these processes shaped contestations around issues of gender, race, class, caste, and nation? This course will think through these concerns that continue to shape art, culture, and society in the global south today, long after the end of formal empire. We will analyze contemporary novels, short stories, and essays addressing regions and contexts ranging from South Asia and West Africa to the Caribbean and post-war Britain. Texts will serve to introduce students to key authors and theoretical debates within the field of postcolonial literatures, and include Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The course will also engage with critical perspectives on 'post'-colonialism, and explore what postcolonial literatures can teach us about ongoing moves to 'decolonize' universities in the global north and beyond.

All texts will be in English, no prerequisite knowledge or expertise needed. Feel free to reach out via email or drop by during office hours if you have any questions about the course.

Novels

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. (1958)

Ngũgĩ Wa' Thiongo. *A Grain of Wheat*. (1967)

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*. (1988)

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. (2000)

Textbooks/ Theory

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*. (1998)

Cesaire, Aime. *Discourse on Colonialism*. (1950)

Ashcroft, Bill, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. 2nd Edition. (2006)

Films (*subject to change*)

Sissako, Abderrahmane. "Bamako" (2006)

Potencorvo, Gillo. "La Battaglia Di Algeri" (The Battle of Algiers) (1966)

Sembene, Ousmane. "Borrom Sarret" (The Wagon Driver) (1963)

Cisse, Souleymane. "Baara" (Work) (1978)

Assignments and Assessments

Class Participation (15%): This course stresses in-class discussion, so please come prepared having read and thought about the assigned readings.

Presentation (20%): Each student will prepare a 10-12 minutes long presentation that sketches the analysis and arguments of their final paper. Each presentation will be followed by a short Q and A session (5 minutes). The presentations will take place in the last two classes of the semester, and will allow you to get feedback on your paper, and to engage with each other's research.

Weekly Posts (25%): Students are required to post a brief commentary to Canvas for any 11 of the 14 weeks for which we have assigned readings and texts. Your post should be between 250 and 500 words in length, and should be free of grammatical and formatting errors. The post should reflect critically on assigned readings, and may include questions the reading provoked, as well as aspects that you wish to further discuss in class. The purpose of the exercise is to aid students in preparing for class discussions. Your grade for this instrument will depend on a close and thoughtful engagement with the assigned text(s), and the timeliness of your submission. The post will be due by 5 PM every Monday except for Week 2. In Week 2, the post is due on Tuesday, Sep 3 by 3 PM instead, since Monday is a holiday.

Final Paper (40%): The final submission for the course will take the form of a research essay that will undertake a comparative analysis of literary texts drawn from at least two distinct postcolonial contexts. You may choose to organize your essay around a key theme covered in the course, such as decolonisation, e.g., colonialism, nationalism, gender, race, and migration.

Due date: December 16, 2024

Length: 2500-3000 words

How to submit: Please email me your essay in an MS Word file so that I can use Track Changes to grade and leave comments. The title of the document should be in the following format: YOURNAMEPocoLit.

Course Policies

Attendance and Absences: Attendance is required in this course, however, students are allowed up to 2 unexcused absences throughout the semester. If an extenuating circumstance requires that you miss more than 2 classes, please consult with me. You are responsible for getting notes from your classmates for any classes that you miss.

Email and Office Hours: Students may write to me, or drop by during office hours to discuss any questions they have about the readings or assignments. If you cannot make it during my office hours, please write to me at kazmi@upenn.edu to schedule an appointment. Please note that I will respond to your emails within 48 hours of receiving them, unless you email me on a Friday, in which case I will respond on Monday. I will occasionally make announcements about the course outside of class time, so please make sure that you read any emails from me in a timely manner.

Late Work: I expect you to submit all assignments on time. In the event that an emergency interferes with your ability to complete your work on time, please let me know with maximum advanced notice. Any such extensions must be arranged at least 24 hours in advance of the due date/time and students must be prepared to document their reasons for requesting an extension. Assignments submitted late, including Canvas posts, may incur a penalty. In the absence of an extension, late term papers will lose one grade “step” for every 24 hours the assignments is late. For example, a paper that would have merited an “A-“ will received a “B+” if submitted within 24 hours after the due date, a “B” if submitted within 48 hours after the due date, and so on.

Religious holidays and assignments: If an assignment due date falls on a religious holiday that you are observing, please let me know at the beginning of the semester. I will discuss an alternative submission date with you in advance.

Syllabus [Subject to change]

Introduction to the course

Week 1

8/27

- Introduction to the course
- Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education" in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* [pp. 428-430]
- Wainaina, "How to write about Africa" *Granta* 92, 2005. <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>

8/29

- Loomba, "Defining the Terms: Colonialism, Imperialism, Neo-colonialism, Postcolonialism" in *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* [20 pages]

Empire and Culture

Week 2

9/3

- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* [Chaps 1-8]
- Achebe, "Colonialist Criticism" in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* [pp. 57-61]

9/5

- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* [Chaps 9-15]
- Achebe, "English and the African Writer," *Transition*, 1997, No. 75/76. Pp. 342-349.

Week 3

9/10

- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* [Chaps 16-25]
- Janmohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 18-23.

9/12

- Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*. [102 pages]

Week 4

9/17

- Said, "Orientalism," in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 87-91.
- Loomba, "Colonial Discourse", "Colonialism and Knowledge", and "Colonialism and Literature" in *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* [40 pages]

Decolonization

9/19

- *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) directed by Gillo Pontecorvo.
- Fanon, "On Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth* [60 pages]

Week 5

9/24

- Ngugi, “Introduction” and “The Language of African Literature” in *Decolonising the Mind* [33 pages]
- Senghor, “Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century”. [7 pages]

Nationalism

9/26

- Ngugi, *A Grain of Wheat*. [Pages 1-90]
- Nehru, “A Tryst with Destiny” [Uploaded on Canvas]

Week 6

10/1

- Ngugi, *A Grain of Wheat* [Pages 91-200]
- Anderson, “Introduction” in *Imagined Communities*. [8 pages]

10/3 NO CLASS [Fall break]

Week 7

10/8

- Ngugi, *A Grain of Wheat* [Pages 200-272]
- Fanon, “National Culture” in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, pp. 153-157.

Post-colonial Critique

10/10

- Loomba, “Feminism, Nationalism and Postcolonialism”, and “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonialism/ Post-colonialism* [30 pages]
- Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*.

Week 8

10/15

- *Borom Saret* (The Wagon Driver). Directed by Ousmane Sembène
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U59BefqjttE>
- Devi, “Draupadi” and “Breastgiver” in *Breast Stories*, Trans. By Gayatri Spivak.

10/17

- “Baara” (Work), Directed by Soulemane Cissé. [in-class screening]

Week 9

10/22

- Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* [Pages 1-80]
- Bhabha, “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences” in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* [7 pages]
- Suleri, “The Rhetoric of English India” in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*

10/24

- Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* [Pages 81-200]
- Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory,” in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* [8 pages]

The Post-colonial State and Culture

Week 10

10/29

- *The Shadow Lines* [Pages 201-256]
- Kaul, "Separation Anxiety: Growing Up Inter/National in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*", *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1/ 2, On India: Writing History, Culture, Post-coloniality (1994), pp. 125-145.

10/31 NO CLASS [Instructor away for conference]

Required Reading:

Smith, *White Teeth* [Pages 1-80]

Diaspora

Week 11

11/5

- Smith, *White Teeth* [Pages 1-80]
- Lamming, George. "The Occasion for Speaking," in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* [pp. 12-17]

11/7

- Smith, *White Teeth* [Pages 81-232]
- Brah, "Thinking through the Concept of Diaspora" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*

Week 12

11/12

- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* [Pages 233-383]
- Said, "The Mind of Winter" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*

11/14

- Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" [17 pages]
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* [Pages 383-480]

'After' Colonialism? Decolonization Today

Week 13

11/19

- Sissako, Abderrahmane. "Bamako" (2006)
- Nkrumah, "Introduction", "The Mechanics of Neo-colonialism" and "Conclusion", in *Neo-Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism*.
- Sankara, "A United Front Against the Debt" (1987) [Speech at the Organization for African Unity]
Video: <https://youtu.be/DfzoToJEnu8>

11/21

- Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor", *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-40.
- Walter Mignolo, 'What Does it Mean to Decolonize?' in Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 105-134.

Week 14

11/26

- Gopal, “On Decolonisation and the University”, *Textual Practice*, Vol. 35, Issue 6, 2021, 873-899.
- Gillian Godsell and Rekgotsofetse Chikane, “The Roots of the Revolution”, *Fees Must Fall*, ed. Susan Booysen (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), 54-73.

11/28 NO CLASS [Thanksgiving break]

Presentations

Week 15

12/3

- Student presentations

12/5

- Student presentations