

780N (01) Introduction to Postcolonial Theory / S. Shankar
Draft Syllabus/ Fall 2013

This course is an introduction to postcolonial theory as an influential academic formation of the last thirty years. It sets out to review, critique and contextualize this methodology of literary and cultural study. Accordingly, the course will engage with some of the major figures who have contributed to the emergence of this mode of cultural critique and its most persistent preoccupations and themes. Particular focus will be on literary studies, cultural studies and historiography, as these disciplines have been particularly important as sites for the elaboration of postcolonial theory. The expectation is that at the end of the semester students will have a strong general sense of the debates within the interdisciplinary field of postcolonial theory and be ready to pursue more particular projects relating to the field should they so wish.

We will read a variety of texts (excerpted or in entirety) from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* through Edward Said's *Orientalism* and the work of Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Rey Chow to more recent essays by Kwame Anthony Appiah, Simon Gikandi, and Rob Nixon. Some of our time will be focused on teasing out methodologies, or modes of cultural critique—noting how critics “doing” postcolonial theory do what they do. However, we will remain equally attentive to the urgent events, ideas and texts (in brief, objects of analysis) for the methodologies. The schedule below is organized thematically as well as chronologically. While our primary concern as we proceed through the semester will be to engage with important debates within postcolonial theory, we will track these debates roughly as they emerged and developed over the last thirty years.

Inevitably, even a semester long review of postcolonial theory must be selective. While every significant debate within the field cannot be covered, students should be well prepared at the end of the semester to pursue uncovered aspects and particular interests on their own. The following are examples of themes that will be explored in some detail: definitions of colonialism/postcolonialism/neocolonialism/imperialism; colonial discourse analysis; varieties of colonialism; Marxism; feminism; nationalism; questions of agency; notions of hybridity; racial identity. Towards the end of the semester, we will turn our attention to new tendencies within postcolonial theory oriented towards the exploration of ecocriticism, of vernacular postcolonialism, and of comparatism and translation.

Students interested in postcolonialism from a variety of cultural and philosophical perspectives will benefit from this class. The assignments are designed to train students in two of the most important genres of the profession: the conference presentation and the critical essay. Students are encouraged to imagine and execute projects that relate to their interests. Hawaiian and Pacific languages and literatures are outside my area of expertise; however some readings included will touch on these areas. I welcome students who wish to pursue projects relating to Hawai'i and the Pacific.

Required Texts (available at Revolution Books, 2626 So King St., between Puck's Alley and 7-11, except for course packet):

1. Desai and Nair, ed., *Postcolonialisms*
2. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

3. Edward Said, Orientalism
4. Trask, From a Native Daughter
5. Course Packet (available at EMA Campus Copy Center)

Assignments and Class Work:

During the semester, students will make one presentation related to the readings for the class. This will also be turned in as a five to six page paper for a grade. This presentation will be organized as part of a panel. Each panel will consist of three to four students. The students will collectively submit a panel proposal to me for approval (250 words). This proposal will indicate panel title as well as the rationale for the panel and give the title and a brief summary for each presentation. Once approved, the panel will present on the assigned day (see schedule below). I have set aside about an hour and fifteen minutes for each panel. Each presentation should be for fifteen minutes, leaving about a half hour for discussion. One of the students will act as chair. The chair will introduce the panel, keep time and moderate the discussion period. While the bulk of the grade for this assignment will be based on the paper you submit to me, I will take into consideration overall cohesion of the panel and presentation. It is essential that each panel work together well.

You are encouraged to initiate as well as participate in online discussions conducted in parallel to our class sessions. Each panel proposal, once approved, should be posted on the message board (see below) no later than early on the Monday before class meets. This is meant to facilitate discussion on the day of the panel presentation as well as to allow the discussion to continue beyond. In addition to these formal assignments, I encourage you to participate in discussions in class. You can do this by reading carefully, writing down doubts you want to clear, and taking notes on points you would like to pursue or develop further in class. This is a graduate seminar and I expect a lot of the work to be done in class discussions, the livelier the better.

Mid semester students will turn in a five-page research proposal with attached five-page (minimum) annotated bibliography. While the focus here will be exploratory (to test a research topic in a preliminary way), a grade will be assigned to this work. At the end of the semester, a twenty-five-page term paper, constituting the bulk of the grade for the semester, will be due. In addition, students will be expected to participate in online discussions conducted in parallel to our class sessions. Your final grade for the semester will be a composite of all these different activities as well as class participation. You should be aware that it is my firm policy not to give “incompletes” except for compelling reasons beyond your control. Also note that plagiarism—the presentation of work not your own as yours—will be grounds for failure.

Attendance is required. More than two unexcused absences may result in lower grades. Repeated tardiness in coming to class or leaving early may also affect your grade.

Please also note the following information relating to **Email, Course Home Page and Web-based Activities**

Each one of you has an UH email ID. All email communications from me to you will be through your UH email account. Please check your UH account on a regular basis in case there are relevant messages from me.

This course also has its own home page that you can access through the MyUH Portal. You will find a link to the MyUH Portal on the university home page <www.hawaii.edu>. To access your MyUH Portal, you will need your User ID and your UH password. On filling in this information in the relevant window, you will be taken to your personal home page. Look for Laulima, which will list the courses in which you are enrolled. Click on the link for this course (Eng 780N) and you will be taken to the course home page, which is restricted to students enrolled in this class and to me. Now is a good time for you to go to the course home page and take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with its different aspects.

The most relevant parts of this home page for our purposes are: “Announcements,” “Discussion and Private Messages,” and “Resources.” “Announcements” is where you will find general messages from me. “Resources” is where I will periodically place course materials. This document has already been placed there. We will use “Discussion” to continue conversations outside of class sessions (see above).

Schedule

This schedule indicates the readings you should have **concluded** for the specific class session, but please plan your semester carefully and read **ahead** if necessary.

Week 1. Jan 11

-Intro to Class

Definitions and Antecedents

Week 2. Jan 18

Read Sec 1 from Reader and Shankar, “Decolonization” and Nima Naghibi, “Colonial Discourse”

Foundational Texts and Textual Foundations

Week 3. Jan 25

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Week 4. Feb 1

Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Week 5. Feb 8

Colonial Discourse Analysis and the Politics of Language and Literary Studies

Read Secs. 2 and 3 from Reader and Viswanathan, Rushdie and Rao

Postcolonial Contexts: Histories, Movements, Identities (Part I)

Week 6. Feb 15

Panel I on Weeks 3-5

Varieties of Colonialism

Read Sec VIII and Wolfe

Week 7. Feb 22

The Politics of Race and Indigeneity

Read Trask; and Senghor and Gilroy from Reader

Week 8. Mar 1

The Nationalism Debate

Read Anderson, Chatterjee, Gandhi and Gilroy (from course packet) (Review Fanon “On National Culture”)

Postcolonial Contexts: Histories, Movements, Identities (Part II)

Week 9. Mar 8

Panel II on Weeks 6-8

Hybridity and Questions of Agency (again)

Read Sec V from Reader

Week 10. Mar 15

Genders and Sexualities

Read Sec VI from Reader and Chandra Mohanty (both essays)

Week 11. Mar 22

Reading the Subaltern

Read Sec VII from the Reader and Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

Your five-page paper proposal with accompanying five-page annotated bibliography is due on this day

Week 12. Mar 29

Spring Break

Marxism and Globalization

Week 13. Apr 05

Panel III on Weeks 10-13

Marxist Approaches to and Critiques of Postcolonialism

Read Jameson, Ahmad, Lazarus, Bartolovich, Brennan, Shankar (from *Textual Traffic*)

Week 14. Apr 12

-Presentation of Research Projects

Week 15. Apr 19

Globalization and Postcolonialism

Read Sec IX from Reader and Appadurai and Appiah

New Directions

Week 16. Apr 26

Panel IV on weeks 13-15

Ecocriticism; Vernacular Postcolonialism; Comparatism and Translation

Read Chakraborty, Shankar (“Midnight’s Orphans”), Aboul-Ela, Guha, Nixon, and Spivak (“The Politics of Translation”)

Week 17. May 3

Wrap-Up

[If you have any disability-related academic needs, please contact the KOKUA program at 956-7511/956 7612 in room 0113 of the Student Services Center. I am happy to work with you and KOKUA to meet access needs related to your documented disability.]

[This syllabus and schedule may be revised if necessary during the course of the semester.]