

Spring 1-15-2007

ENG 2850-001: Postcolonial Literatures in English

Dagni Bredesen
Eastern Illinois University

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English 2850-001: "Postcolonial Literatures in English"
 "Revoicing the Story"
 Spring 2007
 Class Meeting: Monday/Wednesday

Dr. Dagni Bredeesen

Office Hours: Monday 2.00-3.00pm and Wednesdays 10-11am or by appointment
 Office: Coleman Hall 3321 // Email: dabredeesen@eiu.edu Phone: 217-581-6294



"Caliban"
 Franz Marc, 1914

Course Description: In this course, we will look at two sets of texts: one set by the colonizer (now firmly established within the canon of "English Literature"), the other a set of answers to those texts, a revising or 'revoicing' of them from a perspective suppressed in them. This answering is what constitutes the postcolonial, a telling of the story from the voices that form the silent bedrock of the colonial texts. So, for example, the voice of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* is articulated in more than an animalistic howl in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and the story she tells is different. Pitting these texts against each other, we get a holistic sense of the colonial experience—the conflict and the complicity, the violence and the exchanges it involves—and it is this particular conjunction that will produce what we will come to understand as the postcolonial.

Required Texts include:

Introduction: *The Tempest*

Unit One: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* / J.M.Coetzee's *Foe*

Unit Two: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*/ Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Unit Three: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*/ Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Purple Hibiscus*

As well as other textual and background readings.

Note: You will also need a College Level Dictionary to succeed in this course.

Course Assignments: To achieve the objectives described above students will need to keep up with the rigorous reading schedule and actively participate in the class discussion. The following assignments will foster the active engagement necessary to make this a productive and exciting learning experience.

I. Papers: Two “close-reading” essays (4 pages, 100 points each = 200 points)

One longer (5-7 pages) “argument” essay based on a topic you develop from your reading over this semester (200 points).

II. Examinations: **Midterm** (150 points) and **Final** (250 points)

III. Historical Briefs, Discussion Partnerships, and General Participation:

1 Historical Brief at 10-15 minutes with 1 page handout

OR Discussion leading with a partner of a primary text with handout.

Thoughtful engagement with the materials read evidenced in relevant questions and comments that respond to classmates as well as texts. (200 points)

Please note that this class is DISCUSSION-DRIVEN. This means that there is an expectation that each student will be fully prepared for each meeting having read and thought about the text(s) assigned for the day and able to initiate or contribute to discussion with relevant and meaningful questions or comments that indicate a serious effort to grapple with the readings and the questions that frame this course.

COURSE POLICIES

CLASS ATTENDANCE, punctuality, preparation, and participation are expected and required. You are presumed to be professionals-in-training responsible for attending class regularly and participating in discussion. In order to deal with unforeseen emergencies, you are allowed to miss up to the equivalent of one week of class without documented excuse. Any additional absences will, however, be penalized at a rate of one letter grade per two class meetings; any student who is absent for more than four classes (equivalent of four weeks) will earn a grade of **F** for the course.

ASSIGNMENTS are to have been completed by class time on the date for which they appear on the syllabus. The book(s) in which the day's assignments are contained should be brought to class. Unannounced quizzes on assigned material may be given at any time. There will be no opportunity to make up missed quizzes or in-class writing assignments. Students are responsible for material covered in class and announcements or assignments made in class as well as for assignments on the syllabus.

MAJOR TESTS AND EXAMS should be written on test booklets, available at the Union Book Store. Please write tests in ink and on the appropriate booklets. Announced tests and exams must be taken at the scheduled time. Except in cases of DOCUMENTED emergency or official university absence arranged ahead of time, there will be no opportunity to make up mid-term or final exams!

ALL PAPERS AND OTHER WRITTEN WORK must be handed in on the date due. Work turned in late without advance clearance will not be accepted. Any work turned in late with clearance will be penalized, usually at the rate of 5 points per day (not per class meeting) of lateness. Additionally, late submission may delay the grading and return of the paper, perhaps until semester's end. **BE SURE TO KEEP A COPY OF EVERY PAPER YOU HAND IN.** In the case of a missing paper, the student is responsible for supplying a copy.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS: Papers must be "typed" or computer-generated (double-spaced) on heavy or medium-weight white 8.5 x 11 paper. Computer print-outs must be "letter quality," 12-point size, clear, and dark--no pale print will be accepted. Use 1" margins. Each paper should have a separate title sheet which includes the title of the paper, course title, instructor's name, student's name, and submission date. Repeat the title at the top of the first page of text. Papers must be stapled or clipped, and pages numbered.

DOCUMENTATION: Use the MLA system to cite all primary and secondary sources used in preparation of your papers. Also, be sure to introduce sources in your text. Each student should have access to the latest edition of *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, and to a handbook of usage and mechanics.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA: Please keep in mind that electronic media materials must be documented as conscientiously and accurately as any other material. Be aware also that it is necessary to ascertain the authority, reliability, accuracy of all materials and that it may be particularly difficult to do so in the case of electronic media. Be sure to evaluate and clearly identify any source of information, analysis, or opinion; process material from electronic sources as critically and creatively as you do print sources. Check with the Writing Center for up-to-date documentation conventions. **DOWNLOADING IS NOT RESEARCH.**

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All written work (papers, exams, tests, quizzes) must be prepared independently; all sources and background material (print, electronic, or other) must be digested and acknowledged. Make to understand the meaning of plagiarism and the policy of the English Department:

*Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of the grade of **F** for the writing in which plagiarism occurs and a grade of **F** for the course, as well as to report the incident to the university's Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.*

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please note that arrangements must be made through the Office of Disability Services; you should, therefore, contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Course Schedule:

Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to change. Also, students should read assigned text(s) prior to the class in which the text(s) will be discussed.

Week One

Monday (1/8)

Introduction to Class: What, when, where and who is Postcolonial?

Map of the British Empire

Binarism

"White Man's Burden"

Map of Africa

HMWK: Read Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and be prepared to discuss in terms of its binary logic

Wednesday (1/10)

Discuss *The Tempest*

HMWK: First Paper Assignment (due Monday, January 22nd)

Get started reading *Robinson Crusoe* (up to and including p119 by Monday, January 22nd)

Week Two

Monday (1/15) Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday / No Class

Wednesday (1/17)

Continue discussion of *The Tempest*

Introduce Daniel Defoe and *Robinson Crusoe*

HMWK: *Robinson Crusoe* read up to p73

Week Three

Monday(1/22) **First Paper Due**
Historical Brief on 18th c British Slave Trade
HMWK: *Robinson Crusoe* to p119

Wednesday Discussion of *Robinson Crusoe*
HMWK: Finish Reading *Robinson Crusoe*

Week Four (1/29)

Monday: Discuss conclusion
Introduce J.M. Coetzee
Historical Brief on South Africa and the system of Apartheid
HMWK: *Foe* Part I

Wednesday: Discuss *Foe* Part I
HMWK: *Foe* Part II and III

Week Five (2/05)

Monday: Discuss assigned reading
Introduce Charlotte Brontë and *Jane Eyre*
HMWK: Read *Jane Eyre* Preface, chapters 1-10
Wednesday: Discuss reading
Historical Brief on Significance of Jamaica to British Empire
HMWK: *Jane Eyre*, chapters 11-27 (that's four chapters a day!)

Week Six (2/12)

Monday: Discuss assigned readings
HMWK: *Jane Eyre*, chapters 28-34
Wednesday: Discuss readings
Historical Brief: Overview of British Involvement in India
HMWK: *Jane Eyre*, chapters 35-38

Week Seven (2/19)

Monday: Discuss assigned readings
Introduce Jean Rhys and *Wide Sargasso Sea*
HMWK: *Wide Sargasso Sea* Part One
Wednesday: Discuss assigned Readings
HMWK: *Wide Sargasso Sea* Part Two and Ending

Week Eight (2/26)

Monday: Finish Discussion of *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Prepare for Midterm
Wednesday: MIDTERM EXAM
HMWK: Start Reading *Heart of Darkness*
Paper #2 Due Wednesday March 7th

Week Nine (3/05)

Monday: Introduction to Joseph Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*
Look at Congo Chronology p55-58
Wednesday: Paper #2 DUE

SPRING BREAK: March 12-16th / PLEASE FINISH READING *Heart of Darkness*

Week Ten (3/19)

Monday: Discuss *Heart of Darkness* Part I

HMWK: re-read *HD* part II

Wednesday: Discuss assigned reading

HMWK: re-read *HD* part III

Week Eleven (3/26)

Monday: Discuss assigned reading.

Introduce Chinua Achebe and *Things Fall Apart*

HMWK: read introductory essays by Gikandi and Ohadike and chapters 1-3

Wednesday: Discuss assigned readings

HMWK: Finish Part One chapters 4-13

Week Twelve (4/02)

Monday: Discuss assigned reading

HMWK: Read Part Two and Three

Wednesday: Discuss Part Three and ending of *Things Fall Apart*

HMWK: Selected Readings from *Wretched of the Earth*

Week Thirteen (4/9)

Monday: Discuss assigned reading

Wednesday: Discussion of *Wretched of the Earth* continued

Week Fourteen (4/16) HMWK: work on final paper and read Adichie *Purple Hibiscus*

Monday: Class cancelled for Evening Viewing of the *The Battle of Algiers*
(Showing time TBA)

Wednesday: Discussion of Fanon and *The Battle of Algiers*

Week Fifteen (4/23)

Monday: Discuss *Purple Hibiscus*

Wednesday: Discuss *Purple Hibiscus*