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ENG 5006-001: Postcolonial Literature and Theory

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Course description and requirement:
The main objective of this course is to offer you a solid foundation in the study of postcolonial literature and theory, a field in English studies that is the focus of some of the most exciting debates and cutting-edge discussions in our discipline. We’ll be reading primary texts (all novels), but we’ll also acquaint ourselves with writings by some of the leading theoreticians in postcolonial studies. These essays will help us better grasp and discuss the main issues and questions we’ll be exploring during the semester. The African continent is the focus of most of the novels; the main topics of our discussions will be:
1. The term “postcolonialism”
2. Orientalism
3. Nationalism
4. Re-reading and re-writing English literature
5. Postcolonialism and Feminism
6. Diaspora

The required texts we’ll be reading are as follows:
Shakespeare, The Tempest. Ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan
McLeod, Beginning Postcolonialism
Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman, Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory
Conrad, Heart of Darkness
Achebe, Things Fall Apart
Ngugi, A Grain of Wheat
Naipaul, A Bend in the River
Salih, Season of Migration to the North
Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea
Rushdie, Midnight’s Children

Papers, presentation, final exam, policies:
You’ll write a short paper (5-6 pages) and a long research paper (10 pages or longer) for this course. Topics will be chosen by you, but you may want to consult with me before starting the paper. You can write on a work studied in class or by one of the authors discussed, but you may wish to explore writings by an author from other previous colonies. I would like to see you make good use of the theoretical essays available to you.

Each of you is responsible for a thirty-minute oral presentation on the text assigned for the day. You’ll be the instructor and seminar leader during that half hour. You need to know
the text well, and plan a well-organized presentation in which you briefly introduce the work and then focus on a central topic, issue, or question you find interesting or troubling. Use your creativity and imagination!

There is no midterm but a final take-home comprehensive exam.

Please remember that you’ve signed up to be a member of a seminar. Although I might do some “lecturing,” you are the ones who’ll have a significant role in running the class. Be an active, engaged participant if you want the course to be a success. Try not to miss any classes. If an emergency prevents you from coming to class, please let me know! If you are absent more than twice during the semester, your grade for the course will be lowered.

Grading Policy:
Presentation: 15%  Short paper: 15%  Research Paper: 35%  Final Exam: 35%

The English Department policy on plagiarism states that “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 responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6538) as soon as possible.
Class Meetings:

August 21:
Introduction to the Course
Video on Africa

August 28:
Chapter One in McLeod
McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-colonialism’ in Williams and Chrisman
_The Tempest_
Read, also, pp. 91-115; and essays by Hakluyt, Skura, and Loomba in _The Tempest_

September 4:
Conrad, _Heart of Darkness_
Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s _Heart of Darkness_”
Frances B. Singh, “The Colonialist Bias of _Heart of Darkness_”
(all in the Norton Critical Edition)

September 11:
_Heart of Darkness_ (continued)
Said, From _Orientalism_; Porter, “_Orientalism_ and its problems”; Ahmad, “_Orientalism_ and After” (all in Williams and Chrisman)
Chapter Two in McLeod

September 18:
Student Presentation
Achebe, _Things Fall Apart_
Achebe, “The African Writer and the English Language” and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “The Language of African Literature” (both in Williams and Chrisman)

September 25:
Student Presentation
Chapter Three in McLeod
Ngugi, _A Grain of Wheat_ (Chapters 1-7)

October 2:
Student Presentation
Chapter Four in McLeod
Ngugi, _A Grain of Wheat_ (continued)
October 9:
Student Presentation (choice of critical essay)
Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* (pp. 1-140)

October 16:
Student Presentation (choice of critical essay)
Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* (pp. 140-278)

October 23:
Short Paper Due
Student Presentation
Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*
Makdisi, “The Empire Renarrated: *Season of Migration to the North* and the Reinvention of the Present” in Williams and Chrisman

October 30:
Student Presentation
Chapter Five in McLeod
Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

November 6:
Student Presentation (choice of essays from Rhys)
Chapter Six in McLeod
Section V (pp. 90-104) of Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (continued)

November 13:
McLeod, Chapter Seven
Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* (pp. 1-195)

Thanksgiving break

November 27:
Rushdie (pp. 197-389)

December 4:
Rushdie (pp. 391-552)

December 10: Final Paper due

Take Home Final Exam will be arranged