Postcolonial Dialogues: Literature and Criticism

Eng 730: Graduate Seminar
Fall 2012
Th: 9:30-12:15, HL 421

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Office Hours: M 2:05-4:00pm or by appointment (HL 428)

Course Description

In what ways was English literary studies in the colony formulated as a project of colonial rule? How did anticolonial actors imagine literature as a means to counter the hegemonic claims of empire? What critical idioms and comparisons have writers and scholars of the postcolonial world invoked to speak out against entrenched systems of discrimination? We will attend these questions by studying scholars and writers across broad temporal and physical locations, from nationalist writers in India to anticolonial theorists in the U.S. The course is organized around four three-week units on the following themes: the relationship between colonial conquest and literary production/education; the emergence of transnational, anticolonial writing; the fraught relationship between the novel and national literature; and finally, the connection between autobiography and human rights discourse. Although our examples draw heavily from political projects in South Asia and the African Diaspora, I encourage you to bring your own critical expertise to the conversation. The broad goal of the course will be to examine the ways in which literary culture has engaged questions of empire, nationalism, statehood, and human rights.

Required Texts

We will be reading the following books in the course, and they will be available at the SU Bookstore.

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*
Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*
Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*
W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*
Aime Cesaire, *A Tempest*
Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*
Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchu*

There are a more readings on the syllabus which SU Bookstore wasn’t able to acquire (Gauri Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest*, Sharankumar Limbale’s *The Outcaste*, Aime Cesaire’s *A Discourse on Colonialism*). For these texts, I’ll provide a PDF of these texts on Blackboard along with any other essays listed on the syllabus.
Course Requirements

There are four obligations in this course:

- The weekly core reading assignments.
- Written responses to the weekly readings, comprising a couple of paragraphs (~500 words), to be posted on Blackboard, no later than Wednesday at noon.
- A critical paper, 15-20 pages in length, to be specified in a brief prospectus by 11/1. At the end of the semester, we will conduct in-class conference-style presentations. Each presentation should last 15 minutes.
- Leading the discussion in one of the classes. This will involve developing a brief agenda of salient questions to help structure the weekly class discussions. Questions should be precirculated.

Assessment

Your performance in this class will be assessed in the following areas:

- Participation/ BB Posts 30%
- Leading Discussion 20%
- Final Presentation 10%
- Seminar Paper 40%

Schedule

The following reading schedule is subject to change. An asterix is placed next to a text, if it is recommended for further reading but not required for our class session.

8/30 Introductions
Ngugi Wa’Thiongo, “The Language of African Literature”
V.S. Naipaul, “Jasmine”

Literary Conquest and the Colonial Subject

9/6 Language Politics
Gauri Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (1989)
Priya Joshi, “Culture and Consumption: Fiction, the Reading Public, and the British Novel in Colonial India”
*Chinua Achebe, “English and the African Writer”
*Ranajit Guha, Dominance Without Hegemony

9/13 Narrative of Empire
Rudyard Kipling, Kim (1901)
Ashis Nandy, “The Uncolonized Mind: A Postcolonial View of India and the West”
Benita Parry, “The Content and Discontents of Kipling’s Imperialism”
*T.S. Eliot, “Introduction to A Choice of Kipling’s Verse”
*George Orwell, “Rudyard Kipling”
9/20  Counternarrative of Empire?
Mulk Raj Anand, “The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie”
Arun Mukherjee, “The Exclusions of Postcolonial Theory”
Georg Lukacs, “Realism in the Balance”
*Mulk Raj Anand, “The Sources of Protest in My Novels”
*Mulk Raj Anand, “How Unpleasant to Meet Mr. Eliot”
*Talat Ahmad, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*

Anti-Colonialism and Black Internationalism

9/27  Diaspora and Anticolonialism
Paul Gilroy, “The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity”
Robin D.G. Kelley, “But a Local Phase of a World Problem”
Joan Dayan, “Paul Gilroy’s Slaves, Ships, and Routes”

10/4  Reimagining the Color Line
W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess* (1928)
Homi Bhabha, “Global Minoritarian Culture”
Dohra Ahmad, “Beyond Romance”
Paul Gilroy, “Cheer the Weary Traveller”
*Bill Mullen *Afro Orientalism*
*Nico Slate, Colored Cosmopolitanism*

10/11  Counternarratives
Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955)
George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (excerpts)
*Roberto Retamar, “Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America”

“The Nation, Its Form and Its Fragments”

10/18  National Literature and the Minority
Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature: The Components of Expression”
*Saadat Hasan Manto, “A New Constitution”

10/25  The National Longing for Form
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* (Book 1)
Homi Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation”
Timothy Brennan, “The National Longing for Form”
Partha Chatterjee, “Anderson’s Utopia,” “Whose Imagined Community?”
*Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (Chapters 1-3)

11/1

“Third World Literature”
Salman Rushdie, Midnight’s Children (Books 2 & 3)
Fredric Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism”
Aijaz Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’”
Fredric Jameson, “A Brief Response”

“Post-National Subjects and Human Rights”

11/8:

Human Rights and the Bildungsroman
Schaffer and Smith, “Conjunctions: Life Narratives in the Field of Human Rights”
Slavoj Zizek, “Against Human Rights”
*M.M. Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism”

11/15

Testimonio
Rigoberta Menchu, I, Rigoberta Menchu
John Beverley, “’Through All Things Modern’: Second Thoughts on Testimonio”
Arturo Arias, “Rigoberta Menchu’s History within the Guatemalan Context”
*Mary Louise Pratt, “I, Rigoberta Menchu and the ‘Culture Wars’”
*Fredric Jameson, “On Literary

11/29

Dalit Self-Narratives
Sharankumar Limbale, The Outcaste
Sharankumar Limbale, Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature
Rita Kothari, “The Translation of Dalit Literature into English”
*S. Anand, Touchable Tales
*Baby Kamble, Prisons We Broke

12/6

Student Presentations