HU 6050: Postcolonial Theory and Literary Theory

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MWF 04:35-05:50

Course Description and Goals:

This course explores the articulation of subjectivity in postcolonial discourses through an approach combining theoretical and artistic works (including fiction, poetry, drama, and filmic texts). After a discussion of concepts, the course will focus on some of the intellectual and artistic productions that are considered as representative of the postcolonial discourse/aesthetics. By asserting the centrality of discourse in any form of knowledge, postcolonial theory claims that the colonial/formerly colonized subject has no choice but to produce a counter-discourse. As a consequence, his articulation of a decolonized identity is a simultaneous effort to dismantle the discourse that has historically construed him as an underdeveloped, inferior, deficient being, etc., beseeching colonial dominance.

Using works from writers and critics from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean (French and English), the Middle-East and India, the class will investigate such issues as the colonial condition, the rhetoric of the colonial undertaking, the colony as a locus/subject of conflicting discourses, the colonial subject’s struggle for agency as well as the concept of neocolonialism. The theoretical framework of the course will be provided by an array of critics/theorists, including Frantz Fanon, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, Edouard Glissant, Mary Louise Pratt, Aimé Césaire, Edward Said, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Tzvetan Todorov. Of interest for their fictional works will be authors such as Jamaica Kincaid, Aimé Césaire, Gisèle Pineau, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Fernandand Oyono. Film and documentary will complement the selected readings.

Required Texts


Films:

Africa, I will fleece you (Jean-Marie Teno) « Speak White » (Michèle Lalonde
The Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo) Apocalypse Now (Nicolas Roeg)
True Lies (James Cameron)
Requirements

1) One critical summary per week of the reading or film viewing. Maximum 1 page, typed. (25%)
2) Active, informed class participation. (20%)
3) One presentation. (15%) Students may be required to direct class discussion in addition to the presentation.
4) One mid-term paper. 5-7 pages. Based on two or more primary readings, and using the framework provided by theoretical/critical texts read in class. 15%
5) One term paper. A solid 8-10 page research paper. Must include at least one film. 25%

Course Schedule and reading assignments

Note: Assigned texts are to be read before class.

Week 1  Monday 29:  Introduction

Edward Said: What is Orientalism? (video)


Week 2  The colonial condition

Monday 5:  Labor Day


Week 3  The colonial condition


Wednesday14 : Research session at the Library. A. Loomba. "Situating Postcolonial Studies", Colonialism/Postcolonialism (pp1-53)

Week 4  The colonial reason


Week 5

Imperial spatial projections


Thursday 29 (Join session with Professor Flynn’s class, 3:30) Professor Mary Louise Pratt’s visit. S Gikandi. "Ideology of Imperial travel", Maps of Englishness: writing identity in the culture of colonialism. Article by Professor Pratt

Tentative topic for mid-term paper due

Week 6

The case for postcolonial theory


Mid-term paper topic and bibliography due

Week 7

The subject speaks


Mid-term paper due Friday 14

Week 8

The subject speaks


Wednesday 19: F Oyono. Houseboy. F. Fanon. Excerpts from The Wretched of the Earth.
Week 9  Colonial gaze and filmic representations


Week 10  Colonial gaze and filmic representations


Week 11  On Colonial benevolence


Wednesday 9: Provisional conclusions: Ania Loomba: pp53:107

Week 12  Alienation and displacement


Tentative topic for final paper due

Week 13  Thanksgiving


Term paper topic and bibliography due / Meeting with me
Week 15  Postcolonial Theory and the way out of History


**Brief presentation of final paper**

**Conclusion**

Final paper due on **December 14**