

English 864: Seminar in Postcolonial Literatures

“Postcolonial Women’s Writing: Africa and South Asia”

MW 9:30-11:18, Denney Hall 262

Autumn 2008

Dr. Pranav Jani

Assistant Professor, Department of English
Associated Faculty, Department of Comparative Studies

567 Denney Hall, jani.4@osu.edu

Hours: M 3:30-5:30 and W 3:30-4:30

<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/jani4/>

Course Description

Postcolonial women’s writing in English offers a unique view of the complexities of postcolonial life, cutting across easy oppositions derived from the categories of First World/Third World. Critical of both Western and non-Western knowledge and traditions yet indebted to each, the novels, short stories, and essays we will read from former British colonies in Africa and South Asia interrogate a variety of discourses about gender—whether imperialist, nationalist, religious, or Western-feminist. Crucial to this project, as we shall see, are the writers’ diverse aesthetic strategies in representing the interior lives of women and producing new models of postcolonial subjectivity and gender identity.

As we engage these texts, we will consider the productive tensions between their explicit commitment to ideas of emancipation and progress and the postmodernist, post-Enlightenment concepts and paradigms by which mainstream Postcolonial Studies employs in analyzing them. We will also consider the ways in which the development of sovereign nation-states after decolonization in British-ruled Africa and South Asia shape postcolonial writings from these areas.

Required Texts (available at SBX, 1806 N High St)

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*. Lynne Reinner, 2004. (Zimbabwe)

Anita Desai, *Clear Light of Day*. Mariner Books, 2000. (India)

Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*. Heinemann, 1994. (Nigeria)

Nadine Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*. Penguin, 1980. (South Africa)

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*. Harper Perennial, 1998. (India)

Kamila Shamsie, *Kartography*. Harvest Books, 2004. (Pakistan)

Neil Lazarus, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Cambridge U P, 2004.

Course Web Page(s) and Email:

Log on at www.carmen.osu.edu for

- Interactive Syllabus and Assignments
- Online articles
- Dropbox for submitting papers
- Discussion threads for posts

Go to my personal webpage (<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/jani4/>) or blog (www.pranavjani.blogspot.com) for:

- links to the broader literary and political context of class material
- links to world and alternative media
- my rants on politics and culture

Note: Messages requiring a response from me should be sent to jani.4@osu.edu. Please keep the discussion on Carmen focused on themes and questions of general interest to the class.

Grading

Participation	20%
Carmen Entries (5)	20%
Short Paper (4-5 pp.)	20%
Final Paper (12-15 pp.)	40%

Course Policies

- Class Participation: Engaged, active participation in the class will be crucial to your grade—and to your development as a scholar.
- Carmen: To receive the full 20% of the grade, you must post at least 5, paragraph-length entries to the discussion threads on Carmen by the end of the term. These should consist of either close readings of texts or elaborations, with some textual support, of themes and discussions raised in class. Your entries are meant to initiate discussion; you are encouraged, of course, to respond to others' posts.
- Short Paper: The short paper will focus on close readings of 1-2 theoretical or literary texts. Be sure to select passages that best express your point and that allow for elaboration. Less is more, especially in such a short assignment.
- Final Paper: The final paper assignment will be designed to allow you to integrate the quarter's discussions and materials into your own academic project, whether or not this is in Postcolonial Studies. We will discuss the prospectus individually and in detail. Ideally, the paper will be the foundation of a conference paper or perhaps even a publication.

Other Policies

- 1) Absences: More than 2 absences from class will harm your participation grade, with a loss of 1/3 of a grade for each day lost. Emergencies should be reported to me as soon as possible, and may require documentation from the University.
- 2) Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. **There will be no exceptions to this rule. If you are stressed out and don't know how to write the paper, communicate with me *before* deciding to plagiarize, not after.**

- 3) Help with Disabilities: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should meet with me, as early in the quarter as possible, to discuss your specific needs. Early communication will allow me to adjust the course according to your needs in terms of access to technology, course material, and office hours. If it makes sense, we can coordinate a plan with the Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, which offers services for students with documented disabilities. To contact the ODS, call 292-3307.
- 4) Use of Technology: I expect your papers to be typed in 12-point font and double-spaced, and that you submit them to me as a Microsoft Word document via the Carmen dropbox. I also expect that you can be reached at your OSU email account for announcements that I may need to make in between class sessions. While I will make every effort to make the technology accessible, **it is your responsibility to get papers to me on time in the proper format.** This includes, but is not limited to, planning ahead so that you can account for technological problems that may occur in saving your document, transferring it to Carmen, etc.

The logic behind my requirements is this: (1) 12-point font and double spacing makes the document most legible for grading and reading, (2) Microsoft Word—available to you at all campus computers—is the easiest format for uploading and downloading, and (3) posting papers electronically on Carmen allows me to give you comments that are typed, legible, and much more thorough than if you were printing them out and handing them in.

COURSE OUTLINE

Asterisk indicates optional reading

Check Carmen for other supplementary materials for updates

W 9.24 Introduction

Week 1: Introduction to Critical and Historical Contexts

M 9.29 Neil Lazarus, “Introducing Postcolonial Studies” (*Cambridge Companion*)

Lazarus, “The Global Dispensation Since 1945” (*Cambridge Companion*)

W10.1 Kumari Jayawardena, “Introduction” *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (Carmen)

Tamara Sivanandan, “Anticolonialism, National Liberation, and Postcolonial Nation Formation” (*Cambridge Companion*)

Ama Ata Aidoo, “For Whom Things Did Not Change.” *No Sweetness Here*. (Carmen)

F 10.3 Presenter on Buchi Emecheta to post discussion questions

Su 10.5 **DUE: CARMEN POST #1 ON COLONIALISM/POSTCOLONIALISM**

Week 2: Confronting the “Wife and Mother”

- M 10.6 Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*
- W 10.8 Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*
Deepika Bahri, “Feminism In/And Postcolonialism” (CC)
*Stephan Robolin, “Gendered Hauntings: *The Joys of Motherhood*, Interpretive Acts, and Postcolonial Theory” (Carmen)
- Th 10.9 Graduate Student Symposium on Postcolonial Women’s Writing. Denney 311, 3:30-5
- F 10.10 Presenters on Gayatri Spivak and Chandra Mohanty to post discussion questions

Week 3: Representing the (Third World) Oppressed

- M 10.13 Gayatri C. Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (Carmen)
Priyamvada Gopal, “Reading Subaltern History” (*Cambridge Companion*)
*Pranav Jani, review of Vinay Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies* (Carmen)
- W 10.15 Chandra T. Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse” (Carmen)
Mahasweta Devi, “Draupadi,” with Spivak’s introduction (Carmen)
- F 10.17 Presenter on Nadine Gordimer to post discussion questions
- Su 10.19 **DUE: CARMEN POST #2 ON SPIVAK/MOHANTY**

Week 4: Race, Gender, Nation

- M 10.20 Nadine Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*
- W 10.22 Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*
Jenny Sharpe, “The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency” (Carmen)
- F 10.24 Presenter on Anita Desai to post discussion questions
- Su 10.26 **DUE: SHORT PAPER (4-5 pages), MS Word document in Carmen dropbox by 12 noon**

Week 5: Postcolonial Interiority

M 10.27 Anita Desai, *Clear Light of Day*

W 10.29 Desai, *Clear Light of Day*

Monica Fludernik, “Cross-Mirrorings of Alterity: The Colonial Scenario and its Psychological Legacy” (Carmen)

F 10.31 Presenter on Tsitsi Dangarembga to post discussion questions

Su 11.2 **DUE: CARMEN POST #3 ON INTERIORITY/IDENTITY**

Week 6: Westernization and Progress

M 11.3 Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

W 11.5 Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Uma Narayan, “Contesting Cultures: ‘Westernization,’ Respect for Cultures, and Third-World Feminists” from *Dislocating Cultures* (Carmen)

*Pauline Ada Uwakweh, “Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*” (Carmen)

*Leila Ahmed, “The Discourse of the Veil” (Carmen)

F 11.7 Presenter on Arundhati Roy to post discussion questions

Su 11.9 **DUE: CARMEN POST #4: ON WESTERNIAZTION**

Week 7: Reclaiming the Left

M 11.10 Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

W 11.12 Roy, *The God of Small Things*

Aijaz Ahmad, “Reading Arundhati Roy *Politically*” (Carmen)

Brinda Bose, “In Desire and Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*” (Carmen)

*Jani, Pranav, “Beyond ‘Anticommunism’: The Progressive Politics of *The God of Small Things*” (Carmen)

F 11.14 Presenter on Deepa Mehta to post discussion questions

Su 11.16 **DUE: FINAL PAPER PROSPECTUS**

Week 8: Desire and Subalternity

M 11.17 Deepa Mehta, *Fire*

W 11.19 Rahul Gairola, “Burning With Shame: Desire and South Asian Patriarchy, from Gayatri Spivak's ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ to Deepa Mehta's ‘Fire’” (C)

F 11.21 Presenter on Kamila Shamsie to post discussion questions

Week 9: Mapping Postcoloniality

M 11.24 Kamila Shamsie, *Kartography*

W 11.26 Shamsie, *Kartography*

Edward Said, “Reflections on Exile” (Carmen)

F 11.27 Presenter on exile/cosmopolitanism to post discussion questions

Su 11.29 **DUE: CARMEN POST #5 on Exile/Cosmopolitanism/Internationalism**

Week 10: Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, Internationalism

M 12.1 Carol Breckenridge, et al., introduction to *Cosmopolitanism* (Carmen)

Laura Chrisman, “Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies” (*Cambridge Companion*)

*Tim Brennan, “Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism” (Carmen)

W 12.3 Conclusion

T 12.9 **DUE: FINAL PAPERS (12-15 pages), MS Word document in Carmen dropbox, by 2pm**