

English 563: Contemporary Literature

“The Postcolonial and the Postmodern”

MW 9:30-11:18, Denney Hall 206
Spring Quarter 2006

Dr. Pranav Jani

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Office Hours: M 11:30-1, T 10-11:30, & by appointment
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Course Description

Postcolonialism. Postmodernism. You’ve heard these terms before, but what do they mean? Do they overlap and intersect? Is, as one critic put it, the “post” in postcolonial the “post” in postmodern? Through our study of major postcolonial writers and theoretical texts, we will investigate how postcolonial/postmodern narrative strategies have challenged older styles of realism and modernism and resisted continuing legacies of Orientalism, racism, and patriarchy. At the same time, we will explore the tensions between postmodern ideas and postcolonial texts, especially around narratives of solidarity, recovery, and emancipation

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

Danticat, Edwidge. *The Dew Breaker*. New York: Vintage, 2004.
Hagedorn, Jessica. *Dream Jungle*. New York: Penguin, 2003.
Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1988.
Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight’s Children*. New York: Penguin, 1991.

Course Web Page(s) and Email:

Log on at www.carmen.osu.edu for

- Interactive Syllabus
- Articles marked “C” on the syllabus
- Dropbox for turning in papers
- Discussion threads for journal entries

Go to my personal webpage: <http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/jani4/> for

- links to the broader literary and political context of class material
- links to world and alternative media
- information about campus news and events

Note: Important and personal 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.

Course Requirements

Class Participation	20%
Carmen (10 entries)	10%
4 Responses (1-2 pages)	40%
Research Project (6-7 pages)	30%

Grading

- Class Participation: Engaged, active participation in the class will be crucial to your grade. This includes, but is not limited to: arriving to class on time, bringing in the texts we're reading that day, being alert during lecture and discussion, raising questions and comments in the discussion period. Multiple absences, as described below, can detract from your participation grade.
- Carmen: To receive the full 10% of the grade, you must post at least 10, paragraph-length entries to the discussion threads on Carmen. These may be anything from general observations on the reading to close readings of passages to comments about issues raised in the class but not discussed fully. You may either initiate a new thread or respond to others' comments. Balancing original comments and responses, of course, will help develop online interaction.
- Responses: Given the heavy reading load in the class, I'm assigning short papers only for the class outside of the final. Suggestions for response papers will be posted on Carmen, though original ideas are encouraged. Students are also considered to use response papers as a way to build ideas for the final research paper.
- Research Project: The assignment will be posted on Carmen by the middle of the quarter. You will be asked to bring critical, historical, and/or theoretical texts to your interpretation of one or more novels from the course.

Course 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.
- 3) Help with Disabilities: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. We will coordinate something with the Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, which offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.

COURSE OUTLINE (check Carmen for updates)

Week 1: The Postcolonial and the Postmodern

M March 27 Introduction

W March 29 Basic definitions

- “What is Postcolonial?” -- surf articles on Brown University professor George Landow’s website, at <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/themes/1.html>
 - “Postmodernism” -- from U Colorado professor Mary Klages <http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html>
 - Familiarize yourself with Deepika Bahri’s Postcolonial Studies website at Emory University: <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/>
- *Optional: K. Anthony Appiah, “Is the ‘post’ in ‘post-colonial’ the ‘post’ in ‘post-modern’?” (C)

Week 2: The Politics of Knowledge

M April 3 Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1-81)

W April 5 Salman Rushdie, “‘Commonwealth Literature’ Does Not Exist” (C)
Edward Said, from *Orientalism* (C)

Due: Response #1 (1-2 pages)

Weeks 3-5: “Handcuffed to History”

Optional: Articles on South Asian history and Rushdie on Carmen

M April 10 Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*

W April 12 Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*

M April 17 Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*

W April 19 Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*

M April 24 Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*

W April 26 Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*

Due: Response #2 (1-2 pages)

Weeks 6-7: Fictions of Authenticity

Optional: Articles on Philippines and Hagedorn on Carmen

M May 1 Jessica Hagedorn, *Dream Jungle* (1-102)

W May 3 Hagedorn, *Dream Jungle* (103-166)

*Ngugi, from *Decolonizing the Mind* (C)

M May 8 Hagedorn, *Dream Jungle* (167-270)

W May 10 Hagedorn, *Dream Jungle* (271-325)

Due: Response #3 (1-2 pages)

Weeks 8-10: Imagining Resistance

Optional: Articles on Caribbean and Danticat on Carmen

M May 15 Hagedorn, *Dream Jungle* (287-325)

W May 17 Edwidge Danticat, *The Dew Breaker* (1-52)

M May 22 Danticat, *The Dew Breaker* (53-120)

W May 24 Danticat, *The Dew Breaker* (121-181)

Due: Response #4 (1-2 pages)

M May 29 – NO CLASS

W May 31 Danticat, *The Dew Breaker* (183-242)

Final class: Wed, June 7, 9:30-11:18

Due: Final Paper (6-7 pages)