

English 864: Seminar in Postcolonial Literatures

## Postcolonial Women's Writing: Africa and South Asia

MW 1:30-3:18, Denney Hall 207

Spring Quarter 2008

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

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

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### 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 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.

As the 700-level course in Postcolonial Literature and Theory will only begin to be offered next year, we will make sure to discuss the basic definitions of terms and concepts, including the postcolonial and the postmodern, nations and nationalisms, imperialism and colonialism, (strategic) essentialism, subalternity and representation, Western versus Third World feminism, hybridity, historiography, and Orientalism.

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

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*. Lynne Rienner, 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)

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, *The Present Moment*. Feminist Press, 2000. (Kenya)

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.

### **Carmen and Email:**

Log on at [www.carmen.osu.edu](http://www.carmen.osu.edu) for

- Interactive Syllabus
- Discussion threads
- Dropbox for turning in papers

**Note:** Messages requiring a response from me should be sent to [jani.4@osu.edu](mailto:jani.4@osu.edu).

### **Course Requirements**

- Intensive participation, consisting of a formal oral presentation and consistent classroom engagement with literary and theoretical issues emerging from the discussion. We will begin every Monday (except Week One) with a student presentation that will orient us towards the questions and ideas of her/his choice in order to allow for a more diverse discussion of the material. Presenters should post a few discussion questions onto Carmen on the Sunday before their presentation (by noon).
- Five formal and original Carmen posts, of no more than 250 words, by the end of the quarter. You may take up the text/topic at hand in any way that you see fit: close reading, comparative analysis, applying theoretical concepts, etc. You can expect a comment from me as part of the general discussion of your post. Of course, you are encouraged to respond to your classmates' posts as frequently as you like, in a formal or informal manner.
- A short paper that allows me to comment on your written work in a more formal manner, and hopefully helps you get an early start on your seminar paper.
- A final seminar paper directed, if possible, towards becoming a conference presentation, part of your M.A. exam or Ph.D. thesis, or even a publication.

### **GRADING**

Participation	20%
Carmen Entries (five)	20%
Short Paper (3-5 pp.)	20%
Final Paper (12-15 pp.)	40%

### **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. **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 that your papers be in typed in 12-point font and double-spaced as a Microsoft Word document, and that you submit them to me via the Carmen dropbox. I also expect that you can be reached by email 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: 12-point font and double spacing makes the document most legible for grading and reading, Microsoft Word—available to you at all campus computers—is the easiest format for uploading and downloading, and 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:** Check Carmen for other supplementary materials for updates

**Week 1: Introduction to Critical and Historical Contexts**

M 3/24 Defining the contours of the course

\*Patricia Jabbeh Wesley, "In the Beginning" (poem, handout)

\*Arundhati Roy, "Confronting Empire" (essay, handout)

W 3/26 Kumari Jayawardena, "Introduction" *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (Carmen)

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

Bessie Head, "The Collector of Treasures" (Carmen)

\*First three chapters of *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*

(a) Neil Lazarus, "Introducing Postcolonial Studies"

(b) Lazarus, "The Global Dispensation Since 1945"

(c) Tamara Sivanandan, “Anticolonialism, National Liberation, and Postcolonial Nation Formation”

**Week 2: Confronting the “Wife and Mother”**

M 3/31 Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*

Presentation: Candice

W 4/2 Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*

Deepika Bahri, “Feminism In/And Postcolonialism” (*Cambridge Companion*)

\*Stephan Robolin, “Gendered Hauntings: *The Joys of Motherhood*, Interpretive Acts, and Postcolonial Theory” (Carmen)

**Week 3: Representing the (Third World) Oppressed**

M 4/7 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 4/9 Chandra T. Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse” (Carmen)

Mahasweta Devi, “Draupadi,” with Spivak’s introduction (Carmen)

**Week 4: Race, Gender, Nation**

M 4/14 Nadine Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*

Presentation: Dylan

W 4/16 Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*

Jenny Sharpe, “The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency” (Carmen)

Su 4/20 **DUE: SHORT PAPER (3-5 pages), MS Word document in Carmen dropbox by 12 noon**

**Week 5: Postcolonial Interiority**

M 4/21 Anita Desai, *Clear Light of Day*

Presentation: Lindsay

W 4/23 Desai, *Clear Light of Day*

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

**Week 6: Westernization and Progress**

M 4/28 Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Presentation: Catherine

W 4/30 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 5/2 Optional Screening of *Fire* (location TBA)

**Week 7: Reclaiming the Left**

M 5/5 Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

Presentation: Jen

W 5/7 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)

Su 5/11 **DUE: FINAL PAPER PROSPECTUS**

**Week 8: Desire and Subalternity**

M 5/12 Deepa Mehta, *Fire*

Presentation: Jenna

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

W 5/14 Lecture: Dr. Sunaina Maira, Annual Distinguished Lecture of the Asian American Studies Program at OSU. Hale Black Culture Center, 2pm.

**Week 9: Nationalism/Cosmopolitanism**

M 5/19 Kamila Shamsie, *Kartography*

Presentation: Gina

W 5/21 Shamsie, *Kartography*

Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile" (Carmen)

\*Laura Chrisman, "Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies" (*Cambridge Companion*)

**Week 10: Communities of Peace**

M 5/26 NO CLASS-MEMORIAL DAY

W 5/28 Macgoye, *The Present Moment*

Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles" (Carmen)

T 6/3 **DUE: FINAL PAPERS (12-15 pages), MS Word document in Carmen dropbox, by 2pm**