

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Discipline: English Literature

Fall 2008

ENMC 360Z-1/ENMC 360Z-2: World Literature (2 sections)

Upper Division

Instructor: Professor David C. Miller

Pre-requisite: successful completion of at least six previous credit hours in college level English or Comparative Literature courses or permission by the instructor

COURSE DESCRIPTION

East/West, North/South, First World/Third World, Tradition and Modernity, Colonizers and Colonized. These are some of the axes organizing a course introducing mostly Anglophone texts of the Caribbean, southern Africa and India and roughly tailored to certain ports of call on our voyage. The course will develop an appreciation for the power of literary form and expressiveness, especially when seen within a broad historical and interdisciplinary framework focused on the themes of colonialism and post-colonialism, including tensions between orality and writing (or print), the improvisatory character of hybrid cultural forms, the syncretism of cultures, resistance to empire and its after-effects, diaspora and experiences of alienation and exile, and strategies employed by indigenous writers for appropriating or abrogating the dominant linguistic model provided by formal English. It will also consider issues of gender as well as debates over nationalism and the persistence of native folkways during the process of modernization. Discussing and writing about a range of works will be informed by readings in ethnography and the notion of “writing culture” as well as by post-colonial scholarship and theory.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course should deepen your interest in literature in general by placing texts within a range of interdisciplinary contexts that will help you develop complex and penetrating readings while relating closely to the field experiences and FDPs you take part in. The ongoing process of writing about both the various texts and the kinds of actual in-country experience they are connected to should sharpen your critical thinking while expanding your awareness of the world and the crucial role of economics, politics, society and culture in the interwoven processes of literary exploration and historical change.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

1. Nassau to Salvador (A-session schedule—A1 to A4)
Introductory: Aims and assumptions of the course: colonialism and post-colonialism
Caribbean literature: Middle-class identity, the question of embodiment and the effects of post-colonialism
Reading: Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow*
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*
2. Salvador to Cape Town (A5-8)
“The empire writes back”: The north-south dialogue
Reading: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, *The River Between*
3. Cape Town to Chennai (A9-13)
Colonialism to liberation – and beyond
Reading: Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*
Nadine Gordimer, *July’s People*
South African short stories (tba)
4. Chennai to Ho Chi Minh City (A14-16)
Colonialism and its legacies
Reading: E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*
5. Ho Chi Minh City to Kobe (A17-19)
Themes of the Indian diaspora
Reading: Salman Rushdie *East, West* (selections)
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* (selections)
6. Kobe to Honolulu (A20-23)
Tradition and modernity: toward a broader perspective
Reading: Maxine Hong Kingston, “No Name Woman,” in *The Woman Warrior*
Other readings to be announced

FIELD REQUIREMENTS

Each of you must complete *three* practica (either Faculty Directed or Independent), including participating in *two* of the FDPs under my direction. I recommend the readings by writers in Cape Town and Chennai, since they are central to the material covered in this class, and encourage you to choose a third from either of the lists below. The third practica may also be an Independent Practicum based on a regularly-offered SAS trip or it may stand alone. If you select an Independent Practicum, you will need to meet with me to discuss your approach and objectives prior to arriving in the port-of-call.

You are required to keep a journal of your field observations worked up from notes you take while on shore. Specific instructions on how to take field notes will be given during class time prior to each FDP. Whenever possible you should attempt to relate your field experience to issues and perspectives you encounter in the various primary texts and secondary sources included in the course. If possible, you should engage in conversation with writers presenting readings, probing possibilities and drawing conclusions that relate to the course themes of colonialism and post-colonialism.

FDPs led by me (choose two):

Salvador: Sacatar: International Artists' Residency/Community

Cape Town: Authors in Cape Town

Chennai: Women Writers of India

Recommended FDPs not led by me (choose one):

Cape Town: Township Visit and District Six Museum

Shanghai: Suzhou

ASSIGNMENTS AND METHODS OF EVALUATION

You will keep a journal of responses to the readings in this course, writing around a page per class. The journal will be submitted at the end of the course for a grade. Though I will not read it closely, I will ask you periodically, without prior announcement, to submit entries to me—so keep it in a loose-leaf notebook. Out of this journal, you will generate two papers (of no more than 4 to 5 pages each), the first on a work read by the entire class, the second on a short story of your choice (I will be providing a list of possibilities). In addition, there will be an open-book, take-home final due on the final day of class which you will have one-week to complete.

Regular participation in class discussion is required and will constitute a fifth of your final grade (see guidelines below for grading participation). We will begin each class with a brief recapitulation (3-4 minutes) of the previous class by a member of the class. Everyone should have a chance to do so; your performance will be factored into your participation grade. Re-caps, if well done, should help to jump start discussion and maintain continuity from class to class, especially when a visit to a port has intervened between classes on a particular novel or collection of short stories.

Computation of your grade for the course:

- 20% field component
- 60% papers, final and journal (15% each)
- 20% class participation and presentations

POLICIES

1. All written work must be handed in on time (or by negotiated deadlines) or you will not pass the course. Unexcused late papers or exams (the same criteria apply) will be graded down by a third of a grade for each day of tardiness. A second instance of lateness will increase the penalty to a full grade per day.
2. Regular attendance is required (I will regularly take role). More than three unexcused absences will affect your grade, lowering it by one notch (from, say, a B- to a C+) for every three additional unexcused absences. Excused absences include illness (a note from the Health Center is required), a death in your immediate family or falling off the ship.
3. Any instance of plagiarism or improper use of outside sources will result in a failing grade.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION IN CLASS

- an A grade for class participation is awarded when students regularly initiate discussion. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading and hence prepared to raise questions, open discussion, identify topics of interest in the reading and engage other students in discussion (but obviously not monopolizing discussion or shutting others out).
- a B grade for class participation is awarded to students who participate regularly and productively in class discussion, who are prepared, and who are willing to engage. B discussants differ from A students in that the latter are self-starters who don't rely on the instructor to set the agenda for discussion.
- a C grade for class participation is awarded to those who participate on a regular basis, though less frequently than the B student. C discussants will be typically be prepared for class, but their contributions will indicate that less thought has been given to assigned materials.
- a D grade for class participation is given to those who contribute only infrequently to class discussion and whose contributions do not appear to arise from thoughtful consideration of the assignments.
- an F grade results from non-participation in class discussion or any pattern of behavior that interferes with responsible and mature group discussion. Of course, participation is impossible if the putative participant is not I class. Frequent absences mandate F grades.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: JAMAICA KINKAID
TITLE: A SMALL PLACE
PUBLISHER: FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX
ISBN #: 978-0-374-52f707-5
DATE/EDITION: 1988
COST: \$12.00

AUTHOR: PAULE MARSHALL
TITLE: PRAISESONG FOR THE WIDOW
PUBLISHER: E.P. DUTTON
ISBN #: 0-525-48303-9
DATE/EDITION: 2006
COST: \$14.00

AUTHOR: JOSEPH CONRAD
TITLE: HEART OF DARKNESS
PUBLISHER: PENGUIN
ISBN #: 10: 0140281630
DATE/EDITION: 1999
COST: \$11.00

AUTHOR: NGUGI WA THIONG'O
TITLE: THE RIVER BETWEEN
PUBLISHER: HEINEMANN
ISBN #: 0-435-90548-1
DATE/EDITION: 1990
COST: \$13.95

AUTHOR: TSITSI DANGAREMBGA
TITLE: NERVOUS CONDITIONS
PUBLISHER: SEAL PRESS
ISBN #: 978-1-58005-134-7
DATE/EDITION: 2004
COST: \$15.95

AUTHOR: NADINE GORDIMER
TITLE: JULY'S PEOPLE
PUBLISHER: PENGUIN
ISBN #: 0-14-006140-1
DATE/EDITION: 1982
COST: \$13.00

AUTHOR: E.M. FORSTER
TITLE: A PASSAGE TO INDIA
PUBLISHER: HARVEST/HARCOURT
ISBN #: 0-15-671142-7
DATE/EDITION: 1984
COST: \$14.00

AUTHOR: SALMAN RUSHDIE
TITLE: EAST, WEST
PUBLISHER: VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL
ISBN #: 0-679-75789-9
DATE/EDITION: 1996
COST: \$11.00

AUTHOR: JHUMPA LAHIRI
TITLE: INTERPRETER OF MALADIES
PUBLISHER: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
ISBN #: 0-395-92720-X
DATE/EDITION: 1999
COST: \$12.00

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

Achebe, Chinua. *Home and Exile* (Anchor Books, 2000).

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Routledge, 2002).

Buzard, James. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways of 'Culture,' 1800-1918* (Clarendon Press, 1993).

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 2005).

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed. *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (University of Chicago Press, 1986).

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992)

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage, 1994).

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1979).

FOR THE FOLLOWING, SEE RESERVE LIST FOR MY COURSE ON WRITING ABOUT TRAVEL

Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Beacon Press, 1993).

Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (University of California Press, 1986).