

Junior Tutorial: Border-Crossing Fictions of the 20th Century (Fall 2021)

Course description:

The full story of modernism has yet to be told because the geography of modernism is still largely indeterminate. In this tutorial, we will track the development of modernist literature in English across borders and continents, dissecting issues uppermost in the minds of authors writing in and against the modernist tradition, chief among them belonging, identity, and citizenship. To that end, you will encounter several critical methodologies that have been essential to the field of modernist studies, including postcolonial criticism, deconstruction and queer theory. We will follow an evolving set of questions and concerns over the semester. What is the relationship between modernity and empire? Why is “modernism” often synonymous with cosmopolitanism? How do colonialism, statelessness and displacement inform storytelling in the twentieth century?

In the first part of the course, we will study four texts that sit uneasily in the modernist tradition—novels by Forster, Conrad, Tagore and Salih, which examine colonialism and decolonization in India and Africa. During this unit you will gain exposure to foundational texts of postcolonial theory and methods for thinking about and across borders. Many of the authors of postcolonial theory are themselves border-crossers. As we will see, the same impulse to play with and dissolve boundaries that emerges from the postcolonial predicament is shared by poststructuralist reading practices, foremost among them deconstruction, which shall serve as a second set of methodological touchstones for the course. In unit two, we will be alert to the commonalities and differences between the colonized subject and the expatriate. Secondary readings at the start of this unit will explore cosmopolitanism as it informs the modernist sensibility and the postcolonial condition. We will address related questions. Why is being modern specifically understood as being a “citizen of the world”? How does expatriation overlap with and differ from displacement and marginalization? Texts in this unit will also explore queer notions of masculinity and femininity from the modernist period, as well as the formation of queer kinships and communities. Two texts (*Giovanni's Room*, *Nightwood*) track the emergence of queer identity in Paris, a center of modernist activity, as a case study in how cosmopolitanism is lived and written. The final unit will consider figure of the Jew, who is, like the black expatriate, often understood as the cosmopolitan figure par excellence, through three works that turn the American immigrant narrative on its head. Secondary readings will show how the political theory of Arendt and Agamben can be effectively brought to bear in reading literature.

Throughout the term, we will be reading texts in tandem that aren't often studied together, in the hope that, in so doing, we can develop our own definitions of modernity and see how they hold up across time and place. We will also address big questions: to what extent are expatriation and immigration a “choice”? How does the difference between the two show up in language and modes of storytelling? Ultimately, by looking at the figures of the colonial subject, the expatriate, and the DP, this course will help us understand our own moment, when issues of migrancy and postcoloniality are at the forefront of literature and politics, and introduce you to methodologies for analyzing the restlessly itinerant literature of modernity.

Course objectives:

- 1) Read (and react to!) works of modernist literature in English
- 2) Gain familiarity with the varied narrative forms employed by authors writing in and against the modernist tradition
- 3) Learn methods of literary analysis through exposure to multiple schools of criticism (e.g. postcolonial theory, queer theory, law and literature)
- 4) Develop a research question that meaningfully intervenes in a debate in modernist studies
- 5) Craft a prospectus, annotated bibliography, and 20–25 pp. research paper on a topic of your choosing

Required texts: available at the Coop and on reserve at Lamont. I will provide pdfs of shorter texts. Please let me know if you're unable to purchase, rent or borrow the required texts.

E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (Norton, 978-0393655988)
Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World* (Penguin, 978-0140449860)
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Norton, 978-0393264869)
Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (NYRB Classics, 978-1590173022)
James Weldon Johnson, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (Norton, 9780393972863)
Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (Hemingway Library, 978-1501121968)
James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (Vintage, 978-0345806567)
Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (NDP, 978-0811216715)
Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (Norton, 978-0393932423)
Franz Kafka, *Amerika* (either Schocken or Penguin)
W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants* (NDP, 978-0811226141)

Assignments:

Course participation (20%): Students are expected to attend class every week. One unexcused absence will result in a 1/3 grade drop. More than one will result in exclusion from the course. Requests for extensions should be made in advance and will be granted only for approved reasons (family emergency, medical issue).

Written work (80%): This tutorial will prepare you to write a 20–25 pp. research paper on a topic of your choosing. Each week, theoretical readings will be paired with the primary text(s) to offer us an analytical framework for discussion and to model the kind of work you will attempt to do in your own essays. Ultimately, you will make a theoretical intervention by addressing a research question developed in consultation with me.

- 1) Short paper (5pp): close reading that engages with 1 assigned secondary source (10%)
- 2) Mini-assignment: Either in week 6 or week 7, please bring to class an article on the text for that week (*The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, *The Sun Also Rises*) and briefly summarize the argument in a paragraph. *Do not read the abstract until after you have written your summary.* The point of this assignment is to help you succinctly summarize another scholar's arguments, which will aid you in the writing of the final research paper. (5%)

- 3) Annotated bibliography of at least 10 sources you plan to consult in your research and a prospectus of your final paper. You should describe each source in a few short sentences and explain how you expect it will shape the writing of your paper. The prospectus should outline the tentative thesis for your final paper, your plan of action for conducting research, and your plan for integrating secondary sources into the paper. You may also list any challenges you anticipate. (15%)
- 4) A graded draft or partial draft of your final research paper, on a topic of your choosing, approved in advance. At least half of the paper should be complete at this stage, ideally more. It's all right if citations and formatting are not fully polished; what matters at this stage is the content and the argument, which we will discuss during conferences held at the beginning of the following week. (10%)
- 5) Research paper (20–25pp): An original work of research that meaningfully engages with the work of other scholars on the topic you have chosen. The paper you submit should be a polished piece of work (e.g. correct citations, proofread for typos). (40%)

Academic integrity: All material you submit is expected to be your own work. Please ensure that what you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and subject to discipline from the University Honor Council. Please speak with me if you are unclear on Harvard's expectations and standards.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: If you require academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability, please present a Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office and speak with me. I am committed to making this course accessible and manageable for all students and will do my best to devise all necessary accommodations.

Course policies:

- *Undivided attention:* no laptops, phones off. Since we'll be a small group it's imperative that you be engaged with and attentive to your classmates. Let me know if this restriction poses a problem.
- *Extensions* will be granted on a case-by-case basis but must, except in case of emergency, be requested well in advance (i.e. at least 5 days before due date).
- *Late work* without any explanation will be docked 1/3 a grade per day late.

Note on sequencing:

The readings in this course range from the early twentieth to the late twentieth century, and they will be presented in nonchronological order. Our guiding principle will be largely thematic and geographical: novels in the first unit are set in colonial settings; in the second unit in expatriate settings (primarily Europe); and in the final unit in the United States. You are not expected to have deep historical or contextual knowledge about all the places we're reading about, but I am happy to direct you to resources that provide historical and political background if that would be helpful to you.

Unit I: Modernism and Empire

Critical methodologies: postcolonial theory, poststructuralist theory

Week 1 – What is “post” about postcolonialism?

- Ania Loomba, “Defining the terms” and “Colonialism and Literature,” from *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*
- Leela Gandhi, “After Colonialism,” from *Postcolonialism: A Critical Introduction*
- Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism”
- Appiah, “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?”

Week 2

Primary text:

- Forster, *A Passage to India*
- Macaulay, “Minute Upon Indian Education”

Secondary texts:

- Said, Introduction to *Orientalism*
- Hunt Hawkins, “Forster’s Critique of Imperialism in *A Passage to India*”

Optional further reading:

- Sharpe, “The Indeterminacies of Rape”

Week 3

Primary text:

- Tagore, *The Home and the World*

Secondary texts:

- Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
- Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817”

Optional further reading:

- Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man”

Optional viewing:

- *The Home and the World*, dir. Satyajit Ray

Week 4

Primary text:

- Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Secondary texts:

- Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*”
- Said, “Two Visions of *Heart of Darkness*”

Optional further reading:

- Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism*

Week 5

Primary text:

- Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

Secondary texts:

- Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, “Introduction” and Ch. 1, “The Negro and Language”
- Saree Makdisi, “The Empire Renarrated: *Season of Migration to the North* and the Reinvention of the Present”

Unit II: Cosmopolitanism and the Expatriate Novel

Critical methodologies: theories of cosmopolitanism, queer theory

Library Session, Friday, October 1

- Pheng Cheah, “Cosmopolitanism”
- Nussbaum, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism”
- Derrida, “On Cosmopolitanism”

Week 6

Primary texts:

- Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

Secondary texts:

- Siobhan B. Somerville, “‘Perverse’ Desire in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*,” from *Queering the Color Line*

Week 7

Primary texts:

- Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

Secondary texts:

- Greg Forter, “Melancholy Modernism: Gender and the Politics of Mourning in *The Sun Also Rises*”

First close-reading paper (3–5pp.) due Friday, October 8, by 5 pm

Week 8

Primary text:

- James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*

Secondary texts:

- Nadia Ellis, "The Queer Elsewhere of the Black Diaspora," from *Territories of the Soul*
- Jessica Kent, "Baldwin's Hemingway: *The Sun Also Rises* in *Giovanni's Room*, with a Twist"

Week 9

Primary text:

- Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*

Secondary texts:

- Brian Glavey, "Dazzling Estrangement: Modernism, Queer Ekphrasis, and the Spatial Form of *Nightwood*"
- Jane Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic"

Annotated bibliography and prospectus due Friday, November 5, by 5 pm

Week 10

Primary text:

- Larsen, *Quicksand*

Secondary texts:

- Deborah McDowell, Introduction to *Quicksand* and *Passing*
- Arne Lunde and Anna Westerstahl Stenport, "Helga Crane's Copenhagen: Denmark, Colonialism, and Transnational Identity in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*"

Optional further reading:

- Sianne Ngai, "Irritation," from *Ugly Feelings*

Optional viewing:

- *Quicksand*, dir. Rebecca Hall (Netflix)

Graded draft due Friday, November 17, by 5 pm

Unit 3: Coming to America: Revising the Immigrant Narrative

Critical methodology: law and literature

Week 11

Primary text:

- Kafka, *Amerika*

Secondary texts:

- Arendt, “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man” and “Franz Kafka: A Reevaluation”

Optional further reading:

- Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*

Week 12

Primary text:

- W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*

Secondary texts:

- Agamben, “The State of Exception as a Form of Government”
- Hart and Lown-Hecht, “The Extraterritorial Poetics of W. G. Sebald”

Week 13

Primary text:

- Flannery O’Connor, “The Displaced Person”

Secondary text:

- Kant, “Perpetual Peace”

Final paper due Friday, December 17, by 5 pm

Further reading

Postcolonial theory:

- Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*
Boehmer, *Colonialism and Postcolonialism: Migrant Metaphors*
Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities*
Durba Mitra, *Indian Sex Life*
Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism*
Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*
Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism”
Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity, Neither Black Nor White Yet Both*

Cosmopolitanism:

- Robbins and Cheah, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*
Rebecca Walkowitz, “Sebald’s Vertigo,” from *Cosmopolitan Style*
José Casanova, “Cosmopolitanism, the Clash of Civilizations and Multiple Modernities”
Derrida, “Adieu to Levinas,” “Hospitality,” “On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness”

Law and Literature:

- De Gooyer et al, *The Right to Have Rights*