

Junior Tutorial: Border-Crossing Fictions (Fall 2022)

Instructor: Andy Koenig

Course description: In this tutorial, we'll read Anglophone (English-language) literature across borders and continents, dissecting issues uppermost in the minds of authors writing in and against the modernist tradition, chief among them race and belonging. What is the relationship between modernity and empire? What impact does displacement have on storytelling in the twentieth century? In the first unit, we will study novels by Forster, Tagore and Conrad that answer these questions through their examination of colonialism in India and Africa. During this unit you will gain exposure to foundational postcolonial critics, many of whom are border-crossers themselves. Ideas like "hybridity," "mimicry" and the "subaltern" put a name to lived realities: what it's like to be from a place under remote imperial control; how narrative can or can't speak to mixed heritages and fraught political dynamics. In the second and third units, we will turn to the postmodern "global Anglophone" novel from the mid-century to the present. Our focus will be on three regions—Africa, the Caribbean, and India—where multiple languages are spoken but whose literary output is largely in English. The authors we'll be reading ask: Are expatriation and emigration a "choice"? How does globalization inform people's livelihoods and life stories? How are the techniques of "postmodernism" deployed among postcolonial writers? Our secondary readings in these units will introduce you to the fields of ecocriticism and cultural studies, both of which are strongly influenced by postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory, we'll find, does more than just describe political shifts—its latter-day critical inflections describe how bodies, spaces, and environments are constructed and influenced by colonialism. Shorter readings in the final part of the course explore colonialism's afterlives, e.g., tourism and refugeeism. Ultimately, this course will help us understand our own moment, when migration is impacting economics, politics, and literature alike, and how identity and politics are understood in the South Asian, African and Caribbean contexts.

Objectives:

- 1) Gain familiarity with the varied narrative forms employed by modernist and postmodern authors
- 2) Develop a robust understanding of postcolonial theory
- 3) Craft a prospectus, annotated bibliography, and 20–25 pp. research paper on a topic of your choosing

Required texts: I will post pdfs of secondary readings to Canvas. Please let me know if you're unable to purchase, rent or borrow the required texts.

E. M. Forster, <i>A Passage to India</i> (Norton)	Tsitsi Dangarembga, <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (Graywolf)
Rabindranath Tagore, <i>The Home and the World</i> (Penguin)	Jean Rhys, <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> (Norton)
Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (Norton)	Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i> (FSG)
Tayeb Salih, <i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (NYRB)	Patrick Chamoiseau, <i>Slave Old Man</i> (New Press)
V. S. Naipaul, <i>A Bend in the River</i> (Vintage)	Jhumpa Lahiri, <i>The Namesake</i> (Mariner Books)
J. M. Coetzee, <i>Life and Times of Michael K</i> (Penguin)	Mohsin Hamid, <i>Exit West</i> (Riverhead)

Assignments:

Course participation (20%): Unexcused absences will result in deductions to your participation grade. Requests for extensions should be made in advance and only for approved reasons.

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 (3-5pp): close reading that engages with a text from unit 1 (10%)
- 2) Prospectus and annotated bibliography of at least 10 sources you plan to consult in your research. 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. (15%)
- 3) 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 in conferences. (10%)
- 4) 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: 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:

- *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.
- *Reading:* Please do the readings to the best of your ability, even the ones that prove difficult or slow-going. I may also adjust or scale back readings as needed on weeks when written work is due.

Unit I: Modernism and Empire

Week 1 – What is postcolonialism?

- Ania Loomba, “Colonialism and Literature,” from *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*
- Leela Gandhi, “After Colonialism,” from *Postcolonialism: A Critical Introduction*
- Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism”

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”

General Meeting #1: Tutorial Program Welcome and Overview (date, location tba)

Week 3

Primary text:

- Tagore, *The Home and the World*

Secondary texts:

- Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

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 in *Heart of Darkness*”

Library Session, time and location TBD

Unit II: Postmodernism and the Literature of Decolonization

Week 5

Primary text:

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

Secondary texts:

- Appiah, “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?”
- Saree Makdisi, “The Empire Renarrated: *Season of Migration to the North* and the Reinvention of the Present”

Week 6

Primary text:

- V. S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*

Secondary texts:

- Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817”; “Of Mimicry and Man”
- Huggan and Tiffin, “Green Postcolonialism”

First close-reading paper (3–5pp.) due

General Meeting #2: Seniors Tell All: Reflections on the Junior Essay (date, location tba)

Week 7

Primary text:

- J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*
- Nadine Gordimer, “The Idea of Gardening”

Secondary texts:

- Morton, “Towards a Theory of Ecological Criticism,” from *Ecology Without Nature*
- Anthony Vital, “Toward an African Ecocriticism: Postcolonialism, Ecology and *Life & Times of Michael K*”

Week 8

Primary text:

- Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Secondary texts:

- Sartre, Preface to Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
- Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, “Introduction” and Ch. 1, “The Negro and Language”

Week 9

Primary text:

- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Secondary text:

- Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” (excerpt)
- Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity”

Annotated bibliography and prospectus due

Week 10

Primary text:

- Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Secondary texts:

- Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power”

- Iyunolu Osagie and Christine N. Buzinde, “Culture and postcolonial resistance: Antigua in Kincaid’s *A Small Place*” (option A)
- Susie O’Brien, “The Garden and the World: Jamaica Kincaid and the Cultural Borders of Ecocriticism” (option B)

Week 11

Primary text:

- Patrick Chamoiseau, *Slave Old Man*

Secondary texts:

- Paul Gilroy, “The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity”
- Wai Chee Dimock, “African, Caribbean, American: Black English as Creole Tongue”

...and two excerpts:

- Glissant, “The Open Boat” (from *The Poetics of Relation*)
- Orlando Patterson’s definition of slavery as “social death”

Unit III: New Directions: The 21st Century

Week 12

Primary text:

- Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*

Secondary texts:

- “Re-thinking the post-colonial: post-colonialism in the twenty-first century,” from *The Empire Writes Back*

Week 13

Primary text:

- Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*

Secondary texts:

- Amanda Lagji, “Waiting in motion: mapping postcolonial fiction, new mobilities, and migration through Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*”
- Michael Perfect, “‘Black holes in the fabric of the nation’: refugees in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*”

***Final paper due ***

Junior Tutorial Conference (date and location tba)

Further readings, available on Canvas—use these as they are helpful to you!

- Lamming, “The Occasion for Speaking”
- Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant and Khyar, “In Praise of Creoleness”
- Rose-Myriam Réjouis, “Caribbean Writers and Language: The Autobiographical Poetics of Jamaica Kincaid and Patrick Chamoiseau”
- Derek Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory” (Noble Prize speech 1992)
- Doris Garraway, “Toward a Creole Myth of Origin: Narrative, Foundations and Eschatology in Patrick Chamoiseau’s *L’esclave Vieil Homme et le Molosse*”
- Robert Hayden, “The Middle Passage”