

Whiteness and Postcolonialism

WGSS 294/ENGL 294-04 S. Sarker Fall 2012

Class: OM 2

Hours: TR 1:20-2:50 p.m.

Office: OM 317/Mailbox OM 409

Office Hours: TR 4:30-6 p.m. & by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course brings together discourses that have remained somewhat parallel and unrelated--Whiteness Studies and Postcolonial Studies. It is based on the premise that 'whiteness' as an academic/social framework stems from and is intertwined with social and political identity-based movements (feminist, critical race, etc.). In other words, studies of the intersection of gender, race, class, and nation initiated in the post-colonizing imagination seeks to shake up paradigms of power, and whiteness studies shares in this effort. This course explores where and how the notion of 'whiteness' converges and diverges from post-colonialism.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press, 2008.

Gordimer, Nadine. *July's People*. Penguin 1982.

Smith, Zadie. *On Beauty*. Penguin 2007.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS (on Moodle)

Berger, Maurice. From *White! Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art*.

Bonnett, Alastair. "Constructions of Whiteness."

Carlson, Dennis. "Stories of Colonial and Postcolonial Education."

Carter, Robert. "Is White a Race?"

Carter, Vicki. "Computer-Assisted Racism."

Davy, Kate. "Outing Whiteness: A Feminist/Lesbian Project."

Ellsworth, Elizabeth. "Double Binds of Whiteness."

Hurtado, Aida and Abigail Stewart. "Through the Looking Glass."

Frankenberg, Ruth. "Epilogue: Racism, Antiracism, and the Meaning of Whiteness."

hooks, bell. "Representing White in the Black Imagination."

JanMohamed, Abdul. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory."

Kipling, Rudyard. "White Man's Burden."

McLaren, Peter. "Whiteness is the Struggle for Postcolonial Hybridity."

Mohanty, Satya. "Drawing the Color Line."

Morrison, Toni. "Romancing the Shadow."

Roman, Leslie. "Denying (White) Racial Privilege."

Said, Edward. "Orientalism."

Stoler, Laura Ann. "Making Empire Respectable."

Thompson, Becky et al. "Home/Work: Antiracism Activism and the Meaning of Whiteness."

Ware, Vron. "Island racism."

Whitlock, Gillian. "Outlaws of the Text."

Movies: "First Contact," "The Tempest," "At Play in the Fields of the Lord," "Avatar."

REQUIREMENTS

Your participation is the key to making this course intellectually stimulating and socially vibrant. Our careful reflection on what you and others are saying, and on communicating your different opinions with both respect and precision will make these following tasks exciting:

- A) Forum
- B) Moderator
- C) Mini-essays
- D) Oral presentations

A) FORUM: every week, an online communication, through the class email list, will require that each of you, assigned in the group that is due, must post **BY MONDAY MIDNIGHT**, ONE question involving any of the texts assigned for the upcoming Monday. You may reflect briefly on an aspect of the past week's discussion if you consider it relevant. Check Moodle to read the list of questions already posted, to look for correlations, before you post your own entry. The question should be followed by a short comment on the relationship of your query to a point of personal interest in a text. The recommended length is a maximum of 300 words. Please imagine questions that elicit responses about the implications of textual content, rather than 'yes'/'no' or factual research. Be prepared to summarize your point in class as a quick refresher.

You will be graded individually, based on your own entry. I will check Moodle early Monday every week. Please take care to submit your entry on time; if you have not done so, you will forfeit your grade for that missed opportunity. For grading guidelines, see page 4.

B) MODERATOR: every session, each of you will take turns in structuring and leading discussion for part of the class. The moderator will be selected randomly, will synthesize the responses submitted on Moodle, decide a focus topic, and present issues based on that topic for the class to discuss, in the form of questions or observations. If there is an oral presentation scheduled for that session, it will be presented first and the moderator will integrate issues into the already-prepared structure. You will be graded individually.

C) MINI-ESSAYS: an in-class assignment, every other week, not on a day when there is an oral presentation, where a topic or question and a structure will be offered by the instructor and on which you will write for 20-30 minutes. The focus will be on the readings for the day and/or recent past sessions; you will have access to your books and notes, and extra credit will be given for using short, relevant quotations. The assignment is completed and will be collected in class; absences cannot be made up or compensated. You will be graded individually.

Mini-essays are graded on the basis of precision in your response, appropriate and well-chosen examples, and structured sequence of ideas. When beginning to write in class, it is useful to take a few minutes to sketch an outline of the main points you wish to make. Towards the end of the semester, you will have an option to re-do 2 of the mini-essays, keeping the same length, but writing with the knowledge gained post-exercise. You may also opt to write a 5-page paper as a revision. Please discuss each of these revision options with me in advance.

PLAGIARISM is defined as the use of another's ideas without acknowledgement. Since this is considered a serious matter, please consult a style handbook on the correct way to record another person's opinions; ask me if you are still confused.

D) ORAL PRESENTATIONS: a one-time in-class activity for which you will be graded individually. It is scheduled on a day other than a mini-essay day. It is based on the material assigned for the date that you sign up. The presentations can be in the form of artwork, poster show, lecture, or performance.

Advantages: Your moment in the spotlight! You may grasp this opportunity to display your individuality and teamwork in expressing ideas.

Disadvantages: None.

What do you do?

- Provide a Title to your presentation that indicates your approach;
- Outline the particular aspects/themes/ideas of the texts for that day (points will be deducted for summarizing);
- Compare/contrast these texts and previous/outside readings; bring in a visual image or soundtrack to highlight a point;
- Pose a couple of questions based on the themes to elicit discussion.

Time allotted: 15 minutes maximum (please observe time-limit). You are most welcome to consult me beforehand about the presentation, if you have any questions about organization and format. My suggestion is that the presentation be uninterrupted, followed by a general discussion; and that it lean more towards raising questions than summarizing the texts. If you use electronic equipment, please arrive before class to set it up and have it ready to go.

Reminder: Sign up for the group oral presentation as early in the semester as you can and make a note of this event in your diary. You are responsible for remembering the date. If you have to cancel a scheduled presentation, please let me know well in advance. You must reschedule but are allowed to do so only once, if there are available dates remaining.

Participation in class discussion as a moderator or participant, in the online forum, and in oral presentations, is extremely important. One suggestion is to write comments/questions in your notebook while reading and/or consulting past class notes.

CONFERENCES: I value individual conferences highly and encourage them since, for all of the above, frequent communication is necessary. My office hours are printed at the head of this information sheet and at the top of the syllabus sheet. Leave a note, with your telephone number, in my mailbox (or slip it under my office door), or e-mail me, or talk with me after class if you wish to make an appointment other than the times indicated, for any aspect of the class. I urge you to take advantage of this practice, especially because I take great pride in knowing you individually. Please time your appointments or questions with at least 24 hours notice. I am not available between Friday 5 p.m. and Monday 12 p.m.

Regular attendance is the basis of good performance on your part, and is an inspiration for me to work harder. I will make a record of your attendance. Remember, attendance also means punctuality, an important aspect of your presence as a member of the class. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities.

Please see the attached grade-guide (page 4).

I WELCOME YOU AND I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS COURSE!!

For the **Forum**:

A for entries that raise thought-provoking questions, establish unique/interesting/significant connections to one's disciplinary interests, within/between texts, or to issues external to the class, maintain precision and clarity of thought, and provide succinct summaries of relevant ideas discussed.

B for entries that adequately summarize selected/relevant ideas from class-discussion, establish a valid and straightforward connection to one's disciplinary interests.

C for entries that summarize ideas in a sketchy manner, leave connections unclear, and dwell on obvious details that are not stimulating in their significance.

| | |
|-------|--------------|
| A+ | 100 - 97 |
| A | 96 - 94 |
| A- | 93 - 91 |
| A-/B+ | 90 |
| B+ | 89 - 87 |
| B | 86 - 84 |
| B- | 83 - 81 |
| B-/C+ | 80 |
| C+ | 79 - 77 |
| C | 76 - 74 |
| C- | 71 - 73 |
| C-/D+ | 70 |
| D+ | 69 - 67 |
| D | 66 - 64 |
| D- | 63 - 61 |
| F | 60 and below |

When averaging final grades, any number at the upper limit that carries a +0.5 value will be rounded to the next highest number at the discretion of the instructor—for instance, a final average of 89.5 could become 90, meaning a final grade of A-/B+ rather than a B+ (which is not bad in itself). That will enhance the value of your attendance, participation and journal assessment, give you some advantage and a lot of credit!

GRADE DISTRIBUTION FOR THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Mini-essays | 30% |
| Oral Presentation | 20% |
| Forum | 20% |
| Moderator | 10% |
| Participation | 10% |
| Attendance | 10% |

If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to talk to me.

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Week 1

Thursday, September 6 Introduction.

Week 2

Tuesday, September 11 Fanon (Ch. 1); Poem by Kipling.

Thursday, September 13 Fanon (Ch. 2); Said. Extract from "First Contact" in class.

Week 3

Tuesday, September 18 Fanon (Chs. 3 & 4); JanMohamed. PRACTICE MINI-ESSAY.

Thursday, September 20 Fanon (Ch. 4 & 5); Carlson. Presentation.

Week 4

Tuesday, September 25 Fanon (Ch. 6); Carter. **MINI ESSAY #1.**

Thursday, September 27 Fanon (Chs. 7 & 8); hooks. Presentation.

Week 5

Tuesday, October 2 Movie in class: At Play; Whitlock. Presentation.

Thursday, October 4 Movie in class: At Play; Stoler. Presentation.

Week 6

Tuesday, October 9 Movie in class: At Play. **MINI ESSAY #2.**

Thursday, October 11 Gordimer (pp. 1-49); Bonnett. Presentation.

Week 7

Tuesday, October 16 Gordimer (pp. 50-90); Mohanty. Presentation.

Thursday, October 18 Gordimer (pp. 74-90); Mohanty (Contd). Presentation.

Week 8

Tuesday, October 23 Gordimer (pp. 91-142); Davy. **MINI ESSAY #3.**

Week 8 Fall Break

Thursday, October 25 – Sunday, October 28

Week 9

Tuesday, October 30 Gordimer (pp. 143-160); Smith (Part I, Chs. 1-7); McLaren. Presentations.

Thursday, November 1 Smith (Part I, Chs. 8-12); Ware. Presentation.

Week 10

Tuesday, November 6 Smith (Part II, Chs. 1-8); Ellsworth. **MINI ESSAY #4.**

Thursday, November 8 Smith (Part II, Chs. 9-11) and (Part III, Chs. 1-3). Presentation.

Week 11

Tuesday, November 13 Smith (Part III, Chs. 4-10). Presentation.

Thursday, November 15 Smith (Part III, Chs. 11-13); Review.

Week 12

Tuesday, November 20 Movie in class: Avatar; Roman. **MINI ESSAY #5.**

Week 12 Thanksgiving Break Thursday, Nov 22 – Sunday, Nov 25

Week 13

Tuesday, November 27 Movie in class: Avatar. Presentation.

Thursday, November 29 Movie in class: Avatar; Review.

Week 14

Tuesday, December 4 Carter; Frankenberg. Presentation.

Thursday, December 6 Frankenberg (Contd); Hurtado and Stewart.). Presentation.

Week 15

Tuesday, December 11 Morrison; Extracts from *White! Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art*; Review.

Finals week

Thursday, December 13 through Monday, December 17

Optional Mini-Essay Revisions DUE Thursday, December 13, by 5 p.m. through Macalester Email