

ENGLISH 651-01: STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY LITERARY AND CULTURAL THEORY (3.0 CR.)

Modernity, Postmodernity, Globalization: Theoretical Models and Narrative Representations

Instructor: Assistant Professor Christian Moraru
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McIver 139A, M 6:30-9:20 PM
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS: This graduate seminar focuses on one of the most crucial and hotly debated issues in critical theory, cultural analysis, and the humanities generally at the turn of the millennium: the rise of global or "network" society. There has been, indeed, over the past decade or so, growing interest in phenomena of globalization. "Globalization," "globalism," "global culture," the "global age," recent forms of the "modern world-system" (Immanuel Wallerstein), have emerged as leading buzzwords of the late nineties. They have surfaced in all sorts of contexts and areas of inquiry, bearing upon English and American studies, and "theory" in general, rapidly becoming a major subject in fields as diverse as sociology, political sciences, economics, media studies, and rhetoric (which has begun to address issues such as "global literacy," the spread of English, and so on).

This course explores globalization and its complex, often contradictory meanings, in conjunction with theories of modernity and modernism, postmodernity and postmodernism, and postcoloniality. We will start from the premise that globalization represents a certain moment (or chapter) in the same narrative of modernity that critics have used to understand postmodernity and postcoloniality. We will discuss both theories and fictions of globalization and try to see how literary narratives relate to various theoretical models. Readings include works by Giles Gunn, Martin Albrow, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Anthony King, Slavoj Zizek, Timothy Brennan, John Carlos Rowe, Don DeLillo, Bharati Mukherjee, and Karen Tei Yamashita, among others.

The course aims at familiarizing the students with recent theory and criticism, turning in particular to a topic of increasing relevance and its crosscultural developments. In this class, students also learn, and apply, the research methodology needed for the professional study of literature and the critical ideas and theories shaping literary discourse. The emphasis will be placed on identifying the dynamic and features of core concepts and models of current critical and cultural analysis: difference, identity, community, universality, globalism, cosmopolitanism, modernism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and so on. We will place these notions in their appropriate and complex contexts; we will study their origins in modern theory as well as their forms in cultural history both in the West and East. Classroom work and individual projects--to be presented orally or in writing--are geared toward this goal. See the Professional Development note below for more specific objectives graduate students (Ph.D.'s, M.A.'s, and M.F.A.'s) will reach in this class.

METHODOLOGY AND CLASS FORMAT: We will use criticism, theory, and philosophy, but we will also turn to some fictional narratives. Running for almost three hours, this class will resemble a seminar, combining lecture, extensive discussion, student

presentations, and, occasionally, group work. Usually, our meetings will open with a lecture by the instructor providing historical and cultural background and placing the scheduled readings in the appropriate context. Following this introduction, students give 15-20-minute individual presentations on specific aspects of those readings. Then, we discuss collectively the materials for the day. I will set aside time to prepare and evaluate writing projects, exams, and other assignments.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES: Graduate students are encouraged to use this course to put their work in the larger, more demanding and competitive perspective of professionalism and academic performance. The class is geared toward graduate reading and writing carrying potential for presentation and publication outside UNCG. While fulfilling the course's requirements is your main goal, I urge you to take these requirements as an opportunity to think about yourselves as part of the academic community, with its standards, language, methods, tools, and venues.

Here are a few questions for us: where do I stand as a scholar, teacher, critic, and writer, and which are my goals? What is, or will be, my audience? In what kind of scholarly conversation do I wish to intervene based on what I learn in this class? What steps do I have to take to do that? What are the resources? Which are the outlets for my work? What do I have to do, for instance, to turn my seminar presentation/paper into a conference paper/journal article/dissertation chapter/writing sample? (more details in class and individually).

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Writing Assignments and Exams. Two options:

- a) a midterm paper (10 pp.) and a final paper (25 pp. plus endnotes and Works Cited), recommended for advanced graduates;
- b) a midterm and final paper (10 pp. each) plus a take-home final exam.

For the final paper only, you are responsible for submitting (to the instructor and ahead of time), for duplicating and circulating among class members a 1-p., single-spaced proposal, which will be presented and discussed in class toward the end of the semester. We will meet individually to discuss your proposal before its presentation in class. I urge you to consult with me on the topic of your first paper.

Note: All assignments are due in class on the day indicated in the syllabus.

2. Individual Presentations. Students sign up for their final project and oral presentations right away so that we can spread out the presentations over the course of the semester. Each student will give a brief, 15-20-min. talk on the scheduled readings. The presentations need not be written, but if they are, you should probably aim for 7-7.5, double-spaced pages.

Presentations cover a relevant aspect or material for the day. I do not expect you to fully analyze or explain the assignments or even one of these assignments. But I do ask you to a) briefly outline the argument or content of the readings you intend to talk about; b) identify one major element (theoretical problem) in these works, which should help us open up our conversation; c) finally, you must introduce us to one critical article on your subject (identify and present its thesis, outline its argument and research, and judge it overall). Feel free to consult with me before you choose your presentation topic.

3. "The Question for the Day." Each student will write up, before the class, one

question on the scheduled readings. You need not have the answer to the question; nor does the question have to be fully formulated--you may, occasionally, phrase it more as a problem than a full-blown query. I request that you e-mail your question to me by 2:00 PM each Monday.

4. Attendance and Participation. Both are expected and will factor in the final grade (see below under course policies).

CONFERENCES: Please meet with me during my regular office hours or make an appointment to discuss your specific interests, goals, or any aspect of this class. I ask you to make a first, "formal" appointment early on in the semester. I will schedule these meetings immediately. I will also hold a second round of formal conferences before the semester ends, to discuss your 1-p. proposals and your progress in this class.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. Late Papers: No late papers--and any other kind of work for that matter--accepted. However, if you foresee any deadline-related problems, please come to see me ahead of time. We shall work together to find a solution.

2. Absences: You are allowed no more than 2 (two) absences during the semester for illnesses (which you must document afterwards), religious holidays, or emergencies preventing you from attending. No undocumented absences allowed. Should they occur, they will affect your final grade. I will subtract 5% from the latter for any undocumented absence. Since we meet once a week, attendance is particularly critical to the success of our work in this class. If you are the victim of an emergency, please stay in touch with me by e-mail or phone.

GRADING: As a general rule, no incompletes (but, again, come to see me if you anticipate any problems). The quality of your work will be reflected in the final grade as follows:

1. Papers and/or exams: 85%
2. Oral participation: 15%

Note: I would like to discuss these percentages and all requirements in general on the first meeting.

REQUIRED TEXTS

DeLillo, Don. The Names. 1982. New York: Random House, 1989. ISBN: 0679722955. (pbk.)

Mukherjee, Bharati. Jasmine. 1989. New York: Grove P, 1999. ISBN: 0802136303 (pbk.).

Yamashita, Karen Tei. Tropic of Orange. Minneapolis: Coffee House P, 1997. ISBN 1566890640.

Brennan, Timothy. At Home in the World : Cosmopolitanism Now. Cambridge, Mass., London, England: Harvard UP, 1997. ISBN: 0674050312 (pbk.).

King, Anthony D. Culture, eds. Globalization and the World-System : Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. ISBN: 0816629536 (pbk.).

Gunn, Giles. Beyond Solidarity. Pragmatism and Difference in a Globalized World. Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P, 2001. ISBN: 0-226-31064-7 (pbk.).

Rowe, John Carlos, ed. Post-Nationalist American Studies. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2000. ISBN: 0520224396.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present. Cambridge, Mass., London, England: Harvard UP, 1999. ISBN: 0674177649 (pbk.).

Zizek, Slavoj. Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (MIS)Use of a Notion. New York: Verso, 2002. ISBN 1859844251 (pbk.).

Albrow, Martin. The Global Age. State and Society Beyond Modernity. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP. 1997.

II. Additional materials (whole books or xeroxed excerpts) placed on reserve and marked R in the syllabus, or available online (marked O):

Jameson, Fredric, and Masao Miyoshi, eds. The Cultures of Globalization. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1998.

Llosa, Mario Vargas. "Global Village or Global Pillage?" Reason 33. 3 (July 2001): 40-47. Online through Jackson Library (InfoTrac).

Robbins, Bruce. Feeling Global. Internationalism in Distress. New York and London: New York UP, 1999.

Yamashita, Karen Tei. "Interview with Karen Tei Yamashita." By Jean Vengua Gier and Carla Alicia Tejada. Jouvert 2.2. Online: <http://152.1.19.5/jouvert.v2I2/yamashi.htm>

COURSE SYLLABUS

Week 1

Mon Aug. 19 LITERARY AND CULTURAL THEORY; INTERDISCIPLINARITY.
Introduction to the course: goals, requirements, policies. Presentation of the topic and daily syllabus followed by discussion.

Start reading DeLillo's novel and try to finish it by Sep. 16.

Week 2

Mon Aug. 26 MODERNITY, MODERNISM, AND BEYOND.
Assignment for the day: Albrow 77-202

Week 3

Mon Sep. 2 Labor Day Holiday. No class

Week 4

Mon Sep. 9 MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM, AND GLOBALISM: CONTINUITIES, DISCONTINUITIES

Assignments: Jameson, The Cultures of Globalization xi-xvii R; 54-77 R; King 1-18; 19-40; 69-106. Moraru, "The Global Turn" R/O. Start reading Mukherjee's novel and have it ready by Sep. 30.

Week 5

Mon Sep. 16 THE WORLD-SYSTEM: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY
Assignments: DeLillo, The Names (I); DeLillo, "In the ruins of the Future" R; Cowart 162-180 O

Week 6
 Mon Sep. 23 DeLillo, The Names (II)

Week 7
 Mon Sep. 30 POSTCOLONIALITY AND GLOBALIZATION (I)
 Mukherjee (I); Moraru, Rewriting 155-166 R/O;

Week 8
 Mon Oct. 7 Mukherjee (II); Robbins 97-113
 Hand out Spivak study guide

Week 9
 Mon Oct. 14 Fall break; no class

Week 10
 Mon Oct. 21 POSTCOLONIALITY AND GLOBALIZATION (II)
 Spivak 198-311; 423-431 During R/O;
 Midterm student evaluations
Midterm papers and exams due (in class)

Week 11
 Mon Oct. 28 Spivak 312-421

Week 12
 Mon Nov. 4 COSMOPOLITANISM AND GLOBALIZATION
 Assignment: Brennan 1-118; 307-317
 Start reading Yamashita's novel and
 have it done by Nov. 25.

Week 13
 Mon Nov. 11 COSMOPOLITANISM, COMMUNITY, SOLIDARITY, AND THE
 GLOBAL CHALLENGES
 Assignments: Gunn ix-47; 171-195; Rowe
 110-125
 Hand out Zizek study guide

Week 14
 Mon Nov. 18 POST-COLD WAR STUDIES, CULTURAL STUDIES, AND THE
 GLOBAL
 Assignment: Zizek 1-60; 190-256
 Final project presentations (I)

Week 15
 Mon Nov. 25 LIBERALISM, NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALISM--AND THEIR
 CRITIQUE. BORDERLAND AND BORDER-CROSSING NARRATIVES
 Assignments: Yamashita, Tropic of Orange (I)
 Optional: Yamashita, "Interview" O; Rowe 1-39
 Final project presentations (II)
 Discussing the final exam

Week 16
 Mon Dec. 2 Yamashita, Tropic of Orange (II); Llosa,
 "Global Village or Global Pillage?" R; Rowe 41-62
 Final project presentations (III)
 Final exam assigned

Week 17
 Mon Dec. 9 Last day of classes
 Final project presentations (IV)

Overview

Final evaluations

Final papers and exams due (in class)