

**ENGLISH 315-01: POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES (3 CR.)**

***Postcolonialism and After: Redefining the Human***

Professor Christian Moraru

Spring 2017

School of Education 102

TR: 3:30 – 4:45 PM

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION - FOCUS, FORMAT, GOALS:** This is an undergraduate survey of postcolonial fiction. The class also has a thematic-historical focus, namely, the transition, still underway, from by now “classical,” 1960s-1970s postcolonialism to the late-global world and the literature both reproducing and producing this world, bringing it into being. Our course will help us understand what this transition means thematically and formally. Alongside some criticism and theory, we will read novels by authors from a range of cultural and linguistic traditions. These writers include Jean Rhys, J. M. Coetzee, Milan Kundera, Mohsin Hamid, and Christos Tsiolkas, among others.

This class looks at postcolonial literature and its apparent successor, global/world fiction, as a *geocultural* site for the redefinition of human identity in the late-20<sup>th</sup>-century - 21<sup>st</sup>-century world. More specifically, we will be examining how “classically” postcolonial literature turns into the kind of books that, of late, have been called “world novels”—novels whose plots span countries and continents and whose “arch-theme” can be said to be the gradually integrating world. The basic premise of the course is that the overhaul of the modern dynamic of cultural identity (and culture more generally) and place has been an increasingly defining development worldwide since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Simply speaking, the “umbilical cord,” as some have put it, between culture and the physical location or country where cultural expression and identity have been historically deemed to “stem” from has weakened and, in some cases, has been severed altogether.

This and cognate post-1989 realignments attest to the rise of new ways of being in the postcolonial world and perhaps in the “post-postcolonial” world as well. These ways come to the fore in open conflict—and oftentimes in fruitful tension—with the nation-state model of understanding the correlation between identity (who we are) and territory (where we are, come from, and express ourselves). Notably, this correlation is no longer stable. The stability it used to entail, at least compared to our times—a stability of political territory, sovereignty, cultural authority, as well as a limitation in space, of where we could be or get—has eroded especially since the end of the Cold War. After 1989, globalizing processes have kicked into high gear, and globalization overall has entered, accordingly, an “accelerated,” “strong,” or “hypernetworked”

era. Ours is a fluid and porous world in which at-distance interaction and border crossing of all kinds simply force us to reconceptualize a whole set of fundamental practices and values geoculturally. First and foremost, they pressure us to rethink ourselves—how we grow and function, how we perform socially, and how we form communities—in contexts much larger and more complex than those of traditional ethnic, religious, linguistic, and political units. This rethinking concerns the categories and cultural practices swirling around postcoloniality as a historical and political reality in turn dependent on the nation-state and nationalism.

This course covers material lodged at the shifting intersection of the postcolonial, the transnational, and the postmodern/experimental, movements, categories, and features that will also be addressed in our class. Interpretively (analytically) and pedagogically, our approach is cross-cultural and comparative and will be employed with an eye to illuminating the geocultural (relational) scenario of identity formation in the late-postcolonial and global era. That is, we will see how these texts talk to each other over national, linguistic, geographic, and cultural divides and how, in doing so, they foreground the notion of territorial-cultural boundaries as well as these boundaries' increased porousness and this situation's bearings on identity performance during the heyday of postcolonialism and after.

The course is broad and foundational in nature. It does not assume extensive familiarity with the texts and traditions at hand. It combines introductory lectures, class discussion, and group work. All required readings are novels written in or translated into English. There will be some secondary readings to go with our primary literature.

1. Examinations and papers: There will be a midterm exam (75 min. long, take-home), which will cover our first three or four novels, and a paper, both word-processed. The latter will carry more weight. The exam will feature short questions and will require brief essays in response. The essays will have to identify and analyze the central issues and formal characteristics of the material. We will prepare both the exam and the paper carefully—the entire class is required to participate in the midterm overview of the course, selection of topics, and rehearsals. We will talk about exam format and grading in larger detail before the midterm.

We will do the same for the paper later in the semester. For now, note that this will be a 6-7-p., double-spaced, thesis-based essay for which some research will be necessary. As you incorporate research into your argument, keep in mind that 3-4 secondary sources (usually peer-reviewed articles or book chapters) should suffice. The format of your essay should be MLA. Make sure you reference your sources, put your name on your paper, number its pages, and staple them together. Before submitting the paper, students prepare and e-mail the instructor a short 1-paragraph paper proposal in which they describe their project, indicating its thesis, focus, and related matters. The paper is due on April 18, in class.

2. Attendance and Participation: Both are required and will be reflected in the final grade (see below). I expect you to come to class with the assignments for the day completed and ready to participate orally, individually or in your group. **Given that we read only novels, you should have completed the reading of the entire book by the time we start discussing it.**

3. Group Activities: You will be assigned to groups of 4-5 members, which will complete brief

in-class assignments. Groups discuss a specific material or problem and then designate a member to report their conclusions back to the rest of the class. Reports will be oral and rather informal, about 5 minutes long. Their main role is to help us speed up debates. Group work will be graded, too. Students in one group will get the same grade regardless of who gives the presentation.

CONFERENCES: Please meet with me during my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your work or any aspect of the course. My hope is to have at least one round of “formal” conferences during the semester. I urge you to make a first appointment early on to talk about the course and what you need to accomplish in it.

ENGLISH 315-01 CANVAS WEBSITE: Students must go to the course website before each class. I will post handouts, assignments, and announcements regularly. Those materials will have to be printed out and brought to class.

#### COURSE POLICIES:

1. Absences: You are allowed no more than 3 absences during the semester (which you must document afterwards). These are only for illnesses, religious holidays, and emergencies preventing you from attending. Any unjustified absences will seriously affect your grade; 3 undocumented absences may result in your being dropped. If you are the victim of an emergency or serious illness, please stay in touch with me by e-mail or phone. In addition, because tardiness disrupts class too, be aware that coming in late 3 times will count as an absence.

#### 2. Electronic Devices and Classroom Ethics:

>As a general policy, no electronic devices whatsoever allowed during class time, except for students presenting documentation from UNCG’s Office of Accessibility Resources and Services. We will use books in print. Power off cell phones, etc. before the class starts. Using any device of this sort during class time will automatically get you an F for that meeting.

>You must bring your book for the day with you and use it to get credit for the specific class.

>You may not talk with your peers in class unless you have to as part of an in-class assignment.

> While I may not call on you on the spot if you are violating this and related policies, I make daily notes of all students who are not in compliance. If you are often among them, that will affect your final grade well beyond the 25% allotted to oral participation and classroom ethics below; in the more egregious cases—which usually result in class disruption—you will be dropped from the class, and a report may also be filed with the University.

3. Academic Integrity Policy and Plagiarism: Students are required to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course. They need to be familiar with, and abide by, the relevant standards, expectations, and policies described in UNCG’s *Undergraduate Bulletin*, which is available at <http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/>. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of others’ materials both in form (wording) and substance (ideas). Any paper bearing your name signifies that you are the author, namely, that the words

and the ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by quotations marks and paraphrases. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an “F” for the whole course, and/or a report filed with the Dean.

GRADING: As a general rule, I am reluctant to grant incompletes. To pass the course, you must take the exam and turn in the final paper on time, come to class prepared, do your readings regularly, and participate in group work and discussion. The final grade breakdown is as follows:

Participation and Classroom Ethics (includes group work and any possible pop quizzes)	25%
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Paper	40%

Please note the high percentage rewarding consistent, articulated, and ethical class participation.

REQUIRED READINGS (Books in print only):

### I. Primary Sources

- Tsiolkas, Christos. *Dead Europe*. London, UK: Atlantic, 2011.  
 Chikwava, Brian. *Harare North*. London: Random House UK, 2010.  
 Abani, Chris. *GraceLand*. New York: Picador, 2005.  
 Coetzee, J. M. *The Childhood of Jesus*. New York: Viking, 2013.  
 Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007.  
 Kundera, Milan. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. New York: Harper, 1999.  
 Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2016.

### II. Secondary Sources (book chapters)

#### 1. Books:

- Ascari, Maurizio. *Literature of the Global Age: A Critical Study of Transcultural Narratives*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011.  
 Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Studying the Novel*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed., London: Bloomsbury, 2016.  
 Leonard, Philip. *Literature after Globalization: Textuality, Technology and the Nation-State*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.  
 Patterson, Annabel. *The International Novel*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.  
 Walkowitz, Rebecca L. *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

#### 2. Articles:

- Poster, Mark. “Postcolonial Theory in the Age of Planetary Communications.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 24 (2007): 379-393.

## DAILY SYLLABUS:

**Week 1**

T 01/17 Presentation of the course: focus, goals, requirements, topics, and policies.  
Evaluation of student work; reading groups. Course syllabus and discussion.

R 01/19 *Wide Sargasso Sea*

**Week 2**

T 01/24 *Wide Sargasso Sea*

R 01/26 *Wide Sargasso Sea* and, in the Raiskin ed., texts by Brontë, Thorpe, and Rody

**Week 3**

T 01/31 *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

R 02/02 *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

**Week 4**

T 02/07 *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

R 02/09 *Dead Europe*  
Ascari, *Literature of the Global Age*, "Introduction"

**Week 5**

T 02/14 *Dead Europe*

R 02/16 *Dead Europe*

**Week 6**

T 02/21 *Dead Europe*

R 02/23 *The Childhood of Jesus*  
Patterson, *The International Novel*, "Introduction"

**Week 7**

T 02/28 *The Childhood of Jesus*

R 03/02 *The Childhood of Jesus*

**Week 8**

T 03/07 Preparing the midterm exam (topics, discussion): bring all your books so far covered and your notes (the first three novels)

R 03/09 Discussing and circulating the midterm exam questions

**Week 9**

T 03/14 *Fall Break: no class*

R 03/16 *Fall Break: no class*

**Week 10**

T 03/21 **Midterm exam due in class**  
 Discussing the final paper  
 Abani visits UNCG, 03/21-22

R 03/23 *Harare North*  
 Poster, "Postcolonial Theory in the Age of Planetary Communications"

**Week 11**

T 03/28 **Research workshop** on Internet and library resources: Jenny Dale, Main Library computer lab, during regular class time

R 03/30 **Research workshop** on Internet and library resources: Jenny Dale, Main Library computer lab, during regular class time

**Week 12**

T 04/04 *Harare North*

R 04/06 *GraceLand*  
 Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel*, 237-263

**Week 13**

T 04/11 *GraceLand*

R 04/13 *GraceLand*

**Week 14**

T 04/18 *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*  
 Leonard, *Literature After Globalization*, 1-30  
**Final paper due**

R 04/20 *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*  
 Walkowitz, Hamid chapter (189-199)

**Week 15**

T 04/25 *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

R 04/27 Last meeting  
 Course overview  
 Course evaluations