

“Inquiry into Postcolonial Identity”
English 102 Course Proposal
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Course Description:

As the “Ready for the World” program makes clear, UT is becoming more committed to helping “students gain the international and intercultural knowledge they need to succeed in today’s world.” I believe that part of that knowledge can come from understanding how colonization has influenced many cultures throughout the world. Specifically, this course will focus on how identity is constructed (through race, class, and gender) for people living in countries previously colonized by the British Empire. The first unit of the class will provide a general history of the British Empire. Students will also be introduced to concepts informing colonial policies such as a variety of genres, including fiction, non-fiction, and visual images. We will then explore how people from various countries, both male and female, European and native, respond to colonialism in terms of their identity in the second unit. My hope is that students will find these responses in interviews, advertisements, film, and literature. Finally, in the last unit, students will have the chance to bring all of this information to bear in their final research paper (6-8 pages) about a piece of fiction (or a film) by one of the authors (or directors) we will study during the course of the semester.

Types of Inquiry:

1. **Historical Inquiry:** Students will investigate the history of British colonization through various historical documents, archival research, visual images, and museums. I envision students having the chance to explore historical aspects of colonization as they relate to particular majors such as Biology, Business, Linguistics, Sociology, and others. Students would then have the opportunity to present their findings in an oral presentation that would also translate into a paper (3-5 pages).
2. **Hands-On Inquiry:** Students will do field research through interviews (a professor, classmate, etc. from a country previously colonized by the British empire), surveys, and by locating an ad or brochure on a particular destination and then looking at how the culture and people of that country/region are depicted. Student’s papers in this unit (2-4 pages) will focus on the ways that a history of colonization continues to shape identity for those people living on postcolonial countries as well as how it constructs *our* perceptions of those identities through advertisements, stereotypes, etc.
3. **Academic Inquiry:** Students will conduct traditional, academic research on an author, text, or film that we have discussed during the semester. They will then write a research paper (6-8 pages) on how this author (or director) makes an argument about postcolonial identity (informed by issues such as race, class, and/or gender) in his/her text. Another option for this unit would be for students to explore an aspect of postcolonial identity raised in a text or film from the perspective of their major interest (e.g. the history of the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, the psychological consequences of partition in India, the sociological implications of apartheid in South Africa, etc.).

In addition to the three formal papers outlined above, students will also be required to write short, informal responses to the readings, visual images, films, etc. that we will discuss throughout the semester.

Since food is also an important aspect of identity, if at all possible, I would like to include at least one day in the semester where we could share and taste food from one of the regions/countries under consideration in our discussions.

Possible Texts and Films:

Primary Texts (purchased by students)

1. *An Anthology of Colonial and Postcolonial Short Fiction*, Dean Baldwin **OR**
2. *The Arnold Anthology of Postcolonial Literatures in English*, John Thieme
3. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, Robert J. C. Young

Secondary Texts (provided by instructor through on-line reserve)

1. *Oxford History of the British Empire, Volumes 1-5* (excerpts)
2. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature* (excerpts)
3. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (excerpts)
4. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (excerpts)
5. *Gender and Empire* (excerpts)
6. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (excerpts)
7. *Black Experience and the British Empire* (excerpts)
8. *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies: A Historical Introduction* (excerpts)
9. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory* (excerpts)
10. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (excerpts)

Visual Texts (provided by instructor through on-line reserve)

1. *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (excerpts)
2. *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (excerpts)

Films

1. *Fire; Earth; Water*, Trilogy by Deepa Muhta
2. *Salaam, Bombay!*, Mira Nair
3. *Bhaji on the Beach*, Gurinder Chadha
4. *Everyone's Child*, Tsitsi Dangarembga
5. *Masai: the Rain Warriors*, Pascal Plisson
6. *Burning an Illusion*, Menelik Shabazz
7. *Time and Judgment*, Menelik Shabazz
8. *Catch a Fire*, Menelik Shabazz
9. *The Journey of the Lion*, Fritz Baumann

NOTE: While most of the supplemental reading texts can be theoretically dense, I will only select readings that are accessible to freshmen readers and that are relevant to an understanding of identity in the postcolonial setting.