

## English 374 – Postcolonial Literature

Prof. Gwen Bergner \* T/Th 10:00-11:15 \* 200 Clark \* Fall 2012

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### Course Description

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The rise of “globalization” as the new paradigm for understanding the world’s interconnectedness challenges us to re-examine the history of relations between the postcolonial world (of South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean) and its former European colonizers. Though “globalization” suggests we’ve merged smoothly and evenly into an interdependent network, significant cultural, political, and economic differences remain. We certainly travel, transact business, and communicate in a global framework, but conflict—over trade, immigration, religion, and politics—belies any illusion of global harmony. On the other hand, American pop culture is the world’s *lingua franca* or common language. How do we make sense of these uneven developments in national identity and international relations?



We’ll approach this question by examining how colonialism’s legacy shapes people and nations. Reading contemporary novels and viewing one film from the South Asian nations of India and Pakistan and their postcolonial diasporas in the United States and Great Britain, we’ll consider how emerging nations constitute a national identity; how they and their citizens handle the psychological, cultural, economic, and physical violence of colonization and decolonization; and how citizens and immigrants negotiate the tricky relationships among aspects of identity such as religion, gender, race, and sexuality.



In addition to reading postcolonial literature, this course covers the defining and evolving issues in the field of postcolonial theory and literature; outlines the historical, political, and cultural context of colonialism/postcolonialism in India and Pakistan; and uses the knowledge embodied in the first two objectives to analyze relevant postcolonial literature.

### Required Texts

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Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*  
Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*  
Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*  
John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*  
Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*  
Salman Rushdie, *Shame*  
Bapsi Sidhwa, *Cracking India*

### Film (to be watched in class)

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*Slumdog Millionaire*, dir. Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan

**English Program Goals**--Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

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- Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
    - Identify genre conventions and analyzes their effects.
    - Identify and analyzes effects of complexity or ambiguity.
    - Locate texts in social / economic / political / literary history.
    - Connect texts to other literary or cultural texts.
  - Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
  - Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

**Learning Outcomes**—By the end of the course, students should be able to:

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- Define some major concepts, strategies, and debates in postcolonial literary studies.
  - Describe the basic historical, political, and cultural context of colonialism/postcolonialism in Pakistan and India.
  - Use the knowledge embodied in the first two objectives to analyze and interpret literature of these nations and their diasporas.
  - Connect analyses of course texts to sources on the history, economics, cultures, and politics of India and Pakistan and their relation to the U.S

In order to achieve the learning outcomes listed above, students should also be able to:

- Construct unified, coherent, and supported written paragraphs of textual analysis.
- Demonstrate mastery of the mechanics of quotation and citation.
- Synthesize, cite, and document secondary sources to support enrich critical textual analysis.
- Combine the conventions of academic writing with creative use of text, graphics, photographs, and Web links to create an intertextual and multi-modal blog that conveys critical thought on course texts and concepts related to postcolonialism and globalization.

<b>Course Work</b>	<b>Points</b>
Colonialism/Postcolonialism Terms & Concepts Test	20
Quotation Test	10
8 Analytic Blog Paragraphs (250 words each, 10 pts. each)	80
Final Project (multi-modal blog with works cited)	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

Grade Scale

A	180-200 pts.	C	140-159 pts.	F	< 120 pts.
B	160-179 pts.	D	120-139 pts.		

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You must complete all assignments and attend class regularly for a passing grade.

In-class Work

In classes of this small size, learning comes primarily from the quality of discussion rather than from lectures. This means that students bear a responsibility to themselves and to classmates to attend class and to participate in discussion. You must bring the texts for discussion to each class either in hard copy or electronic format. In-class work also includes activities such as summarizing key concepts from our secondary texts, answering discussion questions, completing writing exercises, peer editing paper drafts, and participating in group

work. To complete in-class work, you must attend class; therefore, points will be deducted for absences that exceed the allowed maximum (see Attendance and Late Policy below).

### Colonialism/Postcolonialism Terms & Concepts Test

This open-book, short-answer, take-home test covers the first couple of chapters of the course text *Beginning Postcolonialism*. We will go over the material extensively in class discussion. The material serves as a basis for the rest of the course.

### Quotation/Citation Test

This take-home test assesses your mastery of the mechanics and conventions of quoting from primary texts and using parenthetical page citations. These skills will help you achieve the goal of incorporating quotations from primary and secondary sources into your writing with proper syntax and citation. We will go over the material in class with handouts and exercises.

### Analytic Blog Paragraphs

Over the course of the semester, you will write seven paragraphs analyzing an aspect of the reading to be discussed that day. Each student will construct a blog through Google's *blogger* platform on which to post these paragraphs. These assignments work to strengthen paragraph structure and close textual analysis. They also allow you to draw on and connect to relevant Web resources in order to participate in a larger critical conversation about course topics. We will use your paragraphs to shape class discussion, and you will be required to comment in writing to some of your classmates' posts. Each paragraph is worth 10 points (5% of your final grade).

### Capstone Project: Multi-modal Blog

For the capstone project you will convert your analytic blog paragraphs to a multi-modal blog that conveys informed ideas and critical thinking on course texts and issues of postcolonialism and globalization affecting India and Pakistan and their relations to the US. In other words, the analytic blog paragraph assignments consist only of written responses to specific prompts and readings; the capstone consists of turning those narrative paragraphs into a multi-modal account (including graphics, images, music, videos, and links) to convey in a creative way your informed ideas and critical thinking. Although this project takes the form of a blog, you are expected to write coherently, observe requirements of academic documentation, and critically analyze your own ideas as well as those of your secondary sources.

*Separate guidelines, including grading criteria, will be provided for the analytic blog paragraphs and the capstone blog project.*

## **Policies**

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### Attendance and Late Policy

Consistent class attendance helps students succeed academically and enriches our class dynamics. Therefore, attendance is required. **You are granted four absences without penalty.** Use these for school trips, illness, family emergencies, etc. You do not need to clear these absences with me. **Each additional absence** (no matter the reason), **costs you two points** (1% of course grade) from your total for the class. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to **contact a classmate** to find out what happened in class, if there is an assignment for the next class, and

whether changes were made to the syllabus or assignment schedule. You are responsible for all assignments, graded and ungraded, due in the next class.

At the beginning of each class, we will discuss upcoming assignments, due dates, and questions on graded work. Therefore, it is important that you arrive to class on time. Please anticipate traffic and parking difficulties. Everyone has an emergency now and then, so **you get two late arrivals without penalty. After that, any late arrival counts as half a class absence and costs you 1 point** from your class total.

### Late Work

One full letter grade will be deducted per day for late submissions unless you make **prior** arrangements with me. Assignments will not be accepted by email without prior permission or unless specified on the syllabus or in assignment guidelines.

### Electronic “Handouts,” Assignment Guidelines, and Supplementary Course Materials

I will frequently distribute assignment guidelines and other materials by email attachment in either PDF or Word format. You **MUST** have access to these materials **in class**, in either electronic or hard copy format. One point per ten points of value will be deducted from assignments for failure to bring guidelines to class. For example, one point will be deducted from a ten-point blog paragraph assignment for failure to bring paragraph guidelines to class.

### E-Mail

I will use WVU’s MIX e-mail system to communicate with the class between meetings. Please check your MIX e-mail account regularly between class meetings. Although email etiquette has relaxed with the advent of smart phones, please be courteous and clear by indicating your full name and the course you’re in. No texting in class, please.

### Honor Code

All work that you submit must be your own. Any words, ideas, or data that you borrow from another source must be properly documented. It is your responsibility to learn the conventions of academic documentation. Please see me in conference if you have questions. Cases of plagiarism and cheating will result in appropriate academic sanctions. Please see the WVU Undergraduate Catalog section on Academic Integrity/Dishonesty for school policy.

### Learning Environment

WVU recognizes the diversity of its students and is committed to social justice. I support that commitment and will work to create a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. I welcome suggestions for furthering such an environment. If you have a disability and need accommodation to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700). If a Day of Special Concern (see the Schedule of Courses) conflicts with a test or assignment due date, please notify me in advance to make alternative arrangements.

**Syllabus** (subject to change, if necessary)

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**Week 1**

T, Aug. 21 Introduction: What is postcolonial literature? Why India and Pakistan?

Th, Aug. 23 John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, Ch. 1 “From ‘Commonwealth’ to ‘Postcolonial’” (6-16)

**Week 2**

T, Aug. 28 McLeod, Ch. 1 “From ‘Commonwealth’ to ‘Postcolonial’” (17-34)

Th, Aug. 30 McLeod, Ch. 2 “Reading Colonial Discourses” (37-57)

**Week 3**

T, Sept. 4 McLeod, Ch. 2 “Reading Colonial Discourses” (57-64) and Rudyard Kipling, “The Overland Mail” (in McLeod, appendix, 259-260)

**Blog par. #1**

Th, Sept. 6 Bapsi Sidhwa, *Cracking India* (96)  
McLeod, Ch. 3 “Nationalist Representations” (67-92)

**Week 4**

T, Sept. 11 Sidhwa, *Cracking India* (195)  
McLeod, Ch. 4 “The Nation in Question” (102-113)

Th, Sept. 13 Sidhwa, *Cracking India* (to end)  
**Blog par. #2**

**Week 5**

T, Sept. 18 Rushdie, *Shame* (Parts I and II)  
McLeod, Ch. 4 “The Nation in Question” (114-117)

Th, Sept. 20 Rushdie, *Shame* (Part III)  
McLeod, Ch. 4 “The Nation in Question” (117-129)

**Week 6**

T, Sept. 25 Rushdie, *Shame* (Part IV)  
**Blog par. #3**

Th, Sept. 27 Rushdie, *Shame* (Part V)  
Writing/Quotation Workshop

**Week 7**

T, Oct. 2 **Due:** Colonialism/Postcolonialism Test (take-home)  
*Slumdog Millionaire*, dir. Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan (in class)

Th, Oct. 4 *Slumdog Millionaire*, cont. (in class)

**Week 8**

T, Oct. 9 Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (89)  
**Blog par. #4 on *Slumdog Millionaire***

Th, Oct. 11 Roy, *God of Small Things* (204)  
McLeod, Ch. 6 “Postcolonialism and Feminism” (172-199)

**Week 9**

T, Oct. 16 Roy, *God of Small Things* (to end)  
**Blog par. #4**

Th, Oct. 18 Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger* (95)

**Week 10**

T, Oct. 23 Adiga, *The White Tiger* (189)

Th, Oct. 25 Adiga, *The White Tiger* (to end)  
**Blog par. #6**

**Week 11**

T, Oct. 30 Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (77)  
McLeod, Ch. 7 “Diaspora Identities” (205-221)

Th, Nov. 1 Kureishi, *Buddha of Suburbia* (181)  
McLeod, Ch. 7 “Diaspora Identities” (222-232)

**Week 12**

T, Nov. 6 **Election Day—No Class**  
**VOTE!**

Th, Nov. 8 Kureishi, *Buddha of Suburbia* (to end)  
**Blog par. #7**

**Week 13**

T, Nov. 13 Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (96)

Th, Nov. 15 **Due:** Quotation Test (take-home)  
No Class (I will be at the American Studies Association conference.)

**Week of Thanksgiving!** Have a great break. Be safe.

**Week 14**

T, Nov. 27 Lahiri, *The Namesake* (187)

Th, Nov. 29 Lahiri, *Namesake* (to end)  
**Blog par. #8**

**Week 15**

T, Dec. 4 **Due:** Draft of Capstone Project  
Required in-class Workshop

Th, Dec. 6 **Due:** Revised Capstone Project Draft  
Required in-class Workshop

**Capstone Project—Due Tuesday, December 11, 12:00 PM**