

## English 374 – Postcolonial Literature

Prof. Gwen Bergner \* T/Th 10:00-11:15 \* G11 WDB \* Spring 2014

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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 fiction, essays, and history and viewing one film from a range of Caribbean nations (including, Jamaica, Antigua, Martinique, and the Dominican Republic) and their postcolonial diasporas in North America, 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 the Caribbean; and uses the knowledge embodied in the first two objectives to analyze relevant postcolonial literature.

### Required Texts

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Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (Jamaica, 1984)

Patrick Chamoiseau, *School Days* (Martinique, 1994)

Junot Diaz, *Drown* (Dominican Republic, 1996)

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (Antigua, 1988)

Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (1990)

John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (second edition)

**All other required readings are available on eCampus**

### Films (provided for you)

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“The Harder They Come” (1972), dir. Perry Henzell (103 min.)

“It’s All About Dancing: A Jamaican Dance-U-Mentary” (2006), dir. Jason Williams (100 min.)

“Life and Debt” (2001), dir. Stephanie Black (80 min.)

**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 the Caribbean.
  - Use the knowledge embodied in the first two objectives to analyze and interpret literature of this region and its diasporas.
  - Connect analyses of course texts to sources on the history, economics, cultures, and politics of the Caribbean and its relationship 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.
- 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>
10 DQ/F assignments (5 pts. each)	50
Colonialism/Postcolonialism Terms & Concepts Test (due Feb. 25)	30
6 Analytic Blog Paragraphs (10 pts. each)	60
Final Project (multi-modal blog with works cited; due April 29)	60
<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.		

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

Participation and In-class Work

This class is discussion-based; therefore, learning depends on the quality of discussion and students bear a responsibility to the class community to participate meaningfully. To this end, you must bring the assigned readings to each class, including books and e-reserve readings, and come prepared for in-class work, including workshops, exam preps, and group work.

### Discussion Question/Facts

Ten times over the course of the semester, you will bring to class two questions and one fact on the reading for that day. If you are absent on a DQ/F due date, bring in a full analytic paragraph on the reading for the missed day when you are next in class. Each DQ/F is worth five points. I read DQ/Fs carefully and use them to shape class discussion, but they are not graded. You get full credit for each DQ/F you complete on time according to guidelines.

### 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.

### Analytic Paragraphs

Over the course of the semester, you will write six paragraphs analyzing an aspect of the reading to be discussed that day. These assignments work to strengthen paragraph structure and close textual analysis. We will also use your paragraphs to shape class discussion. You will turn in a hard copy of your paragraph as well as post it to the blog you will create for this class.

### Capstone Project: Multi-modal Blog

For the capstone project you will convert your analytic paragraphs to a multi-modal blog (including graphics, images, music, videos, and links) that convey in a creative way your informed ideas and critical thinking on course texts and issues of postcolonialism and globalization affecting the Caribbean and its relations to the US. 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.

*Additional assignment guidelines and grading criteria will be provided on eCampus.*

### Writing Resources

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- WVU Library Guide for Engl 496: <http://libguides.wvu.edu/english496>
- Purdue's fabulous Online Writing Guide (OWL) on MLA style: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>
- "Basic in-text citation": <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>
- "Basic Works Cited": <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>
- The Writing Center in Colson G02 is available for writing assistance. You can drop in or call for an appointment: **304.293.5788**.

### 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 (4) absences without penalty. Use these for school trips, illness, family emergencies, etc. You do not need to clear these absences with me. **For each additional absence (no matter the reason), you will lose three (3) points of your course total. More than seven (7) absences triggers an automatic F 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. If you have an emergency or serious health problem during the semester, please contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will communicate with me and authorize arrangements for you.

At the beginning of each class we will discuss upcoming assignments, due dates, and feedback. Therefore, it is important that you arrive on time. Please anticipate traffic and parking difficulties. Everyone has an emergency now and then, so you get two (2) late arrivals without penalty. After that, any **late arrival costs you 1 point from your course total and counts as half an absence**. If you enter class late, make sure after class that I have marked you present.

#### Submission of Assignments:

1. Due at the beginning of class on the date specified.
2. **Typed in 12 point font, double-spaced, one-inch margins; pages numbered and stapled.**
3. Keep a folder of all graded course work and electronic backup of all assignments.

#### Late Work

No late work will be accepted unless you make prior arrangements with me.

#### E-Mail

Please check your MIX e-mail account at least once between class meetings.

#### Electronic "Handouts," Assignment Guidelines, and Supplementary Course Materials

I will post readings, assignment guidelines, and other course materials on eCampus. 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 materials to class.

#### Academic Integrity Statement

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code

[http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office\\_of\\_student\\_conduct/student\\_conduct\\_code](http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code). Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

#### Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

**Syllabus** (subject to change, if necessary)—readings and assignments due on day listed.

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**Week 1**

Th, Jan. 9 Introduction: What is postcolonial literature? Why the Caribbean?

**Week 2**

T, Jan. 14 John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, Ch. 1 (7-19)

Th, Jan. 16 McLeod, Ch. 1 “From ‘Commonwealth’ to ‘Postcolonial’” (19-41)

**DQ/F #1**

**Week 3**

T, Jan. 21 McLeod, Ch. 2 “Reading Colonial Discourses” (44-67)

Th, Jan. 23 McLeod, Ch. 2 “Reading Colonial Discourses” (69-77),  
Rudyard Kipling, “The Overland Mail” (in McLeod, appendix, 315-316);  
Sir Spencer St. John, from *Haiti: Or, the Black Republic* (133-140);  
*Jamaica*, anonymous (33-38)

**DQ/F #2**

(Recommended: Paul B. Barringer, *The American Negro: His Past and Future* [15-23])

**Week 4**

T, Jan. 28 Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (Part I)

(Recommended: Jenny Sharpe, “‘The Rebels Old Obeah Woman’: History as Spirit Possession” and Rowe & Harris, *Jamaican Folk Tales & Oral Histories*)

Th, Jan. 30 Cliff, *Abeng* (Part II)

McLeod, Ch. 3 “Nationalist Representations” (80-98)

**DQ/F #3**

**Week 5**

T, Feb. 4 Cliff, *Abeng* (Part III)

McLeod, Ch. 3 “Nationalist Representations” (101-111)

Th, Feb. 6 **Par. #1**

**Week 6**

T, Feb. 11 Patrick Chamoiseau, *School Days* (to p.51)

McLeod, Ch. 4 “The Nation in Question” (122-134)

**DQ/F #4**

Th, Feb. 13 Chamoiseau, *School Days* (to p.93)

Frantz Fanon, “The Negro and Language”

**Week 7**

T, Feb. 18 Chamoiseau, *School Days* (to end)

McLeod, Ch. 4 “The Nation in Question” (135-152)

Th, Feb. 20 Test Prep and Writing/Quotation Workshop

**Par. #2**

**Week 8**

- T, Feb. 25 **Due:** Colonialism/Postcolonialism Test (take-home)  
*The Harder They Come*, dir. Perry Henzell (watch in class)
- Th, Feb. 27 *The Harder They Come* (cont.)

**Week 9**

- T, Mar. 4 Deborah Thomas, "Spectacular Bodies, 1816-2007"  
**DQ/F #5**
- Th, Mar. 6 *Life & Debt*, dir. Stephanie Black (watch in class)  
**Par. #3**  
 (Rec: Michelle Harrison, "Living with the Sugar Legacy: Life on a Jamaican Plantation"  
 and Peter Singer, "What Should a Billionaire Give? What Should You?")

**Spring Break!****Week 10**

- T, Mar. 18 Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*  
**DQ/F #6**
- Th, Mar. 20 Polly Pattullo, "'Like an Alien in We Own Land': The Social Costs of  
 Tourism"  
**Par. #4**  
 (Rec: Talya Zemach-Bersin, "American Students Abroad Can't Be 'Global Citizens'" and  
 Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash, "From Global Thinking to Local Thinking")

**Week 11**

- T, Mar. 25 Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (41)  
 (Rec: Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege Checklist")
- Th, Mar. 27 Kincaid (83)  
 McLeod, Ch. 6 "Postcolonialism and Feminism" (172-199)  
**DQ/F #7**

**Week 12**

- T, Apr. 1 Kincaid (132)  
 Gary Holcomb, "Travels of a Transnational Slut" (eC)  
**DQ/F #8**
- Th, Apr. 3 Kincaid (to end)  
**Par. #5**

**Week 13**

- T, Apr. 8 Junot Diaz, *Drown* (65)  
 McLeod, Ch. 7 "Diaspora Identities" (205-221)  
**DQ/F #9**
- Th, Apr. 10 Diaz, *Drown* (140)  
 McLeod, Ch. 7 "Diaspora Identities" (222-232)

**Week 14**

- T, Apr. 15 Diaz, *Drown* (to end)  
**Par. #6**  
 (Rec: Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The Case for Contamination”)
- Th, Apr. 17 “It’s All About Dancing: A Jamaican Dance-U-Mentary” (watch on own)  
 Sonjah Stanley-Niaah. “Negotiating a Common Transnational Space” (eC)  
**DQ/F #10**

**Week 15**

- T, Apr. 22 Capstone Project-- Required in-class Workshop
- Th, Apr. 24 **Due:** Capstone Project Draft  
 Required in-class Workshop

**Capstone Project—Due Tuesday, April 29, Noon, online****Grading Criteria**


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A (90-100)--Excellent work; the assignment presents an uncommonly cogent analysis of its subject. It advances the reader’s/audience’s understanding by making new and useful connections, by perceptively sorting out and refocusing the relevant issues, by reframing the context in which the subject is to be understood. At all points, the central idea is advanced by valid logic, factual evidence, reliable authority, and plausible observation. The assignment has been completed in a timely manner. Written work requires no substantive or stylistic revision.

B (80-89)--Good work; the central idea is well-focused, adequately supported, and on the whole persuasive. Most issues crucial to the central idea have been addressed and their implications followed up, but the analysis is partially incomplete, evidence is weak, or there are problems with organization. The assignment has been completed in a timely manner. Written work might require sharpening a transition, tightening a passage or two, adding some needed explanation, or making a passage more substantial. The errors in quotation are few and none of them reflects a failure to understand the conventions of formatting. The occasional errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling appear to be minor lapses rather than a lack of understanding or concern. Papers have been carefully proofread.

C (70-79)--Average work; the assignment shows effort, but the analysis is incomplete, lacks appropriate evidence, or needs greater organization. The central idea is apparent, but a significant implication or assumption may remain unexamined. The assignment may not have been completed on time. Written work needs more thought as well as rewriting. Paragraphs may need greater unity, coherence, or development. Transitions may need strengthening. The argument may need development and/or reorganization. Quotations may be abruptly introduced and/or their significance left unexplained. Although there are some errors of documentation, the writer seems to understand the conventions of quoting. The errors in grammar and punctuation are not so many as to distract from the argument. Word choice is occasionally inappropriate, clichéd, or vague. Papers have not been carefully copy-edited.

D (60-69)--Less than average; the assignment has not been completed on time. It shows a significant lack of effort and a lack of engagement with the material and course work. Written assignments lack analysis, evidence, and organization; extensive revisions are necessary for substance and style.

F (<60)--Inadequate work, does not meet the requirements of the assignment. Assignments show a significant lack of effort and a lack of engagement with the material and course work. Such work lacks analysis, evidence, and organization; engagement with the course materials is necessary before revisions are even possible.