

English 439A / A01: Special Studies in Postcolonial Literatures
Fall 2018 / CRN 11430
TWF 1:30–2:20 PM in CLE C110

Dr. Lincoln Z. Shlensky
Office: CLE D332
Office hours: T/W 2:30-4:00 (email to confirm) & by appointment
Email: shlensky@uvic.ca
Web site: www.shlensky.com/teaching

Territorial Acknowledgment

The Department of English acknowledges with respect the history, customs, and culture of the Coast Salish and Straits Salish peoples—in particular, the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples—on whose traditional lands the University of Victoria sits and where we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and learn.

Course topic this year

Speaking in — and Back from — the Place of the Other

Course Description

Postcolonial Studies is a broad field of literary and cultural analysis closely identified with the formal end of modern European colonialism in a range of geographies, notably Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and South Pacific islands, Ireland but also Canada, the US, for instance, where domination of indigenous populations forms part of this political history. Yet modern colonialism cannot be described as unitary in form or ideology. At its height, from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, colonialism spread over some 80% of the world's landmass and was at once a complex and highly diverse set of political and social structures that arguably infiltrated into almost every layer of the world's social and economic existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the term "postcolonialism" arose in the Western academy as activists and intellectuals began to consider the social, political, economic and cultural consequences of colonialism that have continued to resound long after the nominal demise of colonial and imperial structures.

For students in the Western academy, locating the discourse of postcolonialism and cultural products associated with it, including literature and film, "over there" (outside of North America and Europe) is a common yet misleading gesture. Much of what scholars and students call the "post-colonial" (in the temporal sense) or "postcolonial" (in the political sense) has been created by those who are intimately familiar with European and American metropolitan discourse and existence; some of these productive writers, filmmakers, artists, and intellectuals are Indigenous, some were born in the West. Many are avid (if critical) observers of Western cultural norms and ideas; to consider them as somehow essentially "non-Western" is to mystify the very notion of "the West," which as the Caribbean author Edouard Glissant remarked, is "not a place but a project."

Postcolonial politics do not, moreover, merely take place at a remove: when Europeans or North Americans, for example, buy products produced elsewhere, they are often implicitly participating in a postcolonial economy. Foreign policy as exercised by Western nations in places such as the Middle East are influenced in ways large and small by the history of colonial adventure and postcolonial economic command structures. North Americans forget all too easily that the conflicts between state and Indigenous nations are inherently postcolonial conflicts.

This course will consider the postcolonial “location of culture” (Homi Bhabha’s phrase) in this sense: as a problem to be explored, and not as a geographical or political given. To geographically decentre postcolonialism—or, to deploy Ella Shohat and Robert Stam’s terms, to “unthink Eurocentrism”—is also to understand that scholars and students must consider the extent to which the colonial will-to-power lives on, materially if seemingly spectrally, in forms of postcolonialism that can be found throughout our geographical categories and intellectual disciplines.

This course will seek to understand how colonial subjects have been inequitably “spoken for” and continue to go unheard in the postcolonial present. We will consider how to resist framing postcolonial analysis in a determinist geographical sense by listening to the ways in which postcolonial authors and filmmakers speak of their situations in and through a complicated, often ambivalent, relationship with the West. When these writers, artists and filmmakers “speak back” to the history of Western imperial and colonial domination, we will ask how to understand the differing perspectives they assert. Are they rightfully calling the West to account for an array of universalist ideals and promises that go unfulfilled or that represent unstated yet particular interests?

Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course will

- be familiar with, and able to define, the general terminology of colonialism and postcolonialism
- recognize postcolonial literary and film themes, symbols, and intertextual references
- understand the artistic, political and cultural contexts in which postcolonial literature and film have emerged and exerted influence
- be able to analyze and write about postcolonial literature and film from the perspective of politics, history, style, narrative form, and textual influences
- be familiar with a postcolonial understanding of the notion of region or locality

Required Texts

- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. ISBN 1554812607 (90 pp. – main text). Available at the bookstore or <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/conrad/joseph/c75h/index.html>.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Available in the UVic library or online at <https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/postcolonial-theory-a-critical-introduction> (\$16.29 CAD).

- Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. ISBN 978-0374527075 (74 pp.) Available at the UVic bookstore, in the library, or at <https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/a-small-place> (\$10.99 CAD).
- King, Thomas. *Green Grass, Running Water*. ISBN 978-0006485131 (431 pp). Available in the bookstore, the UVic library, or online at <https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/green-grass-running-water> (\$10.99 CAD).
- Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children* (Book I, pp. 1-121, only) Available in the UVic library or at <https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/midnight-s-children-1> (\$11.99 CAD).
- Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. (147 pp.) Available as an eBook via the UVic library (and for sale on Kobo Books).

Other Required Articles, Book Chapters and Films

Articles, book chapters and films as listed in the syllabus.

Assignments

- 1) 10 weekly quizzes, comprised of short answer questions on the texts (literature, theory or film) assigned weekly. Make-ups permitted only for medically or otherwise documented reasons. (1.5% each = 15% total)
- 2) A research paper proposal based on topics I assign (or that I approve) that includes: a provisional introductory paragraph (250-500 words) with a clearly formulated thesis statement; an outline of your argument; and an annotated bibliography with at least three academic secondary sources. *Microsoft Word file only. Due by 10:00 AM on Weds., October 31.* (10%)
- 3) An 1800-2100-word (~7-8 pp., not counting the bibliography) research paper, based on your research proposal. *Microsoft Word file only. Near-complete draft (6 pp+) due on Weds., Nov. 21, in class.* Final version due via the submission link by **Weds., Nov. 28 by 10:00 AM.** (30%)
- 4) A short (10 minutes max.) group video production, based on a topic relevant to postcolonial activist and/or literary concerns, that you and your group develop during the term; and an individual write-up of 300-500 words (2 pp.) submitted via the course upload link. **Due in class Tues., December 4.** (15%)
- 5) A final exam, consisting of short-answer and essay questions based on the readings, presentations and films of the course. (25%)
- 6) Class participation. (5%)

Grading

I will use the University of Victoria's scale to calculate grades:

<u>Grades</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Description</u>
A+ A A-	90 – 100 85 – 89 80 – 84	Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
B+ B B-	77 – 79 73 – 76 70 – 72	Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.
C+ C	65 – 69 60 – 64	Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
D	50 – 59	Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
F	0 – 49	Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.
N	0 – 49	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.

In addition, I will make essay grading rubrics available for the research proposal and final paper.

Late Assignments

Late written assignments will result in the subtraction of two percent per late day, including weekends, from the maximum assignment total of 100 percent. Essays and other written assignments should be submitted electronically in **Microsoft Word format only** to Dr. Shlensky via the submission link at www.shlensky.com/teaching. If you need an extension of the due date for an assignment, you must request it *at least one week in advance*.

Rewriting Assignments

Rewrites for a new grade will be accepted for the proposal and research essay, *with instructor permission only*, if a student has received a B- or lower grade. A final grade for the assignment will be determined by averaging the initial grade with the new grade on the rewritten assignment. Approved rewrites must be submitted *within one week* of receiving the instructor's comments and grade. Rewrites must be submitted via the upload link *with "Rewrite" in the file name* or no credit will be given.

Make-Up Quizzes

Make-up quizzes will be accepted only with medical documentation or the express permission of the instructor. The assignment for a make-up quiz is to write 500-600 words on the assigned materials, with close readings of specific scenes, that demonstrate you know the materials well. Make-up quizzes must be submitted via the upload link *with the quiz number in the file name* or no credit will be given.

'N' Grades

Absence from more than 8 classes, failure to sit at least half of the quizzes, submit the research proposal and research essay, sit the final exam, and participate fully in the group video assignment may result in a student receiving an 'N' in the course (failure through incompleteness).

Group Video Production Assignment

With a small group, your assignment is to film a video on an activist and/or literary topic relevant to the concerns of this course. Please see the full assignment instructions: www.shlensky.com/materials.

Computers in the Classroom

Numerous recent studies have shown that using a computer for note-taking during class is a source of distraction for the computer user and the user's neighbours, that taking notes on a computer harms memory retention, and that those who use laptops in class generally fare worse on quizzes and exams (see [2013](#), [2013](#), [2014](#) and [2014](#)). Using a laptop during class lecture and discussion almost inevitably leads to straying attention, as students check email, Facebook, texts, etc. It also hinders us from having face-to-face interaction in class discussion. So, I ask you not to use laptops in this class. If you feel you need to use a laptop, please come talk to me. There are circumstances when students do need to use a laptop; in that case, I will simply ask you to commit to using it only for note-taking.

Attendance

I require that students regularly attend class. More than 4 unexcused absences may result in a grade penalty; more than 8 absences may result in failure of the course through incompleteness.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. It is expected that students, faculty members and staff at the University of Victoria, as members of an intellectual community, will adhere to these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community. Violations of academic

integrity will impact grades and may result in failure of the course. Please review the University of Victoria's policy on academic integrity:

<https://web.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>

Learning Environment

We at the University of Victoria are committed to promoting a supportive and safe working and learning environment for the whole community. Students and faculty members are expected to adhere to the UVic human rights policy ([www.uvic.ca/universitysecretary/assets/docs/policies/GV0200_1105 .pdf](http://www.uvic.ca/universitysecretary/assets/docs/policies/GV0200_1105.pdf)). Please let me know if anything related to classwork makes you feel personally unsafe.

Life challenges

Are things unexpectedly becoming overwhelming in your life? Death in the family, difficult break-up, mental health challenges, family or housing difficulties affecting your coursework? I have faced unexpected life challenges at various times myself, and I may be able to help you get back on track in this course, if you let me know what's going on. Send me an email if you are facing some challenges you'd like me to know about or if you just need someone to lend an ear. (Please be aware that, as a university employee, I have an obligation to report any instances of on-campus sexual or physical abuse that are disclosed to me.) I will work with you in whatever ways I can and, if you wish, I will help connect you with further resources. You may also wish to know about the community resources and counselling services listed on the UVic counselling site: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/resources/index.php>.

Fall Schedule

Assignments listed for each date are due that day, unless the syllabus or instructor indicates otherwise.

Weds., Sept. 5	Course introduction. Syllabus and assignment review. Presentation: an introduction to postcolonialism.
Fri., Sept. 7	Presentation conclusion.
Tues., Sept. 11	Due: Leela Gandhi, <i>Postcolonial Theory</i> , “After Colonialism” (1-22). Available: https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/postcolonial-theory-a-critical-introduction .
Weds., Sept. 12	Due: Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (first third of the novella = appx. 25 pp).
Fri., Sept. 14	Quiz 1. Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (second third of novella).
Tues., Sept. 18	Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (final third of novella).
Weds., Sept. 19	In lieu of class, read: Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa” (15 pp.) https://www.jstor.org/stable/3818468 . Caryl Phillips, “Out of Africa” https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/feb/22/classics.chinuaachebe . Watch at home: Pippa Scott, Oreet Rees, <i>King Leopold’s Ghost</i> (2006). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5h-oUfHN6I (\$2.99).
Fri., Sept. 21	Quiz 2. Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man.” http://www.jstor.org/stable/778467 . Note to students: this is a short but dense article; give yourself time to read it carefully for the quiz.
Tues., Sept. 25	Robert J. C. Young, <i>Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction</i> , “Introduction: Montage” and “Chapter 1: Subaltern Knowledge” (25 pp.). https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780192801821.003.0001
Weds., Sept. 26	Salman Rushdie, <i>Midnight’s Children</i> (1-40, or first third of Book I). Available: https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/midnight-s-children-1 .
Fri., Sept. 28	<i>Midnight’s Children</i> (41-80, or second third of Book I).
Tues., Oct. 2	Quiz 3. <i>Midnight’s Children</i> (81-121, or final third of Book I).
Weds., Oct. 3	Young, <i>Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction</i> , “Chapter 4: Hybridity” (22 pp.). Writing workshop: developing a topic.
Fri., Oct. 5	Quiz 4. Gandhi, <i>Postcolonial Theory</i> , “Thinking Otherwise: A Brief Intellectual History” (23-41).
Tues., Oct. 9	Young, <i>Postcolonialism</i> , “Chapter 3: Space and Land” (23 pp.).

Weds., Oct. 10	Thomas King, <i>Green Grass, Running Water</i> (1-84, or 1/5 of novel). Available in the bookstore or online at https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/green-grass-running-water .
Fri., Oct. 12	Quiz 5. <i>Green Grass, Running Water</i> (85-173).
Tues., Oct. 16	<i>Green Grass, Running Water</i> (174-258). Writing workshop: developing a thesis.
Weds., Oct. 17	<i>Green Grass, Running Water</i> (259-344).
Fri., Oct. 19	Quiz 6. <i>Green Grass, Running Water</i> (345-431).
Tues., Oct. 23	Writing workshop: research (part I).
Weds., Oct. 24	Writing workshop: research (part II).
Fri., Oct. 26	Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness" (1952) http://abahlali.org/files/Black_Skin_White_Masks_Pluto_Classics_.pdf (82-108). Young, <i>Postcolonialism</i> , "Chapter 7: Translation" (9 pp.).
Tues., Oct. 30	Gandhi, <i>Postcolonial Theory</i> , "Postcolonialism and the New Humanities" (42-63).
Weds., Oct. 31	Due: research proposal. Peer Editing.
Fri., Nov. 2	Quiz 7. Jeff Barnaby, <i>Rhymes for Young Ghouls</i> (2013, 88 min). PN1997.2 R497 2014 or https://www.nfb.ca/film/rhymes_for_young_ghouls/rental/ .
Tues., Nov. 6	Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" https://archive.org/details/CanTheSubalternSpeak (66-78).
Weds., Nov. 7	Gandhi, <i>Postcolonial Theory</i> , "Postcolonialism and Feminism" (81-101).
Fri., Nov. 9	Writing workshop: structure and style.
Tues., Nov. 13	Reading Break.
Weds., Nov. 14	Reading Break.
Fri., Nov. 16	In class: watch Gillo Pontecorvo, <i>The Battle of Algiers</i> , first 45 mins (complete at home; streaming available via UVic library website).
Tues., Nov. 20	Quiz 8 (Pontecorvo/Gandhi). Discuss <i>The Battle of Algiers</i> .
Weds., Nov. 21	Video project planning day.
Fri., Nov. 23	Due: a full near-final draft of your research paper (at least six pages). Peer-editing. If there's time, watch: Jeff Barnaby, <i>File Under</i>

	<i>Miscellaneous</i> (7 min.) and Kent Monkman, “Sisters and Brothers” (3½ min.).
Tues., Nov. 27	Quiz 9. Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i> (pp. 1-81). In class: Kincaid, short stories.
Weds., Nov. 28	Young, <i>Postcolonialism</i> , “Chapter 5: Postcolonial Feminism” (27 pp.). In class: begin <i>Jamaica: Life and Debt</i> (dir. Stephanie Black, USA 2001, 90 min.). HC154 L54.
Fri., Nov. 30	Due: a final revised version of your research paper. In class: conclude <i>Jamaica: Life and Debt</i> .
Tues., Dec. 4	Quiz 10. Young, <i>Postcolonialism</i> , “Chapter 6: Globalization from a Postcolonial Perspective” (16 pp.). Discuss <i>Jamaica: Life and Debt</i> .
Weds., Dec. 5	Due: group video projects and individual write-ups. Derek Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory” (Nobel Prize speech, 12 pp.). (Available via the UVic library website.)
Final exam	Distributed by 10 am on Dec. 11, due by noon on Dec. 16