

**American University of Beirut ENGL 243A**  
**Postcolonial Literature: From Anti-Colonialism to Globalization**  
Monday/Wednesday/Friday 8:00AM-8:50AM  
Nicely 412  
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Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 Wednesday

**Course Description:**

Postcolonial literary studies began as a critique of colonialism. Some of the early postcolonial scholars we will be reading such as Albert Memmi, Franz Fanon and Aime Cesair lived in colonized spaces and attacked the discourse of Europe's colonial project. At the same time novels such as *A Grain of Wheat* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* represented resistance to colonialism and hope for the postcolonial era. For many outside of the field of postcolonial literary studies, this moment of anti-colonialism and postcolonial optimism defines the field. Insiders like us though know (or will soon know) that postcolonial literary studies has moved beyond a critique of the colonial period. Today, postcolonial literary studies conceptualizes migration, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism and globalization. Works such as Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism*, V.Y. Mudimbe's *Invention of Africa* and Antonio Benitez-Rojo's *Repeating Island* complicate the popular idea of an equitable "flat earth" while novels such as Chris Abani's *Graceland*, Aravind Adiga's *White Tiger* and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* illustrate that the new discourse of triumphant globalization does not apply to many formerly colonized peoples. We will ask whether the global underclass in sweatshops and slums around the world are simply an inevitable growing pain in globalizing capital or a new colonialism. Such complex issues do not lend themselves to easy answers but this course explores how we think about and represent these people and issues.

**Required Texts:**

Abani, Chris. *Graceland*. New York: Picador, 2005.  
Adiga, Aravind. *The White Tiger*. New York: The Free Press, 2008.  
Coetzee, J.M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*. New York: Penguin, 1980.  
Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988.  
Lovelace, Earl. *Salt*. New York: Persea Books, 1998.  
Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o. *Grain of Wheat*. New York: Penguin, 1967.

**Required Secondary Readings Available Online (in the order we will read them):**

Diary of Columbus' First Journey (excerpt 1492)  
Edward Said *Orientalism* (excerpt 1978)  
Aime Cesair *Discourse on Colonialism* (excerpt 1955)  
Albert Memmi *Colonizer and Colonized* (excerpt 1965)  
Frantz Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* (excerpt 1961)  
Wai Chee Dimock "Literature for the Planet" (2001)  
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988)  
Anthony Appiah *Cosmopolitanism* (excerpt 2007)

V.Y. Mubimbe *The Invention of Africa* (excerpt 1988)  
Franco Moretti *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (excerpt 2005)  
Robert Young “Postcolonial Remains” (2012)

### **Objectives:**

1. To provide students with an understanding of the geographical scope, historical intensity, and political consequences of European colonization, anti-colonial resistance, the emergence of postcolonial nationhood, and the subsequent global order we experience today.
2. To introduce students to the powerful creative responses to European colonialism by from the postcolonial world, both historically and today.
3. To encourage students to engage *critically* with the issues and texts these creative works address.
4. To enable students to demonstrate the ability to analyze and interpret the literary, visual and cultural texts we study from multiple critical and theoretical perspectives.
5. To encourage students to discuss a wide range of questions and problems facing our contemporary postcolonial world.

### **Expectations of Instructor**

I will begin class on time and finish on time. I will be prepared for each session. I will be available during office hours and by appointment. I will return work promptly and give clear feedback on all assignments. I will also try to demonstrate why we are doing what we are doing.

### **Grading**

Grades on various assignments will be weighted according to the following scale:

Participation 150 points  
In-class and wiki work 100 points  
Response Papers 150 points  
Midterm Paper 150 points  
Final Project 300 points  
Final exam 150

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1000 points

## Grading Criteria for Papers

### A Papers-Excellent (90%-100%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in a fresh and mature way. The paper is intellectually dynamic and demonstrates a mastery of the texts and salient cultural issues surrounding them.
2. The evidence is highly detailed and used persuasively towards an original analysis.
3. Citations are used effectively and formatted correctly
4. The organization of the paper gives the reader a sense of the flow of the argument; meaning paragraphs are fully developed and properly related to one another.
5. Few if any grammatical mistakes.

### B Papers-Above Average (80%-89%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in a better-than-average way. The paper is intellectual and demonstrates an above average understanding of the texts and cultural issues surrounding them, although may rely too heavily on the obvious.
2. The evidence is detailed and used persuasively towards an insightful analysis.
3. Citations are used effectively and formatted correctly
4. The organization of the paper gives the reader a sense of the flow of the argument; meaning paragraphs are well developed and properly related to one another.
5. Few grammatical mistakes.

### C Papers-Average (70%-79%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in an average way. The paper is serviceable and demonstrates limited understanding of the texts and cultural issues surrounding them and restates obvious points.
2. The evidence is primarily vague and lacks meaningful insightful towards an analysis.
3. Citations are mostly used effectively and formatted correctly.
4. The organization of the paper gives the reader some sense of connection between the argument's various components.
5. Repeated grammatical mistakes.

### D Papers- Below Average (65%-70%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in a below-average way. The paper's serviceability is highly limited and it demonstrates highly limited understanding of the texts and cultural issues surrounding them.
2. Necessary evidence is fragmented or missing and lacks meaningful insightful towards an analysis.
3. Citations are used ineffectively and formatted poorly.
4. The organization of the paper makes following the argument difficult, if not impossible.
5. Repeated grammatical mistakes.

### F Papers-Fail (64% and below)

1. Does not fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment. The paper is unserviceable as an assignment by showing no understanding of relevant material.

2. No evidence or analysis.
3. Does not meet page requirements.
4. Citations are used ineffectively or not at all.
5. Little discernable organization.
6. Repeated grammatical mistakes.

## **Participation**

By participation I mean that you should engage in class discussion. This includes reading the assigned material, engaging in constructive discussion and not in any way inhibiting discussion in the class. I understand that you may not feel that you have something to contribute, but your insight or question might be helpful to other members of the class and part of your responsibility is to find something interesting or insightful to discuss. So please do not deny us a learning opportunity; share your thoughts! On the other hand, participating continuously with extraneous and off-topic remarks will lower your grade. Please focus and measure your remarks to be as insightful and as on-topic as possible. We all have different learning styles and personality types, but participation is a part of your grade. Therefore, do whatever it takes to be not only an observer or follower of class discussions, but also an active participant.

## **Attendance**

**Excused Absences:** The University excuses absences for certain reasons (illness, representing the University at certain events, religious observance, and the death of an immediate family member), provided the cause of absence is appropriately documented. Do not give me the generic form you can get off the University's website.

If you have, or will have an excused absence (such as your mandatory presence at a University event), you must let me know ahead of time or as soon as possible. For absences for religious observance, you must notify me before the end of the schedule adjustment period. No absence is officially excused, however, until I have seen the documentation. Documentation must be presented no later than the first class period after your return to class—you have, in other words, one class day's leeway to get your documentation in order. If you do not supply documentation within the specified time period, your absence will be regarded as unexcused. Please make one copy of your documentation for me to keep and keep another copy for your own records.

**Documentation Requirements to Justify an Excused Absence:** Documentation must justify absence for the specific period missed: a vague statement that you were "under [a doctor's] care during the week of X" won't do. Ask your doctor to be specific about times and limitations. The Student Health Service will give out medical excuses only for long-term ailments. If you have an illness for which you went to the Student Health Service, contact me right away about how to present appropriate documentation.

Although you are not required to attend class, your ability to fulfill the participation and in-class assignment portions of the grading scale will be negatively impacted by absence. What this means is that I will not penalize anyone for being absent but that you cannot receive participation credit if you are not present and you will receive a zero for any in-class work missed.

## **Tardiness**

You have made a commitment to be in this class on time. If you can't do that then you should not be taking the class. We're all human and sometimes we turn up late for reasons beyond our control. At the same time, it is disruptive and disrespectful to regularly come into class when it is already in progress. Do your best to be on time and keep in mind that any participation or in-class work missed because of tardiness cannot be made up.

## **Consultations**

Communication with me is one of the best ways to better understand the expectations of this course and how well you are fulfilling them. Contact me and I will spend as much time as needed to work on any issues. I am here to guide you through the process of this class so do not be shy about coming to see me even if just to touch base. In preparing to see me, though, you should have specific questions that you want to discuss.

## **Drafts**

What is a draft exactly? For our purposes, a draft is a paper you would feel comfortable turning in for a grade. That means that your drafts are not sketches or outlines or a game plan. They must also be formatted to my normal paper requirements. We take this approach because we want to work on your essays in a state you would submit. Failure to submit a draft will result in one full grade off of the final draft of the paper.

## **In-class assignments**

In-class assignments are not noted on the syllabus. They can be announced days before or simply given without warning. If you do not show up for class that day, you fail the assignment. Only students with excused absences will be given a make up.

## **Paper specifications**

All essays must be double spaced and typed with one inch margins. The font must be 12 point Times Roman. These are the default setting of Word 2007 (not 2003) so if you don't mess with the margins, you have no worries. Do not include a cover page and be sure to staple all assignments. Your name, the class, the assignment and the date should be single spaced in the top right corner of all papers. If there is a title there should be one space between the date and the centered title.

## **Late Papers/Projects**

All papers are due at specific times on ELMS. Any paper not submitted by that time is considered late and will be penalized at least one full grade.

I do not give extensions on papers after the due date. Under special circumstances I may give an extension beforehand if you have consulted with me. All the essays are noted on the syllabus and will be discussed in class beforehand. I take one full grade off for every day the paper is late. I will not accept any papers that are more than two weeks late. Also, keep in mind that a failing grade and zero are two

different things. Not turning in a paper earns you a zero. A late paper may earn a low grade, even below 60%, but that will still amount to a lot more points than a flat zero.

## **Academic Integrity**

I will not tolerate plagiarism of any kind in our class. Any student caught improperly using online or print resources in a paper will receive an automatic zero for the assignment and may incur further disciplinary action. No exceptions.

Plagiarism is a serious issue in academia and I want to clarify exactly what I mean.

### *Online Sources*

Plagiarism includes online sources; so cutting and pasting material from a website and passing it off as your own is plagiarism. Not citing the sources of your argument is also plagiarism, as is partially citing; so do not just cite “History.com” but specific URLs.

### *General*

Not using quotation marks for a quote is plagiarism. Not citing every time you use a quotation is plagiarism. Changing a few words in a citation and passing it off as your own is plagiarism as is using work from other classes for this class. Turning in the same paper for different classes without permission is also not allowed by the university. Please see me if you have any questions.

These are some of the major forms of plagiarism. For complete information see the university’s academic integrity code.

## **Response Papers**

Each week each member of a group will submit a one-page response paper. These papers should be one double spaced page with normal paper specifications. The point of the response papers is for you to formulate arguments and points concerning the texts while reading them. They are not mini-papers that need an intro, body, and conclusion. Rather they should be precise insightful points of interpretation. “Response” here does not mean observation or the first thing that came to mind when reading something. A response in the academic sense is a short analysis of a particular point of interest. This means making a non-generic claim, providing evidence and then analyzing why the evidence provides insight beyond the obvious. Also, do not summarize the work you are discussing; we have all read it and do not need a recap. What we want is your particular insight. All response papers must be posted to the appropriate Blackboard forum by noon on Tuesday. Other members of the class must respond to at least two responses by midnight on Tuesday.

## **Wiki**

Two students in every class meeting will take notes on the discussions we have in class. We will discuss this in detail later but the wiki is a written narrative of the class rather than a shorthand document.

Think of it as a mini-paper in which you tell the events that transpired. This will serve as a repository of notes to accurately catalogue the events in our class for all to review when needed. This is especially useful in preparing for the final exam. Beyond note taking, the wiki is also a place to continue discussion or event to dispute the writers takes on what happened. Was there an argument over a point in a book? Did someone offer a claim with flawed evidence? Points such as these are open for interpretation by the writers and the readers so after the writers have posted their narrative anyone in the class can respond.

### **Exam**

We will discuss the format of the exam in depth near the end of the semester. This is a take-home exam and will consist of short answer and essay questions regarding the primary and secondary readings. Perfecting the response paper format will pay off in the exam as the same format of exigent claim, evidence and analysis are the criteria for both.

### **Schedule**

This schedule of readings is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class. In addition to the literary readings, we will have some sessions on how to write literary arguments. These will be allocated and adjusted once I have had a chance to read some of the classes' work.

TBA