

The (Post)colonial Short Story

Lower-Division Course

Course Description:

This course surveys the ways in which short fictional forms have been used by writers in diverse parts of the world during and after the colonial era. We will consider questions around why writers use the short form to tell a story, the ways in which political and cultural concerns influence these forms, and how forces of political and cultural domination are expressed and contested in a range of texts. We will study texts from North America, the Caribbean, Africa, India, and New Zealand. Authors will include: Salman Rushdie, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Arundathi Roy, Mahasweta Devi, Ama Ata Aidoo, and many more. Students will gain familiarity with key terms in postcolonial literary studies—subaltern, diaspora, globalization, hegemony—and develop the ability to read transnationally and cross-culturally. They will also be introduced to literary traditions from across the world. As we follow the evolution of the short story in different national and regional contexts, we will consider the circumstances in which stories are produced, their treatment of questions of gender and identity, and the ways in which writers use different literary techniques to undermine colonial and neo-colonial power structures. We will also discuss the ways in which these short stories circulate—through magazines, online, or as part of an oral tradition (the latter particularly important for some of the African texts that we will read). Students will develop their critical reading and writing skills through a range of short writing assignments in addition to a longer final project. There will be ample opportunity, both in class and in assignments, to draw comparisons between stories from diverse geographical locations.

Learning Goals for this Course:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Think critically about short stories in their social and political contexts.
- 2) Be able to talk about the relations between different forms of colonialism and short fiction.
- 3) Close-read and analyze short texts.
- 4) Learn to construct basic written and oral arguments.
- 5) Be able to make comparisons between the formal properties of short stories from diverse parts of the world.

Assessment:

- 1) *Attendance, Participation, and Preparation:* I expect you to PRINT the reading, and to do it well, every class—when you read for class I expect you to arrive having not simply scanned the material but having thought about it. You should come to class EVERY TIME with at least one question or comment about the text for the day. In each class I will provide opportunities for you to contribute, most commonly in the form of a class discussion. I expect every student to contribute at least once during each class. You are required to pose at least one question to the group, or comment on another student's question, until everyone has spoken.
- 2) *Formal written responses:* You will turn in 4 formal, written responses to pre-circulated discussion questions. The responses each relate to a particular unit of the course and a list of questions (from which you will choose one) will be provided at the start of that unit. Responses (1 page, single-spaced) will be submitted via CANVAS.
- 3) *Mid-term Exams:* Exams may include a variety of question types, such as: short answers, quote identifications, definitions, passage analysis, and brief essays.

- 4) *Final Paper*: You will write a 6-7 page (double-spaced) paper on a topic of your choice. More information about the final paper will be provided closer to the time.

Grading: Your grade will be determined as follows:

- 4 Written Responses (4 items x 5%): **20%**
- Midterm Exams (2 x 15%): **30%**
- Attendance, participation, preparation: **20%**
- Final Research Paper (6-7 pages double spaced): **30%**

Failure to complete any of these assignments will prevent you from passing the course.

Daily syllabus:

Introduction: The Short Story in A Global Frame

- M 1/9 Course Introduction and Overview; Assignments
- W 1/11 “How Short is a Short Story?”; “What is the Postcolonial?”; Maps
No reading for this class – but come prepared to participate.

The Gothic and the (Post)colonial

- F 1/13 *Gothic Spaces*
Read (1) Edgar Allan Poe, “The Pit and the Pendulum”
- M 1/16 NO CLASS – MLK DAY.
- W 1/18 *Dark Domesticity*
Read: (1) Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher”
- F 1/20 *New Zealand and the Haunting of Empire*
Read: (1) Katherine Mansfield, “The Woman at the Store”
- M 1/23 *Gruesome Happenings*
Read: (1) Gertrude Atherton, “The Striding Place”
- W 1/25 *The Gothic and the Memory of War in Malaya*
Read: (1) Lee Kok Liang, “Five Fingers”

The Short Story and the Imperial Metropolis

- F 1/27 *Detection in Imperial London I*
Read (1) Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Red-Headed League”
Response #1 due by or before the start of today’s class.
- M 1/30 *Detection in Imperial London II*
Read: (1) Ernest Bramah, “The Coin of Dionysius”
- W 2/1 *Satire in Edwardian England*
Read: (1) Saki, “Sredni Vashtar”; (2) Saki, “The Bull”

Alexander Fyfe

F 2/3 *Stream of Consciousness and the Traces of Imperialism*
Read: (1) Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall"

M 2/6 *Dublin: The "Semi-Peripheral" Metropolis*
Read (1): James Joyce, "The Sisters"

W 2/8 *Anarchism in the Center of Empire*
Read: (1) Joseph Conrad, "The Informer"

F 2/10 **MIDTERM EXAM ONE**

The Short Story of Empire

M 2/13 *The Ambiguities of Empire and Race*
Read: (1) Rudyard Kipling, "His Chance in Life"

W 2/15 *Writing "The Native"*
Read: (1) Flora Annie Steel, "In the Permanent Way"

F 2/17 *The Pitfalls of Colonial Capitalism*
Read: (1) Joseph Conrad, "An Outpost of Progress"

M 2/20 *Writing as Colonial Subject*
Read: (1) Cornelia Sorabji, "Love and Death"

W 2/22 *The Possibilities of Nationalism*
Read: (1) James Joyce, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room"

Short forms on the African Continent

F 2/24 *Myths of Origin*
Read: (1) Selections from myths of the Masai and the Yoruba in *African Myths of Origin*.
Response #2 due by or before the start of today's class.

M 2/27 *Amos Tutuola and the Question of Style*
Read: (1) Amos Tutuola, "The Village Witchdoctor" and (2) "Don't Pay Bad for Bad"

W 3/1 *Layers of Injustice in Post-Dictatorship Uganda*
Read: (1) Lillian Tindyebwa, "Looking for My Mother"

F 3/3 *Writing Against the Myth of the Abject African Woman*
Read: (1) Ama Ata Aidoo, "Certain Winds from the South"

M 3/6 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

W 3/8 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

F 3/10 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

M 3/13 *Afro-Futurism I*
Read: (1) Tendai Huchu, "The Sale"

Response #3 due by or before the start of today's class.

- W 3/15 *Afro-Futurism II*
Read: (1) Nnedi Okorafor, "Moom!"
- F 3/17 *The Complexities of Gender and "Tradition"*
Read: (1) Bessie Head, "Snapshots of a Wedding"
- M 3/20 *Perceiving the World*
Read: (1) Ben Okri, "Incidents at the Shrine"
- W 3/22 **MIDTERM EXAM TWO**

Writing the Subaltern

- F 3/24 *Problematizing Female Agency*
Read: (1) Anita Desai, "The Rooftop Dwellers"
- M 3/27 *Writing The "National Bourgeoisie"*
Read: (1) Ngugi wa Thiongo, "Minutes of Glory"
- W 3/29 *India's Tribal People I*
Read: (1) Mahasweta Devi, "Douloti the Bountiful" (pp. TBA)
- F 3/31 *India's Tribal People II*
Read: (1) Mahasweta Devi, "Douloti the Bountiful" (pp. TBA)
- M 4/3 *Writing on Behalf of Refugees*
Read: (1) Abdulrazak Gurnah, "The Arriver's Tale"

Diaspora and the Short Story

- W 4/5 *The Interstices of Identity*
Read: (1) Salman Rushdie, "In the South"
- F 4/7 *African Diasporic Writing in the 21st Century I*
Read: (1) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Apollo"
- M 4/10 *African Diasporic Writing in the 21st Century II*
Read: (1) "Midnight Sun", Chigozie Obioma
- W 4/12 *Class and Mobility*
Read: (1) Edwidge Danticat, "Quality Control"
- F 4/14 *Mobility and the Problem of Identity*
Read: (1) Jamaica Kincaid, "Holidays"

Ecological Postcolonialism

- M 4/17 *The Struggle of the Ogoni and the Politics of "The Land"*

Read: (1) Ken Saro-Wiwa, “Adaku”

Response #4 due by or before the start of today’s class.

W 4/19

Climate Change and Satire

Read: (1) Arundathi Roy, “The Briefing”

F 4/21

The Country and the City

Read: (1) Bozorg Alavi, “Gilemard”

M 4/24

“Indigeneity” and the Land

Read: (1) Albert Wendt, “Prospecting”

W 4/26

Wrap-up and final papers workshop.

F 4/28

Wrap-up and final papers workshop.