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Spring 2020
TH 2-4:20
SOS B45

ENG 504: Postcolonial Theory & Decolonization Theory: A Dialogue?

Postcolonial theory and decolonization theory both aim to understand, challenge, and overturn the legacies of European imperialism and colonialism, offering compelling theorizations of race, class, and gender in the process. Yet these two fields have, notably, never sustained an ongoing dialogue with one another. While postcolonial studies has historically privileged South Asia -- and, thus, administrative colonialism -- decolonization studies has tended to focus on sites of settler colonialism such as North America and Australia.

This course seeks to put postcolonial theory and decolonization theory in productive dialogue with one another. Over the course of the semester we will sound out where these critical formations are complementary with one another and where they are at odds. How helpful are postcolonial keywords like “subaltern” when transplanted to a settler colonial context? Can recent “queerings” of settler colonial studies be productively applied to postcolonial studies? Do both fields anchor their understandings of race, class, and gender in the same theoretical moorings (i.e. Marxism and poststructuralism)? Or do they claim different theoretical antecedents? In recent years, scholars working in both postcolonial studies and decolonization studies have turned their attention to the planetary crisis. How do these fields theorize the so-called Anthropocene differently? How do they differ in their conceptualizations of what “resistance” to colonialism should look like?

Our first class meeting (1/16) will be spent discussing—and perhaps altering—the reading schedule and assignments listed below.

Learning Objectives

- Become familiar with two current field formations in literary studies
- Grasp the historical and theoretical bases of current criticism
- Apply literary theory to literary texts
- Engage with current critical debates and dialogues
- Contextualize literature and literary theory in the historical/material/intellectual conditions of its production

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

1. **Weekly Class Prep (15%):** I ask that you prepare for class by carefully reading the assigned material. In order to help you synthesize and reflect on the week’s reading, and prepare for a fruitful discussion, I ask that you come to each class session with 3 questions: one question that applies to all of the readings as a whole; one question that juxtaposes two passages from two different readings; and one question that applies to a single passage from a single reading. These do not need to be posted or handed in. Instead, you should be prepared to use them to motor our classroom discussions with your interests.
2. **Context-Wallah Presentation/Paper (25%):** The ability to contextualize readings -- whether literary or theoretical/critical texts -- is a hugely important skill for producing scholarship. Theory does not float, unmoored, in the ether of pure ideas. Instead, as Louis Althusser insists, all thought is “founded on and articulated to natural and social reality.” Or,

to borrow Walter Benjamin's formulation: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger." For this short (10 minute) presentation, you will reconstruct the "moment of danger" for a critical reading. Put another way, you will present a compelling account of a reading's relevant historical/theoretical context. A short (5-6 page) paper is due along with this presentation. You may decide to read your paper in class for your presentation, or present the ideas in a more free-form way. I am happy to help you with this assignment in office hours.

3. **Theory-Wallah Presentation/Position Paper (25%):** Like all field formations, postcolonial theory and decolonization theory are characterized as much by fierce debate as by harmonious consensus. For this short (10 minute) presentation, you will enter into the fray. You will take up a contentious point, explain the different positions taken by scholars (with no straw mans), and make a compelling case for the stand you wish to take. For example, you might weigh in on the question of whether or not the subaltern can, in fact, "speak"? What is meant by this formulation? How/why do scholars argue in the affirmative? What lead scholars to argue in the negative? What is your stand? As with the previous presentation, a short (5-6 page) paper is due along with this presentation. You may decide to read your paper in class for your presentation, or present the ideas in a more free-form way. Examples of real, successful position papers will be provided. I am happy to help you with this assignment in office hours.

4. **Conference Paper OR Book Review + Annotated Bibliography (35%):** For your final project for this course I will ask you to choose between writing a conference paper (10-12 pages) and a book review (approx. 1500 words) + an annotated bibliography (with 5-6 sources [not on the syllabus] and a critical introduction). Each of these projects is designed to help you intervene in current critical conversations. In a conference paper, you will make an original argument about a critical/theoretical debate, a literary text, or both. In the book review + annotated bibliography, you will contextualize a relatively new scholarly monograph with reference to the current state of the field(s) in which it intervenes.

Provisional Reading Schedule (to be finalized on 1/16)

1. What is Postcolonial Theory? What Is Decolonization Theory? (1/23)

1. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998; revised 2015), pp. 1-60
2. Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (2011), pp. xi-xxxix
3. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" (2012)

2. Marxism and Poststructuralism: Marx and Foucault (1/30)

1. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology: Part I* (1845-6)
2. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1978)

3. Subalternity (2/6)

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1983)
2. Jodi A. Byrd and Michael Rothberg, "Between Subalternity and Indigeneity: Critical Categories for Postcolonial Studies" (2011)
3. Robert Warrior, "The Subaltern Can Dance, and so Sometimes Can the Intellectual" (2011)

4. Queering Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies Part I (2/13)

1. *Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities*, special issue of *GLQ* (2010)

5. Queering South Asia Studies Part I (2/20)

1. Ismat Chughtai, "Lihaaf" ["The Quilt"] (1942)
2. Deepa Mehta, *Fire* (1996)
3. Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (2005), Introduction + Chapter 5, pp. 1-28, 131-160

6. Queering South Asia Studies Part II (2/27)

1. Abhishek Chaubey, *Dedh Ishqiya* (2014)
2. Jigna Desai and Rajinder Dudrah, "The Essential Bollywood" in *The Bollywood Reader* (2008), pp. 1-20.
3. Krupa Shandilya, "(In)visibilities: Homosexuality and Muslim Identity in India after Section 377" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 2 (2017): 459-84.*

7. Queering Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies Part II (3/5)

1. Craig S. Womack, *Drowning in Fire* (2002)
2. Mark Rifkin, "Native Nationality and the Contemporary Queer: Tradition, Sexuality, and History in *Drowning in Fire*" (2008)

8. Trauma and Memory: Boarding Schools (3/12)

1. Tomson Highway, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998)
2. Mary Zaboriskis, "Sexual Orphanings," *GLQ* 22, no. 4 (2016)

*Mary will visit class

9. Settler Time, Native Temporalities (3/26)

1. Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (1972), pp. 62-97
2. Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (2017), Preface + Introduction, pp. xv-48

10. History and Native America's Present (4/2)

1. David Truer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* (2019)
* David will visit class

11. Native America's Past/Future (4/9)

1. Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (2019)

12. Postcolonial Studies and the Planetary Crisis (4/16)

1. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses" (2009)
2. Ian Baucom, "The Human Shore: Postcolonial Studies in an Age of Natural Science" (2012)
3. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Climate and Capital: On Conjoined Histories" (2014)
4. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category" (2019)

13. Native Studies, the Anthropocene, and Radical Resistance I (4/23)

1. Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Climate Change Studies : Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *English Language Notes* 55, no. 1-2 (2015): 153-62
2. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (2018)

14. Final Class Meeting (4/30)

1. Workshop Final Project Ideas
2. Review and Synthesize

****If students wish to spend more time with the theoretical bases of these fields, one or more of the following weeks can be added to the syllabus in place of one of the weeks listed above. This will be decided as a group on 1/16****

Structuralist Marxism: Althusser

1. Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (1965; Verso 2009 edition), “Part I: From Capital To Marx’s Philosophy” and “Part II: The Object of Capital,” pp. 11-212.
2. Optional context:
 - a. David Dworkin, “The Politics of Theory,” in *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, The New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*, pp. 219-45

Structuralism and Cultural Studies: Stuart Hall

1. Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation and Societies Structures in Dominance” (1980)
2. Stuart Hall, “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the post-Structuralist Debates” (1985)
3. Optional Context:
 - a. David Dworkin, “Between Structuralism and Humanism,” in *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, The New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*, pp. 125-81

Poststructuralism: Foucault

1. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), pp. 1-169
2. Optional context:
 - a. André Burguière, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History* (2009), “Passing of the Comet,” pp. 195-218

REQUIRED STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
 Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
 Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.
<https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

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Definition of Excellence in Teaching
USC Department of English

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas. Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students' responses. We expect our students to:

- understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
- organize and interpret evidence;
- feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;
- understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
- grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
- see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
- attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
- assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
- adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC's corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the "USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching."

Approved September 18, 2018
Undergraduate Studies Committee
Department of English