

# **Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction to Key Debates and Texts**

## **Module Description**

This module introduces students to key debates and texts in the field of postcolonial studies. The lectures are grouped together under headings relevant to historical and contemporary engagements with postcoloniality. Each theme consists of two lectures: one that frames the conceptual, critical, and historical debates on the given topic, the other discussing a literary text. The critical and literary works scheduled for each lecture represent the focus of discussion, but related authors, themes, and texts are introduced and discussed alongside them, giving direction for further study. In addition, and where appropriate, visual and audio material is used to illustrate as well as help generate debate. The module gives students grounding in foundational texts and writers in the discipline as well as contemporary engagements with the field of postcolonial studies.

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of this module students will

- have a sense of key foundational and current debates in postcolonial studies
- be familiar with key texts in the field
- be able to engage with and critically reflect on postcolonial literatures in a conceptual as well as thematic context
- have a sense of the connections between literature and wider cultural and political debates in a postcolonial context

**Structure:** 11 lectures, 8 tutorials, 8 online discussion posts

**Assessment:** 8 online discussion posts (pass/fail 20%), end-of-term exam (80%)

## **WEEK 1**

### ***Introduction [MO]***

Postcolonialism - Political Philosophy and Critical Practice

## **WEEK 2 [MA]**

### ***Orientalism***

Edward Said, excerpts from *Orientalism* (1978)

## **WEEK 3:**

### ***Language and Identity [MA]***

Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language" (1965)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature" from *Decolonising the Mind* (1986)

Édouard Glissant "Creolization in the Making of the Americas" (2008)

Maryse Condé, "Créolité without Creole Language?" (translator Kathleen M. Balutansky, 1998)

## **WEEK 4: [MA]**

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Ama Ata Aidoo, "The Message" (1969)

## **WEEK 5 [MO]**

### ***Subaltern Knowledge***

Gayatri C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Pearson, 1994)

Eavan Boland, "Lava Cameo" from *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time* (Carcenet, 1995)

#### **WEEK 6: [MO]**

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)

Michelle Cliff, *Abeng*

#### **WEEK 7: STUDY WEEK**

#### **WEEK 8: [MA]**

***Place and Displacement: Settler Colonialism***

Grace Dillon, introduction to *Walking the Clouds* (2012)

Zitkala-Ša, excerpts from *The School Days of an Indian Girl* (1900)

Danis Goulet/Sterlin Harjo, *Reservation Dogs* S3E3, "Deer Lady" (2023)

#### **WEEK 9: [MO]**

Shaun Tan, *The Rabbits*

#### **WEEK 10:**

***Postcolonial Ecologies* [MO]**

Epeli Hau'ofa, "The Ocean in Us"

Elizabeth DeLoughrey and Tatiana Flores, "Submerged Bodies The Tidalectics of Representability and the Sea in Caribbean Art"

Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Toward a Critical Ocean Studies for the Anthropocene"

Selection of poets featured in *Rising Pacific Sea Levels* at <https://britomart.org/>

#### **WEEK 11:**

***Postcolonial, Queer, Ecological* [MA]**

Rita Indiana, *Tentacle* (translator Achy Obejas, 2018; originally published as *La mucama de Omicunlé*, 2015)

Walter Mignolo, "Foreword: On Pluriversality and Multipolarity" (*Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge*; 2018)

#### **WEEK 12: [MA]**

***Neocolonialisms***

José Martí "Nuestra América" (1891)

Ruha Benjamin, excerpts from *Race After Technology* (2019)

Inès Estrada, *Alienation, final cut* (2026)

#### **Discussion Post Guidelines:**

Every week, students will respond to a written prompt using the Discussion function on Blackboard. The prompts will be tailored to each week's readings and thematics, but will be open-ended enough to allow for creativity and independence of thought. We expect student responses to be fairly informal

and not particularly burdensome: around 2-3 paragraphs and certainly under a page. Students will also be encouraged to reply to each other's posts in order to create a sense of classroom community. Discussion posts are to be submitted prior to lecture/tutorials. They are a starting off point for conversation, not a performance of mastery. To that end, they will be graded pass/fail. If a student has written in good faith (no AI, no plagiarism), they will pass. Tutorial leaders will consult student responses in order to guide classroom discussion and adapt the conversation to student interest. We will circulate sample discussion posts in the first week of classes to give students a sense of what we're looking for.

Pedagogically, our objectives are as follows:

1. Foster community and facilitate conversation in tutorials; as well as provide a platform for students who are more comfortable in rehearsed or written form.
2. Encourage students to practice their close reading and analytic skills regularly in a low stakes environment.
3. Emphasize the importance of active reading, ensuring that students maintain a written record of their thoughts and reactions to a text.
4. Draw connections between and amongst different texts and themes throughout the semester.