Post-colonial Literature and Theory

Seminar Leader: Kerry Bystrom
Times: Monday 10:45 – 12:15, Wednesday 09:00 – 10:30
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Course Description
In the Berlin Conference of 1884-5, nearing the height of their imperial power, European leaders sat around a table in Germany and carved up the African continent between them—without bothering to consult a single African representative. This course explores the historical practices and cultural formations that allowed such colonial usurpations to happen; but more centrally it charts the ways in which writers and intellectuals in Africa, the Americas, the Middle East and Asia responded to colonization and examines the spectres of colonial history that haunt Europe and the United States today. The semester will be organized around a series of seminal essays and novels, which range from Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness to Edward Said’s Orientalism, Che Guevara’s Guerilla Warfare: A Method, Gilles Pontecorvo’s The Battle of Algiers and Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses. We will pay particular attention to the historical development of post-colonial theory, now accepted as one of the major theoretical schools of literary and cultural analysis.

Course Texts
- Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart
- Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness
- Michelle Cliff, No Telephone to Heaven
- Ondjaki, Good Morning Comrades
- Salman Rushdie, The Satanic Verses
- Tayeb Salih, Season of Migration to the North

Additional required reading materials are printed in a course reader (CR), will be handed out as Xeroxes (X), and/or are available on-line.

Requirements
Attendance
Attendance is required at all classes. Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Illness leading to inability to attend classes, or submit work, must be reported to the College Registrar; a medical note should be submitted to the Registrar within one week of the absence. Bard College Berlin cannot offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, whether the absences are on documented medical grounds or not.
Assessment and Writing Assignments
This course has four essay assignments (the first 3pp or 750-1000 words, and the second, third and fourth, 5-7 pp. or 1500-2000 words each). It also has informal assignments, including giving presentations on readings and writing reading responses and/or discussion questions in advance of seminar meetings. Since this is a seminar, active and informed participation in class is a required and graded element of the course.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
As the Student Handbook states, essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Academic Integrity
In this course, we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. However, you are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. When you use another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it in the MLA parenthetical format (http://www.mla.org/style). Please come see me if you have questions about when and how to cite. Further note that even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on any assignment, large or small, will result in reporting of the offense to the Academic Administration and may result in failure for the entire course. The full Bard College Berlin policy on academic integrity is detailed in the Student Handbook and you should familiarize yourself with it.

Cellphones and Laptops: Cellphones should be switched off for the duration of class. Laptops are allowed only when necessary for class activities.

Grade Breakdown
Essay #1: 15%
Essay #2: 20%
Essay #3: 20%
Essay #4: 20%
Class Participation (including informal assignments): 25%

Schedule
Please note that the following course outline is provisional. Changes to the assignment and seminar schedule will be communicated in class and via the Bard College Berlin email system. It is your responsibility to remain up-to-date on course assignments and due dates.
Week 1
Monday 1/27
Introduction: The Berlin Conference of 1884
Wednesday 1/29
Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, Part I [MK author presentation]

Week 2
Monday 2/3
Heart of Darkness, Parts II and III
Wednesday 2/5
Edward Said, selections from *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* (CR)

Week 3
Monday 2/10
Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart*, Part I, Ch 1-7
Wednesday 2/12
*Things Fall Apart*, Part I, Ch 8-13
Saturday 2/15: Paper 1 due

Week 4
Monday 2/17
*Things Fall Apart*, Parts II and III
Weds 2/19
Chinua Achebe, “The African Writer and the English Language”; Ngugi wa Thiongo “The Language of African Literature” (X) [MK theory presentation]

Thursday evening 2/20 Special Screening of *The Battle of Algiers* (Italy: Gilles Pontecorvo, 1967)

Week 5
Monday 2/24
Battle of Algiers cont’d
Wednesday 2/26
Frantz Fanon; “Concerning Violence” (CR); Ernesto “Che” Guevara, from “Guerilla Warfare: A Method” and “Socialism and Man in Cuba” (CR) [IB theory presentation]

Week 6
Monday 3/3
Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, pp 1-73
Wednesday 3/5
*Season of Migration to the North*, pp. 74-139

Week 7
Monday 3/10
Wednesday 3/12 (Parts III-IV, 127-240)
Friday 3/14: Paper 2 due

Week 8 Spring Break

Week 9
Monday 3/24
*The Satanic Verses* (Part V, 241-356)
Wednesday 3/26
*The Satanic Verses* (Parts VI-VIII, 357-470)

**Week 10**
Monday 3/31
*The Satanic Verses* (Parts VII-IX, 471-547)
Wednesday 4/2
Homi Bhabha, “How Newness Enters the World” from *The Location of Culture* (X) [JL theory presentation]

**Week 11**
Monday 4/7
NO CLASS (Kerry at conference) but please read Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*, parts I-III (pp. 1-84) [make-up is *Battle of Algiers* screening]
Wednesday 4/9 NO CLASS (Kerry at conference) [make-up Ellerbe-Dücker lecture]
**Friday 4/11: Paper 3 due**

**Week 12**
Monday 4/14
*No Telephone to Heaven*, Part IV (pp. 85-140)
Wednesday 4/16
*No Telephone to Heaven*, parts VI-XI (pp. 141-208)

**Week 13**
Monday 4/21
NO CLASS (FEDERAL HOLIDAY)
Wednesday 4/23
Paul Gilroy, selections from *The Black Atlantic* (CR); Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” (CR)

**Week 14**
Monday 4/28
Ondjaki, *Good Morning Comrades*, Part I (pp. 7-76) [JL author presentation]
Wednesday 4/30
Ondjaki, *Good Morning Comrades*, Part II and “Afterword” (pp. 77-112)

**Week 15**
Monday 5/5
George Steinmetz and Julia Hell, “The Visual Archive of Colonialism: Germany and Namibia” (CR); Ex-Berliner “Africa in Berlin” articles (CR)

**Monday evening 5/5 at 7:30pm in the Lecture Hall:** Dr. Cassandra Ellerbe-Dück, special guest lecture and discussion on Afro-Deutsch experiences.

Wednesday 5/7

Conclusions; Jennifer Wenzel, “Remembering the Past’s Future: Anti-imperialist Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World” (CR)

**Week 16 Completion Week**

**Wednesday 5/14: Paper 4 due**