

## ENGL 385-01, Postcolonial Studies, Spring 2008

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Authors	Mallot, J. Edward
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## English 385: Postcolonial Studies Course Syllabus/Spring 2008

Instructor: J Edward Mallot  
Office Location: 304 Palmer  
Office Hours: 9:30-11:30 Monday mornings, and 3:30-4:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays  
(also available by appointment)

Office Phone: 843-3569  
e-mail: [mallotj@rhodes.edu](mailto:mallotj@rhodes.edu)

Course Concept: This class is designed to introduce undergraduate majors to postcolonial literature and theory. This highly charged, highly contested discourse has gained enormous attention—along with frequent controversy—within the past quarter century, and continues to rise in popularity amongst English students and scholars. One of the most vexing issues for this still-young field is the very term “postcolonial,” which has been defined in numerous ways, and co-opted by and for various communities. Our task will be to determine the reasoning behind these multiple “postcolonialisms,” to outline prominent areas of contemporary criticism, and to read seminal literature and nonfiction in the field. The course is organized around the idea that colonial enterprise and postcolonial experience are both governed, literally and metaphorically, by questions of ownership—ownership of land, capital, identity, agency, body, language, future. We will, therefore, consider questions such as “Whose text?” “Whose nation?” “Whose language?” as they apply to both colonial and postcolonial contexts. We’ll encounter texts from Africa, India, Ireland and the Caribbean, as well as the US and UK; Ania Loomba’s overview will provide general theory, along with contributions by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Benedict Anderson and others. We’ll pay particular attention to how questions of identity and agency emerge in postcolonial politics.

Required Texts (all available at Rhodes Bookstore):

Aslam, Nadeem. Maps for Lost Lovers  
Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness (Fourth Norton Critical Edition)  
Dangarembga, Tsitsi. Nervous Conditions  
Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth  
Friel, Brian. Translations  
Hwang, David Henry. M. Butterfly  
Loomba, Ania. Colonialism/Postcolonialism (Second Edition)  
Padmanabhan, Manjula. Harvest  
Rushdie, Salman. The Moor’s Last Sigh  
Soyinka, Wole. Death and the King’s Horseman

In addition, a number of supplementary readings will be required for the course; you’ll need to photocopy these from the reserve section of Barret Library. Finally, three films will serve as additional required texts for this class, to be screened here. The library’s Media Services center has these on reserve, in case you miss our film screenings.

## Tentative Reading Schedule

(Note: “CP” denotes material found in our supplementary Course Packet at the library; “CP2” refers to Conrad essays you’ll need if you don’t have the Norton Fourth Edition.)

### *Whose “Burden”?*

- 15 Jan Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness  
17 Jan Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa” (NE 336 or CP2)  
Frances B. Singh, “The Colonialistic Bias of Heart of Darkness” (CP)  
C.P. Sarvan, “Racism and the Heart of Darkness” (CP)  
Hunt Hawkins, “Heart of Darkness and Racism” (NE 365 or CP2)
- 22 Jan No Class  
24 Jan Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism (Pages 7-22, 42-82)  
Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (CP)  
Lord Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education” (CP)

### *Whose Decisions?*

- 29 Jan Wole Soyinka, Death and the King’s Horseman  
30 Jan (Wednesday) Film Screening: *Born Into Brothels* (7 pm)  
31 Jan Discussion of Film  
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (CP)
- 05 Feb Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (Preface, 1-62, 97-144)  
07 Feb Manjula Padmanabhan, Harvest
- 12 Feb Derek Walcott, Pantomime (CP)  
14 Feb Brian Friel, Translations

### *Whose Nation?*

- 19 Feb Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (Pages 1-7, 163-185) (CP)  
Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments (Pages 3-13) (CP)  
20 Feb (Wednesday) Film Screening: *Dil Se* (7 pm)  
21 Feb Discussion of Film  
22 Feb (Friday) **Paper One Due, 5 pm**
- 26 Feb Salman Rushdie, The Moor’s Last Sigh (Pages 1-120)  
28 Feb Rushdie (Pages 121-217)
- 11 Mar Rushdie (Pages 218-378)  
13 Mar Rushdie (Pages 379-434)

### *Whose Bodies?*

18 Mar Loomba (Pages 128-145 and 180-192)  
Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"; Una Marson, "Kinky Hair Blues" and "Cinema Eyes" (CP)

25 Mar Tsitsi Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions (Pages 1-119)

27 Mar Dangarembga (Pages 120-204)

01 Apr David Henry Hwang, M. Butterfly

02 Apr (Wednesday) Film Screening: *Fire* (7 pm)

03 Apr Discussion of Film

04 Apr (Friday) **Paper Two Due, 5 pm**

### *Whose Homeland?*

08 Apr Nadeem Aslam, Maps for Lost Lovers (Pages 1-91)

10 Apr Aslam (Pages 92-151)

15 Apr Aslam (Pages 152-264)

17 Apr Presentation Workday

22 Apr Aslam (Pages 265-379)

24 Apr The Postcolonial Sitcom: *Goodness Gracious Me / Little Mosque on the Prairie*  
**Presentation Bibliography Due**

**"Postcolonial Hot Topics" 5:30-8:00 pm, Wednesday 30 April**

### **Course Requirements**

Participation: As many of you will be relatively new to this field, it will be crucial to work together to navigate our way through these texts; an essential element of this group project will be vigorous, consistent conversation about what we're reading. I expect each of you to come to class every day, having read the material and having multiple comments/questions about it. Sitting at your desk and doing only the written work (however well you might do that) is not enough to succeed here; submitting one comment and then "checking out" of the discussion is only barely better. I will do everything in my power to generate lively, productive discussion, but your own efforts will make the real difference. Miss class at your own risk: more than three absences will adversely impact your overall grade. Contact me immediately if a catastrophic situation emerges that affects your ability to attend. Participation (not attendance) is worth 100 points.

Reading Quizzes: Because participation is such a crucial element to this course, and as I really want you to come to class familiar with the material and ready to discuss it, thirteen of our sessions will begin with a brief quiz over factual matters in the text under

discussion for that day. These quizzes will be unannounced, but if you are reading attentively this should cause no reason for alarm. Twelve of these quizzes will count toward your final grade, for a total of 120 points. This is in case you miss a quiz (as I will not do “make ups”) or to compensate for a poor performance.

“Postcolonial Hot Topics”: As this course deals with subjects and situations that substantially impact millions around the world, we will attempt to place our readings not only within their respective historical frameworks, but in relation to a number of ongoing “hot topics.” You will construct a group presentation on a contemporary global news issue connected to our course materials; examples might include debates about female genital mutilation, outsourcing, “honor killings” or human trafficking. Presentations may include the use of multiple media. In addition, groups will be responsible for composing a detailed, annotated bibliography about their issue. Details about group assignments, potential topics and specific requirements will be made available later in the semester. This presentation will take the place of our final exam; it will take time, effort and creativity to do well on this assignment, which is worth 80 points overall.

Formal Essays: Two scholarly papers will be assigned over the course of the term; due dates are indicated on the reading schedule. These essays will allow you the opportunity to tie together literary materials with our theoretical frameworks. The first will run over 2000 words in length; this close reading of a postcolonial play will be worth 80 points. The second will concern Rushdie’s The Moor’s Last Sigh, and will incorporate outside research. This essay will stretch over 3000 words, and will be worth 120 points.

### **Other Important Information**

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at extension 3994 as soon as possible. Arrangements need to take place well in advance, and this process can take time. I am more than willing to try to accommodate reasonable requests, but you’ll need to get underway with the process of documentation now.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is literary theft. It occurs when you use someone else’s ideas as your own, without proper citation. Plagiarism is committed if you copy someone’s words without documentation—whether the original source was published or not (this includes “borrowing” someone’s paper, or using something from the Internet). Plagiarism is committed when you closely paraphrase a source without proper acknowledgement. If convicted, the student will receive a grade of F in the course, in addition to sanctions assigned by the Honor Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please come to me before handing in an assignment. According to English Department policy, all work is assumed to be the student’s own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality.