

**HON412: “Seas of Stories”: Postcolonial Literature and Theory
Spring 2024**



Professor: Justine K. Van Meter

Office: Virtual (appointments available on Zoom at your convenience)

E-Mail: vanmeter@chapman.edu

Catalog Description:

Prerequisite, acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor. Using an interdisciplinary approach, we will explore diverse “seas of stories” (as Salman Rushdie terms it) from various parts of the world. We will focus on key issues involved in postcolonial theory as well as the complexities, possibilities, and challenges of this particular theoretical approach to the study of literature and culture.

Course Objectives/Outcomes:

In this course, we will read authors and theorists who explore how their cultures, identities, and stories have been interrupted and/or transformed by colonial and postcolonial contacts between East and West. Our study of these authors and their works will primarily be structured around issues that are prevalent within the field of “Postcolonial Studies.” In exploring diverse “seas of stories” that flow between East and West, we will have a greater understanding of the contexts in which these authors are writing and of the issues that comprise this emerging field. We will particularly focus on **anti-colonialism, Orientalism, gender matters, the notion of hybridity, and postcolonial gothicisms.**

Major Topics Covered:

- Diverse experiences, definitions and expressions of culture and identity.
- Major historical figures and theorists in the field of “Postcolonial Studies.”
- Postcolonial interpretations/approaches to reading literature.
- Storytelling and stories as creators of community, culture, identity, and nation.
- The “Self,” the “Other,” and the “in-between.”

Honors Program Learning Outcomes:

- Obtain a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- Sharpen the ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- Understand how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- Develop effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

In addition to the outcomes specified above, this course also satisfies the following General Education areas:

- 7AI (Artistic Inquiry): Students compose critical or creative works that embody or analyze conceptually an artistic form at a baccalaureate/pre-professional level.
- 7SI (Social Inquiry): Students explore processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives.

Required Texts:

Faqir, *Pillars of Salt*

McPherson, *The Weir*

Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

Handouts (posted on Canvas)

Requirements:

- I. Readings and informal writing assignments: as you will notice on the syllabus, there are many materials that will be posted on Canvas for your convenience. Please be sure to have the readings and assignments completed on the day that they are listed on the syllabus. **It usually is very obvious when that's not happening, so do your business so that we can all do our business together!** Additionally, please **ONLY** use your device in class to reference course materials – I'll be checking! - or simply print them out and bring them into class!
- II. Essay 1 (200 points): Your essay needs to be submitted **on Canvas by 11:00pm** on the date listed on the syllabus. **No late papers accepted!**
- III. Essay 2 (300 points): Your essay needs to be submitted **on Canvas by 11:00pm** on the date listed on the syllabus. Your presentation at the end of the

semester will be based on this essay (more on this later!). **No late papers accepted!**

- IV. Presentation (100 points): More information will be distributed as this assignment approaches.
- V. Final Exam (300 points): The final will be comprehensive. More on this later!
- VI. Participation/Attendance (100 points): It is more than likely that, at this point in the syllabus and in your time in the Honors program, you are aware that your active participation in this class is necessary. We are in this together, to critically explore and examine a variety of texts, images and ideas; as such, all of our voices must be heard!

Please be aware that excessive unexcused absences (meaning absences that are not cleared with me **prior** to class and that are not legitimized by either a doctor's/dean's note or by other satisfactory means) or excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade according to the table shown below:

Absence #3	20 point deduction
Absence #4-5	50 point deduction
Absence #6 and beyond	Failure in the class
Tardies	3 Tardies=1 Unexcused Absence

Chapman University's Students with Disabilities Policy: In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Disability Services Office, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Special Notes:

*Please be aware that this is not a hyflex/hybrid course; in other words, I'll be zooming each class (with minimal interaction with anyone who is there), but this is to be used sparingly and **only when necessary!**

*If you need to discuss accommodations, please contact **Disability Services** (ds@chapman.edu) right away.

*Please **do not** use laptops/cell phones during class time other than to access materials! If there is an emergency or circumstance in which one or both of these is required, please let me know before class begins.

*Dr. Richard Ruppel from the English Department has succinctly explained my own policy regarding the use of AI here, so please read his words carefully:

Chatbots or generative AI tools may offer useful information. However, students are solely responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the material that the Chatbot generates in response to their prompt or AI query. It is the student's responsibility to verify the accuracy of the information provided and to use that information in ethical ways that avoid academic integrity issues. Students should also be aware of the inherent bias that may be manifested in generative AI responses and need to think critically as they analyze the information provided. To stay in compliance with university policies on academic integrity, a student's use of AI tools must be properly documented and referenced in the citation style of your chosen discipline.

*The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) **is permitted** in this course for the following activities:*

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas.
- Fine-tuning your research questions.
- Finding general information about the topic.
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts.
- Checking grammar, writing conventions, and/or style.

*The use of generative AI tools **is not permitted** in this course for the following activities:*

- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs, or papers to complete class assignments.

If you have questions about whether a specific AI tool is permitted, please ask me for clarification prior to turning in classroom or research assignments. Should I determine that an assignment has used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways, I will ask you in for a conference. Repeated offences may be brought before Chapman University's Academic Integrity Committee for final arbitration.

Grades: I am painfully aware of the emphasis that we all place on the grades that we receive. Although I have listed below the point values/percentages assigned to the various course requirements, I would like to remind you to please keep in mind as we proceed that *learning* is a process, one which points and percentages are very often incapable of measuring (corny, but true). Enjoy the process!

		Grade Scale:
Essay 1	200 points	A 950-1000
Essay 2	300 points	A- 910-949
Final Exam	300 points	B+ 880-909
		B 840-879
		B- 810-839
Presentation	100 points	C+ 780-809
Participation	100 points	C 740-779
		C- 710-739
		D+ 680-709
		D 640-679
		D- 610-639
		F 0-609
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TOTAL	1000 points	

Helpful Resource:

On the website below, you will find a list of articles about postcolonialism, postcolonial theory, or specific authors/works which might be helpful in the future:

http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/Literary_Criticism/postcolonism/postcolonial_link.htm

Schedule of Classes

*I reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed.

Week 1:

T	01/30	Introduction to the Course/Review of Syllabus
Th	02/01	Defining our term(s): What is meant by the word "Postcolonial"? Which authors or artists would be called this and why? What are some of the potential difficulties with this term?

Week 2:

T	02/06	(Very, very brief) summary of Empire (handout on Canvas) The "Anticolonial": Memmi, <i>The Colonizer and the Colonized</i> (handout on Canvas)
Th	02/08	Independent Work (no class): view Isaac Julien's documentary, <i>Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask</i> Link on Canvas (just click on the title above the gray square to access Kanopy).

Week 3:

T	02/13	Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> (handout on Canvas)
Th	02/15	The Postcolonial "Moment": Salih, <i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (read 1/3 for today)

Week 4:

T	02/20	<i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (read next 1/3 for today)
Th	02/22	<i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (read last 1/3 for today)

Week 5:

T	02/27	Orientalism: Said (handout on Canvas)
Th	02/29	Gender Matters: Leila Ahmed, "The Discourse of the Veil" (handout on Canvas)

Week 6:

T	03/05	The Torah, the Bible, the Quran: Representations of Women in East and West/Islam and Christianity (read powerpoint on Canvas and write an informal response for the purpose of discussion on the following: How effective is this approach? Is there an alternative way that this group might present their information?)
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Th	03/07	Independent Work (No Class, but I'll be available on Zoom if you need me!) Essay 1 Due on Canvas by 11:00pm. No late papers accepted, so be careful with this and be sure to use all guidelines – provided on both the handout and on Canvas – to avoid deductions.
Week 7:		
T	03/12	<i>Pillars of Salt</i> (read 1/2)
Th	03/14	<i>Pillars of Salt</i> (finish book)
Week 8:		
T	03/19	Spring Break (NO CLASSES)
Th	03/21	
Week 9:		
T	03/26	Hybridities: The Empire comes “home”: “Britishness” and Black Britain (selections from <i>Writing Black Britain</i> on Canvas)
Th	03/28	Continue with <i>Writing Black Britain</i>
Week 10:		
T	04/02	Rushdie, “Imaginary Homelands” (handout on Canvas)
Th	04/04	Bhabha’s “How Newness Enters the World” (at the end of <i>Writing Black Britain</i> handout) and “The Third Space Interview” (handouts on Canvas)
Week 11:		
T	04/09	<i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i> (read 1/3)
Th	04/11	<i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i> (read next 1/3)
Week 12:		
T	04/16	Finish <i>Haroun</i> (finish book)
Th	04/18	Hauntings: The Postcolonial Gothic and Ireland (handout on Canvas)

Week 13:

T 04/23 Ireland (cont.) and McPherson, *The Weir*

Th 04/25 **Independent Work (No Class, but I'll be available on Zoom if you need me!)**
Essay 2 DUE by 11:00pm via Canvas. No late papers accepted! Be sure to use all guidelines!

Week 14:

T 04/30 Presentations

Th 05/02 Presentations

Week 15:

T 05/07 Presentations

Th 05/09 Presentations

Final Exam: Friday 05/17 (due on Canvas by 11:00pm). **NOTE:** The due date is firm, meaning that no late papers will be accepted!