
ENGL S128 02: READINGS IN COMPARATIVE WORLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

Summer 2025, MW 9-12:15

Professor Juno Richards (they/them) juno.richards@yale.edu

Office Hours: TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to the English language literatures that emerged in the wake of colonial empire and the transatlantic slave trade. Though the texts in question span the historical period from the nineteenth century to the present day, the course is primarily organized by region, through case studies in the Caribbean, Africa, and South Asia. Moving swiftly across oceans and continents, this version of course puts particular emphasis on transnational regimes of gender and sexuality, with a special focus on the intimate archives of a queer diaspora. Other thematic points of entry include racial apartheid, liberation struggles, indigeneity, reparations, forced migration, and asylum. Authors include M. Nourbese Phillip, Claude McKay, Jamaica Kincaid, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Arundhati Roy, and Mohsin Hamid.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Claude McKay, *Romance in Marseilles* (1933) (Penguin)
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988) (Farrar)
Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) (Greywolf)
Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (1998) (Harper)

REQUIRED WORK

This course serves as one of the introductions to the English major, and so we will pay special attention to developing the skills needed to write a critical essay. Each assignment will come with a more specific handout with detailed directions, prompts, and written expectations. Every week students will post a reading response on Canvas by 10pm the night before class. Students will be divided into two alternating groups, Monday and Wednesday, so that everyone writes one response per week. Class presentation dates will be assigned in the first weeks of class: this will be a short, 10 minute presentation on the selected reading. No additional research is necessary for the presentations or the reading responses.

- * In class presentations
- * Reading responses, approximately 300 words
- * Midterm Paper, 4-5 pages
- * Final Paper, 8-10 pages

GRADES

Participation: 20%

Presentations: 10%

Reading Responses: 20%

Midterm Paper: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

PARTICIPATION

Attendance: I will take role at every class meeting. Grounds for excused absences are documented cases of illness, family emergency, or observance of religious holidays. Beyond that undocumented absences will negatively affect your participation grade. For the summer session missing even one class puts you way behind, so please make every effort to be there every day.

Discussion: One of the things that you are learning is how to talk about books, how to organize your ideas out loud, and how to respond to someone else's verbal arguments on the spot. The only way to learn this is by practicing. This does not mean you have to come into class with a fully formed argument. However, it is generally good to walk in the door with a few thoughts about the texts already at hand. You can ask questions. You can point out a passage you really like or dislike. You can argue or agree with your classmates' comments. You can say, "I don't get it," "this doesn't make sense," "I don't see the point." It really helps me to hear your reactions, so that I can lead the class in a direction that is helpful for everyone.

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

Please notify me if you have a disability that makes an aspect of the course challenging and I will be happy to work to accommodate you. I encourage you to makes use of the Office for Disability Services and regularly work with them to provide student with the services they need. It is also important to me to create an inclusive classroom environment, where everyone is referred to by their preferred pronouns and names. Though some of the texts under discussion may include racial or ethnic slurs, we will not voice them in the course when reading out loud or in classroom discussions. Finally, colonialism and slavery have left in their wake a literary tradition rife with sexual and physical violence. I will warn you about these texts ahead of time, but please be aware that a significant number of materials include explicit depictions.

LATE WORK

All work is due on Canvas on the date assigned. It is fine if you are up late and turn it in shortly after midnight, so that the calendar date says the next day. Late papers will be graded down 1/3 of a grade per day late (e.g., a B will become a B-; a C- will become a D+; etc.). Extensions must be requested as far in advance as possible. Late reading response assignments should be submitted as quickly as possible for a reduced grade. No need to alert me to the fact of a late reading response; I will see the time it was handed in on Canvas. Papers that are substantially late will not receive written comments, but I would be happy to discuss them in office hours.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the practice of passing off someone else's work as your own, whether this is in the form of unacknowledged quotations or ideas. It also occurs when someone else writes any part of your paper. Papers written with AI will be returned to students with zero credit. Reading responses written with AI will also receive zero credit. All work you do for this class must be your own. Please

understand that you cannot use the same paper for two different courses at the university and that you must correctly cite and document your sources, whether they are library books, class textbooks, scientific/technical or other articles, Internet sites, lectures, personal interviews, etc. If you have any questions about plagiarism or about the use and documentation of sources, please talk with me.

SCHEDULE

Introduction: Mother Tongues, Diaspora Poetics

Reading Questions: What does it mean to read world literature written in English? Why do these authors not write in their native languages, like Hindi, Shona, or Xhosa? How does the postcolonial writer relate to the English language as a legacy of colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slavery?

June 30 Introduction, in class work on a selection of poems

The Black Atlantic: Caribbean Routes and Histories

Reading Questions: How do these works understand place? Is place a background or something more active? In what ways does the Atlantic Ocean, and with it the aftermath of trans-Atlantic slavery and colonialism, figure into this sense of place?

July 2 Claude McKay, *Romance in Marseilles* (1933), Introduction, pp. 3-57

July 7 Claude McKay, *Romance in Marseilles*, pp. 57-end

July 9 Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988)

Midterm Paper Due July 13

Colonial Education and the African Novel

*Reading Questions: In the Western tradition, a novel of education or Bildungsroman follows the protagonist from childhood to adulthood, moving from a naïve or refractory youth to an adult who accept the dominant values of his/her social world. Think of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Little Women* or *Great Expectations*. How does Dangarembga respond to and alter this western novelistic tradition from a Shona perspective?*

July 14 Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988), pp. 1-104

July 16 Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988); pp. 105-208

Intimate Life and Domestic Worlds in 1960s India

Reading Questions: What are the hallmarks of Roy's style and how do they affect your reading experience? How does this novel create new forms to depict the world from a child's perspective? A twin's perspective? How does this perspective offer a new language to understand the hierarchies of caste?

July 21 Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (1998) pp. 3-89;

July 23 Arundhati Roy, *God of Small Things*, pp. 90-147

July 28 Arundhati Roy, *God of Small Things*, pp. 148-253

July 30 Final Paper workshop,
Due in class: hard copy of first 6 pages of final paper, ungraded rough draft

Final Paper Due on Canvas August 3