

**Postcolonial Literature in English** (Lit 2189-1, Spring 2002)

Professor Robin Truth Goodman

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Office hours: 5-6 Tuesdays and Thursdays, by appointment

This course introduces students to some of the key concepts in postcolonial studies. The term “postcolonial” refers to the type of cultural production that started to take place in many formerly colonized nations when the European empires began to be dismantled in the 1940’s, but particularly after the anti-imperialist struggles that occurred in the 1960’s. However, the term has also come to mean a number of other political, cultural, and economic formations, including resistance movements; new global identities which interface, for example, modern technologies with local concerns; and the politics of race and gender worldwide.

This course looks at the way current politics are playing out in people’s lives. In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it has become vital for U.S. citizens to understand the struggles in the Middle East. The Middle East was dominated by the Ottomans until the end of the first World War, when it was split into protectorates of the British and the French who, in turn, withdrew in the wake of the second World War. This course for the most part is concerned with the way Middle Easterners themselves are describing the religious, cultural, economic, territorial, and geopolitical conflicts that are catapulting many nations into war and terror: what are the historical trajectories of these conflicts, and what are possible resolutions? Some of the issues include: what are the politics of decolonization? has the Middle East been decolonized everywhere and for everyone? when is violence justified? in what form does structural domination and oppression persist even after decolonization? what is a just relationship between religion and state? is women’s liberation inimical to the rights of self-determination for local cultures and religions? what is the role of literature in national liberation movements, cultural and historical reconstructions, drives for sovereignty, and actions for justice?

- 1) Students are expected to be *present*, *prompt* and *prepared*. Equally important, students are expected to *participate* fully in the work of the group: commenting and questioning, listening and observing. Attendance is mandatory.
- 2) You must come to class and you must do the reading before the class when we will be discussing it. You must bring the reading materials to class to refer to during discussion. Some weeks have more reading than others. Try to plan ahead and make extra time for the weeks that require extra time.
- 3) There will be regular reading quizzes. You must come to class familiar enough with the readings to answer simple questions. Reading quizzes constitute 20% of your grade and can only be taken on the day they are administered in class. If you are not in class that day for any reason, you will receive a failing grade on the quiz. Occasionally, there will also be impromptu writings in class. You should always be prepared to write in class if asked to do so.

4) **Readings and assignments are subject to change.** If you are absent, you are responsible for what happens in class, and for any changes made in assignments. **You should therefore get telephone numbers and/or email addresses from two classmates whom you can call if you are absent.** Please do not write or call me to ask what happened in class, and please do not write or call me to tell me the reason you are absent. If you ever email me, make sure you put your name and the name of the course in the email. If you have any suggestions for readings you would like to do, please let me know.

5) **Late papers are unacceptable.** If papers are handed in one class period after the day they are due, I will lower your grade one gradient (from an A, for example, to an A-). If you hand in your paper more than one class period after the day they are due, you will receive a failing grade on that paper. Not handing in any one of the three papers within at least a week of the due date constitutes grounds for failing the course.

6) Papers should be typed, double-spaced, in a standard and legible, 12-pt. font, *stapled without report covers*, and always with a standard MLA bibliography. You should always have a paper read by somebody else before the teacher reads it. Preferably, after you yourself have done your **proofreading**, you should have a classmate who will edit and comment on your work before it goes into its final draft. Also, you should never hand-in a paper that you don't have a copy of. This goes for this course as well as for any other course you might take. If you have a copy on disk, this is fine as long as you can produce a hard-copy if asked to do so.

7) **Cell phones should not come to class unless you are expecting a pizza delivery.**

8) **Plagiarism is against the law, and will result in an automatic failure of the course.** Plagiarism is when you use somebody else's words or ideas but say that they are yours. If you take material from any source whatsoever, you must cite it in a "Works Cited" list at the end of your paper. Material taken from other sources must be enclosed in quotation marks, while material that is paraphrased must be attributed and cited.

9) Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in *The Florida State University Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook*.

10) Grades:

Reading quizzes: 20%

Class participation: 10%

Email participation: 10 %

3 5-page papers: 20% each

### **Written Assignments**

Email participation: For every different text (either visual or written), you must make an email entry to me at least five hours before class. The email message should have your name on it, and should include:

if you met the author or filmmaker of the text we are currently considering, what are three questions you would ask him or her? (in response to this, please focus on the politics of the text rather than the author's or characters' psychology. Try to get to

what is important about the particular text. Try to make your questions *useful* and *compelling* discussion questions. Make sure your questions are specifically about how the text works).

Papers will be in response to specific questions which I will distribute in class the week before they are due. If you have any suggestions about possible questions you would like to write about, please let me know.

### **Weekly Breakdown**

8 January: Introduction

10, 15, 17 January: Film Screening, *Lawrence of Arabia*

22 January: Henry Cattan, excerpts from *Palestine, the Arabs and Israel*

24, 29 January: Amira Hass, *Drinking in the Sea of Gaza*

31 January, 5 February: Edward Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims" and "The Arab Portrayed"; Yitzhak Rabin, "On the Road to Peace"

7, 12 February: Raja Shehadeh, *Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine*

14 February: First paper due

19, 21 February: Naguib Mahfouz, *The Day the Leader Was Killed*

26, 28 February: Betool Khedairi, *A Sky So Close*

5, 7 March: Film Screening, undecided

19, 21 March: Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*

26 March: Michael Klare, excerpts from *Resource Wars*

28 March: Second paper due

2, 4 April: Hanan Shaikh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*

9 April: Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence"

11 April: Film Screening, Isaac Julien's *Black Skin, White Masks*

16, 18 April: Idries Shah, *Kara Kush*

22 April, noon: Final papers due