

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo  
Department of English

## Engl322: Postcolonial Literature of the Americas

Fall 2018

MW 4:00-5:20 SJ2 2001

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### Course Description

**Calendar Description:** This course examines postcolonial literature in English from Canada, the U.S., and the Caribbean. Through study of both written and oral genres, we will discuss how language practices adapt to and are created in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Topics may include diaspora and migration, nationalism, gender, neo-colonialism, and multiculturalism.

**Detailed Description:** Postcolonial literature emerges out of a need to understand, so as to critique, the ramifications of colonialism in its various, most often culturally devastating, forms. As such, postcolonial literature becomes an expression of resistance, a “writing back” to the Empire seeking the acknowledgement of wrongs committed, and, thereby, seeking to recover from colonial interference and its traumatic results. Nevertheless, as we will be discussing throughout the course, the “post” of “postcolonialism” can often be quite the misnomer when the effects of colonialism, and even many of its systems, still endure. With our course’s focus on North America and the Caribbean, we will particularly be able to note the endurance of colonialist practices as they relate to indigenous populations, while also viewing neo-colonialist systems brought about particularly through the tourist industry. As we proceed throughout the course, in addition to considering this endurance of colonialism (and its re-emergence as neo-colonialism), we will consider such related issues as the construction of identity/ies and the experiences of migration/immigration, of nationalism/transnationalism, and of trauma and recovery.

Expect for our course to combine lectures with discussion and group work; hence, expect to come to class ready to actively participate and share your ideas.

### Course Goals and/or Learning Outcomes

- develop one's knowledge of contemporary postcolonial literature from Canada, the U.S., and the Caribbean through the exploration of interesting and challenging literary texts
- develop one's knowledge of postcolonial approaches to literature
- practice the skills of close critical reading
- enable students to communicate their interpretations effectively both orally and in writing and become a part of a community of learners
- build respect for matters of academic integrity, including developing the skills of proper MLA citation of sources
- build essay writing skills, including effective argumentation, structure, and grammar

### Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase at the UW bookstore. Having alternate editions is completely acceptable, but be aware that you might find it difficult to follow lectures if your page numbers are different from the editions assigned.

- Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*
- Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*
- Brand, *At the Full and Change of the Moon*
- Kincaid, *A Small Place*

### Readings Available on Course Reserves

- Zitkala-Sa, "School Days of an Indian Girl" from *American Indian Stories*
- King, "Godzilla vs. Post-colonial"
- Corntassel, Jeff, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadsí "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling"
- Vizenor, "Almost Browne"
- Philip, "Meditations on the Declension of Beauty"
- Philip, "Discourse on the Logic of Language"
- Smartt, "Because I'm Nothing You Can Name"
- Nichols, "Weeping Woman"
- Brathwaite, "The Marley Manor Shoot/in"
- Silvera, "Caribbean Chameleon"
- Cisneros "Mericans"
- Mistry, "Swimming Lessons"
- Walcott, "The Sea is History"
- Campbell, "Goodman's Bay"; "Dover to Accra"; "Groove"

You are required to have access to Course Reserves readings in lecture; printing out copies for yourself is likely the best option, but e-readers/ipads that allow you to mark-up your readings (to highlight them and take notes in the margins) are fine. **You should be marking up your texts**

**substantially** by noting important themes, responding to ideas, asking questions, etc. **Not bringing your readings to class will disadvantage you and will cause you to let down your classmates.**

## Assignment Schedule

	Assignment	Due Date	Weighting
1	In-class Assignments and Participation	Various (See Class Schedule)	10%
2	Optional Sample Reading Journal entry	Anytime before Sept. 26 <sup>th</sup>	n/a (completed for the sake of receiving feedback)
3	Reading Journal, part 1 (4 entries)	Oct. 17 <sup>th</sup>	10%
4	Essay Proposal	Nov. 7 <sup>th</sup>	10%
5	Reading Journal, part 2 (4 entries)	Nov. 28 <sup>th</sup>	10%
6	Final Essay	Dec. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	30%
7	Take Home Exam	Dec. 14 <sup>th</sup>	30%

## Assignment Descriptions

Except where indicated, more detailed guidelines will be posted on LEARN.

### Assignment 1

#### **In-Class Participation/Assignments (6% Assignments; 4% Active Contributions)**

Note: These are the full assignment guidelines.

This course will require that you participate actively, which means attending consistently and being willing to share your ideas regularly. A great part of this mark will be determined by your participation in in-class assignments which will most often take the form of small-group discussion. You, individually or as a group (depending on the activity), will be required to submit notes from your work.

In-class assignments will be graded as follows:

0/2 = Not Completed or Completed but Unacceptable

1/2 = Complete but inadequate

1.25/2 = Complete and adequate

1.5/2 = Complete and well-done

1.75/2 = Complete and better than many, but not quite exceptional

2/2 = Complete and exceptional

I've noted what weeks there should be an in-class assignment, but remember our schedule may have to be adjusted depending on how quickly we get through our material. And remember there will be opportunities for active participation every week

throughout the term. You must be present in class to complete the assignment, except in extraordinary circumstances for which documentation will be required.

6% of this mark will come from your grades for the completion of the in-class assignments.

4% will come from your active contributions to class discussion.

Consequently, it is rather easy to achieve close to 6/10 for this portion of your final grade if you attend and produce good in-class work, but if you wish to achieve more than 6/10, you will have to participate in our class discussions.

I keep track of those who speak each class, but if I haven't learned your name yet or if you feel I haven't recorded your contribution, feel free to remind me at the end of class. Also, you will have the opportunity at the end of the course to offer a self-evaluation of your participation to plead your case for that 4%, so think about keeping a record for yourself of when and what you've contributed.

### **Assignments 2, 3, and 5**

**Optional Sample Reading Journal entry, Reading Journal, part 1 (4 entries), and Reading Journal, part 2 (4 entries)**

Note: These are the full guidelines, but additional information is available on LEARN.

Note: You are welcome to create a blog as your journal. If you do so, instead of submitting a hard copy, you will email me your blog's url, by the start of class on the due date.

#### **The Rules:**

Throughout the term, you must write 8 Reading Journal entries (4 are submitted for Part 1 of this assignment, and 4 are submitted for Part 2). See Chart Below that indicates the texts from which you can choose. Each entry should be approximately 300-500 words (or equivalent if your entry is more multi-modal).

7 of your entries will be on our assigned readings; 1 will be on a relevant critical article that you've located yourself. You can choose whether you write about the critical article as part of Part 1 or Part 2 of the assignment. Otherwise, Part 1 should reflect our course readings from the early part of the term, while Part 2 should reflect our readings from the latter part of term

For your entry on a relevant critical article/book chapter, ideally you should be locating an article that you will be able to use to inform your work for the Final Essay. So, your choice of an article/book chapter will either concern a particular theoretical concept related to post-colonial studies or concern in particular your literary text(s) that you will discuss in your Essay.

**Chart of Possible Entries:**

I've constructed the following chart so that you can keep track of your progress.

Topic of Entry	Completed:
REQUIRED: Critical article of your own finding	
<b>Seven of the following nine options (3 of which must be books):</b>	
Dimaline, <i>The Marrow Thieves</i>	
Danticat, <i>The Dew Breaker</i>	
Brand, <i>At the Full and Change of the Moon</i>	
Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i>	
Zitkala-Sa, King, or Corntassel, Jeff, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadsí	
Maracle event, Vizenor	
Philip or Smartt	
Nichols, Brathwaite, Walcott, or Campbell	
Silvera, Cisneros, Mistry	

**Objectives:**

This assignment comes as a response to a few concerning comments that I've heard in the past about postcolonial literature, one being a student's comment that "he/she just can't relate to that type of literature because it doesn't represent his/her experience" and one being a colleague's comment that "that type of literature is scary to students." For this assignment, I want you to think about these comments and use them as a starting point to think about your own engagement with our texts throughout the course.

For each entry, you will offer your personal response to the text by identifying a key aspect of it that interests, concerns, intrigues, and/or excites you. Remember though, these entries should not be plot summary or character analysis; they should reflect that you've read your texts closely and critically and that you have something detailed and interesting to say about them.

**Assignment Format:**

You could complete this assignment in one of two ways: (1) produce work to be handed-in in a more traditional way – i.e., on paper – OR (2) produce work in the form of an on-line blog (or something else computer-based).

As for the form your journal could take, you can write in a more traditional and analytical way (a.k.a. a mini-essay, albeit potentially in a less formal style), but also feel free to express yourself in more creative ways. So, for example, if there's a current

event, newspaper article, etc. that you wish to relate to our reading for the week, feel free to do that. If you wish to express yourself by offering a poem for one entry, that's fine; if you wish to create a comic strip for another entry, that's fine; whatever form you feel is most appropriate to express your ideas about the text in an interesting and engaging manner is fine. For more creative entries, you may find that you want to/need to offer a paragraph explaining your intentions so that the complexity of your ideas can be fully appreciated.

Remember, your goal is to write your entries at the time we're studying each text so that you can gain full benefit of the exercise. That way you'll be ready to participate actively in lecture and share your ideas.

Please see the Evaluation Criteria and a sample entry on LEARN.

#### **Assignment 4**

##### **Final Essay Proposal (1-2 pages)**

More detailed guidelines will be posted the week of Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>, but this assignment will require that you construct an effective proposal that announces your intentions for your final essay. The purpose of this assignment is to ensure that you're setting yourself up with an argument that will result in an effective final essay.

The proposal will require that you indicate your proposed thesis, explain the main ideas that will structure your paper's argument, and identify possible critical sources.

#### **Assignment 6**

##### **Final Essay (7-8 pages)**

This assignment will require that you write an essay on one-two course texts based on a selection of suggested topics. Your essay will be informed by research (1-3 critical sources will be cited). More detailed guidelines, complete with a list of suggested topics, will be posted the week of Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>.

#### **Assignment 7**

##### **Take Home Exam**

More detailed guidelines will be discussed in our final class meeting, but expect the Take Home exam to test your knowledge of our readings and of key discussions from class. You will be tested through a variety of short answer and/or essay questions. The exam is cumulative.

NOTE: You can earn bonus marks for your exam by attending our Reading Series events. By attending an event and then writing a one-page response to it (What impacted you most about the event? What did you find most interesting? What made you think?) **to be submitted one-week after the reading**, you will receive a **2% bonus** on your exam. So, if your mark on the exam would have been 78%, but you attended 2 readings and submitted your responses, your mark on the final exam will be 82% (78%+2%+2%).

## Class Schedule

We will follow this schedule as closely as possible, but occasionally one week's topic/readings may carry over into the next week. Please have all the reading for the week done by the beginning of the week in which it is scheduled so that you will be able to participate fully.

Readings marked with an \* will be available via Course Reserves (see link on LEARN).

Week	Date	Readings	Important Notes
1	Sept 10, 12	Orientation and Introduction	
2	Sept 17, 19	Introduction  <b>Colonialism, Indigeneity, and Debunking the "Post":</b> Zitkala-Sa, "School Days of an Indian Girl" from <i>American Indian Stories</i> * King, "Godzilla vs. Post-colonial" * Corntassel, Jeff, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadsi "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling" *	Practice In-class Activity
3	Sept 24, 26	Dimaline, <i>The Marrow Thieves</i>	In-class activity <b>Optional Sample Reading</b> <b>Journal Entry Due: Sept 26</b>
4	Oct 1, 3	Dimaline, <i>The Marrow Thieves</i>  Note: Assuming that there is no change to the event plans, we will attend the Indigenous Speakers Series on October 3 <sup>rd</sup> : Lee Maracle with Bill Coleman 4pm Modern Languages Theatre	
5	Oct 12	Note: because of the Study Break, we meet on Friday this week  <b>Language, Self-Representation, and "Writing Back"</b> Vizenor, "Almost Browne" *  Philip, "Meditations on the Declension of Beauty" and "Discourse on the Logic of Language" *	In-class activity
6	Oct 15, 17	Smartt, "Because I'm Nothing You Can Name" * Nichols, "Weeping Woman" *	<b>Reading Journal, part 1 (4 entries) Due: Oct. 17</b>
7	Oct 22, 24	<b>Legacies, part 1: Legacies of Violence</b>  Danticat, <i>The Dew Breaker</i>	
8	Oct 29, 31	Danticat, <i>The Dew Breaker</i>  Brathwaite, "The Marley Manor Shoot/in" *	In-class Activity

Week	Date	Readings	Important Notes
9	Nov 5, 7	Brathwaite, "The Marley Manor Shoot/in" *  <b>Legacies, part 2: Home(s), Belonging, Roots/Routes</b> Silvera, "Caribbean Chameleon" * Cisneros "Mericans" *	In-class Activity  <b>Essay Proposal Due: Nov. 7</b>
10	Nov 12, 14	Mistry, "Swimming Lessons" * Walcott, "The Sea is History" *  Brand, <i>At the Full and Change of the Moon</i>	
11	Nov. 19, 21	Brand, <i>At the Full and Change of the Moon</i>	In-class Activity
12	Nov. 26, 28	<b>Legacies, part 3: Neo-Colonialism</b> Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i>  (In-class Examples: Campbell, "Goodman's Bay"; "Dover to Accra"; "Groove" *)	In-class Activity  <b>Reading Journal, part 2 (4 entries) Due: Nov. 28</b>
13	Dec. 3	Course Wrap-up and Review	<b>Final Essay Due: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> (Electronic Submission)</b>  <b>Take Home Exam Due: Dec. 14<sup>th</sup></b>

**Course Policies:****Correspondence:**

If you need to contact me by email, be sure to use my [vjausten@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:vjausten@uwaterloo.ca) address. In most cases, I will respond to emails within 24 hours, though I can't guarantee that I'll check email on weekends. Remember too that a university is a professional environment, so **you should use your UW email addresses** for all correspondence.

**Unexcused Absences:**

Though you do not receive marks for your attendance in this course, you are expected to attend every class meeting, particularly since you won't be able to earn participation grades unless you're in class and participating. The university is a professional space much like the workplace, so you need to show your professionalism and take all your work, including your attendance, seriously. For the rare times when you can't attend, you may inform me by email. In any case, remember that absences will make you less likely to be able to succeed in the course because you won't be privy to where our class discussions take us. The number one lesson in university, as in life, is 'show up.'

**A Note on Ethics in Writing:**

Although you may, of course, discuss your work with others, your assignments must reflect your own abilities. Remember that "study help" sites are not your friends. **Your job in our course is the creation of knowledge, not the regurgitation of what others have already thought and communicated.** So, do your own thinking!



Furthermore, while peer-review should be part of any writing process, soliciting someone “to correct” or “edit” your writing is NOT allowed. There is a fine-line between peer-review and academic misconduct (peer reviewers point out potential problem spots and make suggestions that the writer can then take or discard; peer-reviewers should not do the “correcting” for the writer). If you have any questions about ethics in the preparation of assignments, please ask!

**Late Assignments:**

Assignments due in class will be collected **at the beginning of the class** in which they are due. Once class has ended, your work will be considered as already one day late. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of **three percent (3%) per day**, including weekends (e.g. an assignment due on Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> that is submitted on Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> is 5 days late; hence, that assignment will be penalized by 15%).

To stop the clock on a late assignment, you must submit an electronic submission by email, with the understanding that the hard copy must be submitted to my essay dropbox (see cabinet outside of the St. Jerome’s library) by the next working day. The electronic copy will serve as our time/date stamp (assuming that you do submit the hard copy by the next working day; if you don’t, the late clock resumes); the electronic copy must be the same as the hard copy you submit.

For participation assignments that are due electronically, you have until 11:59pm on the due date to submit.

**Extensions:**

All extensions must be requested **by the Friday** of the week prior to the assignment’s due date. A request made in person is more likely to be granted. In any case, a request made after the Friday, will only be granted if appropriate documentation can be provided explaining why your assignment will be late (this may include a doctor’s note; documentation of a family emergency; etc.). Remember that a request for an extension may be denied. Without documentation, no extension will be granted after the original due date has passed.

**Assignment Format:**

Hard copies of assignments are required unless otherwise specified or approved. **Please double-side your written assignments.**

All essays must follow MLA format as described in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Some details regarding MLA formatting will be discussed in class, but you should as well consult the MLA Handbook yourself.

Specified page lengths for assignments/essays are approximate and based on proper MLA formatting (1 inch margins, Times New Roman (or equivalent) 12 point font). Exceeding the page limit by up to approximately one page is acceptable. Not meeting

the specified page length is not acceptable and most often can significantly affect the quality of your assignment.

### **Mental Health Services:**

Lindsay Thomson is St. Jerome's University's Wellness Coordinator. She can be contacted at 519-884-8111 x28361 or at [lindsay.thompson@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lindsay.thompson@uwaterloo.ca). Her office is Sweeney Hall 1016.

### **On Campus**

- Counselling Services: [counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca) / 519-888-4567 x32655
- [MATES](#): one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from the Student Life Centre

### **Off campus, 24/7**

- [Good2Talk](#): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Extended Assessment Unit Phone: 519-749-4300 x6880
- [Here 24/7](#): Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- [OK2BME](#): Support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 x222

Full details can be found online at the Faculty of ARTS [website](#)

Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

### **UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS**

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations

([www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf)) state that:

- I. A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the "University of Waterloo Verification of Illness" form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at [www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health\\_Services/verification.html](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html).
- II. If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- III. The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to

write tests and examinations.

- IV. Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

**Note for students with disabilities:**

The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

## Other Important Information

**Academic Integrity:**

*Academic Integrity:* In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

[Academic Integrity Office \(UW\)](#): A resource for students and instructors.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. For students who decide to file a grievance, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 70 \(Student Petitions and Grievances\)](#). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome's University.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read [University of Waterloo Policy 72 \(Student Appeals\)](#).

## **Intellectual Property**

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or the University of Waterloo/St. Jerome's University. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student's educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner's permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA and/or the University of Waterloo/St. Jerome's University for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor, TA or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).