

# Literature and Decolonization

ENGL 263 01 / CRIS 265 03

FALL 2022

TUESDAY/THURSDAY 1:05–2:20PM

SCIENCE CENTER 302

GOOGLE CLASSROOM CODE: UCREDN5

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Wright Museum of Art 203

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## Course Description

This course engages with English-language literatures from formerly colonized nations and peoples. Students explore why literature was important for the world-building process when colonized areas asserted independence over the course of the 20th century. They also explore what literature can teach us today about ongoing efforts to decolonize language, colleges, and other institutions.

By the end of the course, students will have:

1. Developed a global historical consciousness of imperialism and decolonization in the 20th and 21st centuries;
2. Improved critical reading and writing skills, particularly in the analysis of literature;
3. Evaluated different creative and activist strategies of documenting and interrupting the legacies of colonization; and
4. Thought critically about their personal role in national and global structures of economic and political inequality.

The focus of this course will at times bring our attention to challenging topics including sexual violence. At times, our readings can be upsetting. So, too, may be our class discussions, because difficult material can produce conversations whose trajectories are not knowable in advance. Careful attention to the material and to each other as we participate in the co-creation of knowledge will be our rule. However, even this cannot make a guarantee against surprises. Please read through all of the syllabus now so you know what lies ahead. I urge you to come talk with me about any concerns you may have about participating fully in this class before the course drop deadline.

## Course Readings

Many of the assignments for this course and supplementary readings are available in our class site on Google Classroom. Please download them and print off or annotate on your computers and bring to class. In addition, I ask you to rent/borrow/purchase these texts. I am not particularly fussy about the edition, so feel free to find what is cheapest.

- Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*
- Shani Mootoo, *Cereus Blooms at Night*
- Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*
- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
- Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*
- Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Because so many of our readings are digital, I realize many folks will be bringing tablets or laptops to class. As long as you're just looking at the readings, go for it. But I also know there's a lot of research that says having screens on in class distracts from both your learning and the learning of your classmates, so we'll also be having dedicated "no screens" time in class when our discussion doesn't require reference to the readings. Please be prepared to put your machines to the side.

## Course Requirements

### Grade Determination

Your grade for this course consists of participation, a group presentation, a 3-page co-authored article summary, and three essays of 5–6 pages.

- Discussion Participation: 20%
- Group Presentation: 15%
- Co-written Article Summary and Co-led Discussion Leadership

- 3-page summary: 10%
- Discussion leadership: 10%
- Three essays of 5–6 pages: 15% each

## Attendance & Participation

The success of this discussion-based seminar depends upon your participation and preparation. Please come to class having read the material and prepared to talk about it. Contributing to discussion means both listening to others and building on what they have said; it means both leaning in and leaning back to facilitate a community process of knowledge formation. Participating can mean commenting on the text or commenting on someone else's contribution. It can mean asking follow-up questions of someone or synthesizing the comments of those who have contributed before you. It also means participating in group work, where we are teaching each other in a more intimate context.

In our classroom community, we want to hear everyone's voice, and we want to support everyone to participate. If you are finding it difficult to join discussion, please come visit office hours so we can brainstorm strategies for you to jump in.

## Absences

If you're going to be absent for a good reason, please let me know 48 hours ahead of time. More than one absence will make it much harder for you to develop the skills and knowledge you need to succeed in this course; more than two absences will directly lower your grade by 1/3.

## Group Presentation

Each time we start a new novel, a small group will be responsible for presenting on the colonial and decolonial history of an area associated with the novel's setting or the author's biography. The purpose of this presentation is to provide context and set the stage for our classroom discussions. Each presentation should be about 15 minutes long and should cover:

- The colonial origins and colonizers of the area
- Significant events in the history of colonization
- Origins and causes of fights for independence or decolonization
- Leaders and activist groups in this fight
- Enduring impacts of colonization of the area's religion, language, and culture
- Significant postcolonial authors from the area and their reception on the global stage

Your group will draw upon the History research guide available through the Beloit College library, in particular the *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*. You must cite at least three sources in your presentation materials.

We will randomly divide into groups of ~3 students during the first week of class. The groups will be assigned to the following areas and days:

- Group A (September 15): Martinique
- Group B (September 20): Zimbabwe/Rhodesia
- Group C (September 29): Algeria
- Group D (October 25): Trinidad and Tobago
- Group E (November 10): Bangladesh
- Group F (November 29): Antigua

## Partnered Article Summary and Discussion Leadership

To expand our range of interpretations of the novels we read, you will be assigned to read and report on a scholarly article about a particular text. In pairs, you will write up a 3-page summary of the article, which you will read to the class on your assigned day. Inspired by the article, you will also write up two discussion questions for the class to explore themes or problems addressed by the article. In class, you will lead classroom discussion for approximately 10 minutes after you read your article summary.

We will randomly divide into pairs the first week of class. I will endeavor to make sure you work with someone not also assigned to your small group presentation. I will also endeavor to make sure you don't have to do both the group presentation and the article partnership on the same novel.

## Essays

You will receive prompts for your essays about three weeks before they are due. Each essay will be graded according to the same rubric, which will be distributed with the prompt. Please submit essays to Google Classroom *before class*. Microsoft Word or Google Documents format preferred.

Each essay should be in 12-pt Times New Roman, double spaced, one inch margins, with MLA format and citations. Go to <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/> for detailed citation instructions and a very helpful sample MLA-format paper. Do not bring in readings beyond those assigned in class.

## Academic Resources

College-level analysis and writing pose challenges to all students. To help you meet these challenges, you may find it helpful to utilize some of the services provided by the college. Various professional staff and advanced students are committed to helping you address academic challenges in a variety

of ways. Please let me know if there are any resources I can help you find to ensure your success in this class.

I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center website at <https://www.beloit.edu/writingcenter/> to learn about tutoring and mentoring options, guidance on study skills and time management, and one-on-one assistance to ensure that you are using the best possible strategies for success in your course work. The Writing Center has appointments available Sunday-Thursday 3-10pm. Try not to wait until the last minute—there is often a lot of work to be done after a session. At an appointment, you will bring in the assignment, related reading, and any previous work on which you've received feedback. Please try it out! It is so helpful to be able to sit down with somebody to dissect your assignment prompt, discuss the related reading, generate ideas and make a plan, revise drafts, and edit sentence-level issues. And you don't need to have writing done to find a session useful—sometimes it's great to have an appointment just to get started!

## Accommodations

I aim to make this class accessible and inclusive by meeting the needs of each student. That means I'm happy to meet with you or respond to your e-mails if you have any concerns about the class. I just ask that you get in touch sooner rather than later so we can work toward solutions together as soon as possible.

If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services (LEADS) located on the 2nd floor of Pearsons (north side), 608-363-2572, [learning@beloit.edu](mailto:learning@beloit.edu), or through [olesena@beloit.edu](mailto:olesena@beloit.edu). For accommodations in my class, please bring me an Access Letter from the Director of LEADS, and then we will discuss how to implement the accommodations. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact LEADS.

If you want support from an Organizational Tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact LEADS.

## Late Papers

Turning in papers on time allows me to provide feedback in a timely manner. However, I understand things come up in life and sometimes a couple extra days to work on a paper can make all the difference. If that happens, what's most important to me is that we stay in good communication so we have a plan on when you can turn in a paper and when I can return it to you. Please reach out to me sooner rather than later if you foresee a challenge.

## Office Hours

I love talking with students and having the opportunity to think out loud with you in real time. That means the best time to discuss any questions you have with me is in class or during office

hours. I am available over e-mail to answer brief clarification questions or to set up office hour appointments, but please come to office hours or set up an appointment to discuss anything more substantive. Please also schedule an office hour appointment at least 2 business days in advance. That means if you want to meet on Tuesday, you should be e-mailing to schedule on Friday.

Please also note that this syllabus gives you detailed information about due dates and readings. Read it and refer to it often. Answers to many questions are already provided here.

Please note I do not usually check e-mail after 5pm on weekdays and only rarely over the weekend. Please do not expect prompt replies at this time. However, I will make every effort to reply to your e-mail within 24 hours.

## Reading and Discussion Schedule

The following schedule tells you what readings you should complete *before* each class session. On average, we'll read about 75 pages per class session. Everyone is welcome to read the articles that discussion leaders present, but only the leaders themselves are required to read them.

### 1 Decolonization: Some Working Definitions

**Tuesday, August 30: Introductory (no reading)**

**Thursday, September 1: What is decolonization?**

- Read Jan C Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel, “Decolonization as Moment and Process” from *Decolonization: A Short History* (Google Classroom) [35 pages]
- Read Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” (Google Classroom) [40 pages]

### 2 Hierarchy and Independence

**Tuesday, September 6: *Untouchable***

- Read pages 1–53
- Read chapters 2, 4, 6, and 7 from Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (Google Classroom)

**Thursday, September 8: *Untouchable***

- Read to page 117

### 3 Hierarchy and Reconstruction

#### Tuesday, September 13: *Untouchable*

- Finish the novel.
- Discussion leader pair #1 presents [on Baer, Ben Conisbee. “Shit Writing: Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*, the Image of Gandhi, and the Progressive Writers’ Association.” *Modernism/Modernity* 16, no. 3 (September 9, 2009): 575–95.]

*Prompts for essay #1 distributed*

#### Thursday, September 15: *Wretched of the Earth*

- Read chapters 1–3.
- Group A presents on the colonial and decolonial history of Martinique

### 4 The Postcolonial Moment

#### Tuesday, September 20: *Nervous Conditions*

- Read pages 1–89 (chapters 1–3)
- Group B presents on the colonial and decolonial history of Zimbabwe/Rhodesia
- Bring *Wretched* to class as well.

#### Thursday, September 22: *Wretched of the Earth*

- Read chapter 4.
- Bring *Nervous Conditions* to class as well.

### 5 Nervous Conditions

#### Tuesday, September 27: *Nervous Conditions*

- Read pages 90–154 (chapters 4–5)
- Bring *Wretched* to class as well.
- Discussion leader pair #2 presents [on Aegerter, Lindsay Pentolfe. “A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 15, no. 2 (1996): 231–40.]

## Thursday, September 29: *Wretched of the Earth*

- Read chapter 5 + conclusion.
- Group C presents on the colonial and decolonial history of Algeria
- Bring *Nervous Conditions* to class as well.

*Essay #1 (on Untouchable) due*

## 6 Nervous Conditions

### Tuesday, October 4: *Nervous Conditions*

- Read pages 155–257 (chapters 6–8)
- Bring *Wretched* to class as well.
- Discussion leader pair #3 presents [on Selvick, Stephanie M. “Beyond the Binary: Same-Sex Desire and Gender Defiance in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 49, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 278–90.]

### Thursday, October 6: *Nervous Conditions*

- Finish the novel
- Bring *Wretched* to class as well.
- Discussion leader pair #4 presents [on Rahman, Muzna. “Bodily Secrets: The History of the Starving Body in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 50, no. 3 (July 1, 2014): 275–88.]

## 7 Nervous about Gender

### Tuesday, October 11: Decolonizing Culture

- Read the foreword and preface to *Wretched of the Earth* (pp. vii–lxii)
- Bring *Nervous Conditions* to class as well.

### Thursday, October 13: Colonizing Gender and Sexuality

- Read Lugones, María. “Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System.” *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186–209.
- Read Lugones, María. “Toward a Decolonial Feminism.” *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 742–59.

*Prompts for essay #2 distributed*



## 8 Fall Break: No Class 10/18 and 10/20

## 9 Queer Decolonization

### Tuesday, October 25: *Cereus Blooms at Night*

- Read pp. 1–102 (Part I)
- Group D presents on the colonial and decolonial history of Trinidad and Tobago

### Thursday, October 27: *Cereus Blooms at Night*

- Read pp. 103–188 (finish Part II)
- Discussion leader pair #5 presents [on Hong, Grace Kyungwon. “‘A Shared Queerness’ Colonialism, Transnationalism, and Sexuality in Shani Mootoo’s ‘Cereus Blooms at Night.’” *Meridians* 7, no. 1 (2006): 73–103.]

## 10 Queer Decolonization

### Tuesday, November 1: *Cereus Blooms at Night*

- Read pp. 188–249 (finish the novel)
- Discussion leader pair #6 presents [on May, Vivian M. “Trauma in Paradise: Willful and Strategic Ignorance in *Cereus Blooms at Night*.” *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (2006): 107–35.]
- Discussion leader pair #7 presents [on Lincoln, Sarah L. “Uncanny Communion: Trauma, Touch, and Vegetal Being in *Cereus Blooms at Night*.” *The Global South* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 110–30.]

### Thursday, November 3: *No class (Michael out of town)*

## 11 Decolonizing Ecology

### Tuesday, November 8: Beloit and Beyond Conference (no class)

### Thursday, November 10: *Gun Island*

- Read pp. 1–85
- Read “Stories” from *The Great Derangement*
- Group E presents on the colonial and decolonial history of Bangladesh

*Second essay (on either Nervous Conditions or Cereus Blooms) due.*

## 12 Decolonizing Ecology

**Tuesday, November 15: *Gun Island***

- Read to page 161 (finish Part I)
- Read “History” from *The Great Derangement*

**Thursday, November 17: *Gun Island***

- Read to page 244
- Read “Politics” from *The Great Derangement*

## 13 The Great Derangement

**Tuesday, November 22: *Gun Island***

- Finish the novel
- Discussion leader pair #8 presents [on Kluwick, Ursula. “The Global Deluge: Floods, Diluvian Imagery, and Aquatic Language in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*.” *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 24, no. 1 (2020): 64–78.]

**Thursday, November 24: no class; Thanksgiving**

## 14 Decolonizing Tourism

**Tuesday, November 29: *A Small Place***

- Read the entire text
- Group F presents on the colonial and decolonial history of Antigua

**Thursday, December 1: *A Small Place* (continued)**

- Read Alessandrini, Anthony C. “Small Places, Then and Now: Frantz Fanon, Jamaica Kincaid, and the Futures of Postcolonial Criticism.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46, no. 5 (December 1, 2010): 553–64.
- Bring the novel to class
- Discussion leader pair #9 presents [on Larkin, Lesley. “Reading and Being Read: Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place* as Literary Agent.” *Callaloo* 35, no. 1 (2012): 193–211.]

## 15 Decolonizing Cinema

**Tuesday, December 6: In-class screening of movie elected by students**

**Thursday, December 8: Discussion of movie screening**

*\*Final essay (on either Gun Island or A Small Place) due Monday, December 12.*