

Advanced Feminist/Queer Theories & Methodologies (WGSS 300/ENGL 394-02)

Feminist/Queer Postcolonialism and Postmodernism

S. Sarker

Fall 2008

Class: OM 10

Office: OM 317/Mailbox OM 409

PH: 696-6316

Hours: TuTh 1:20-2:50 p.m.

Office Hours: TuTh 3-4 p.m. & by appt.

e-mail: sarker@macalester.edu

REQUIRED TEXTS

Arenas, Reinaldo. *Before Night Falls*.

Cha, Theresa. *Dictee*.

Trinh Minh-Ha. *When the Moon Waxes Red*.

Wicomb, Zoe. *David's Story*.

Winterson, Jeannette. *Written on the Body*.

FILMS

At Play in the Fields of the Lord

Earth/Fire

RESERVE READINGS

Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy." *Modernity at Large*.
Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. Introduction from *La Frontera/Borderlands*.

Appiah, Anthony Kwame. "Is The 'Post-' in 'Postcolonial' the same as the 'Post-' in 'Postmodern,'" from *Dangerous Liaisons*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Ashcroft, Bill, et al, eds. Extracts from *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Cixous, Helene. "Laugh of the Medusa." From *New French Feminisms*. New York: Schocken, 1981.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. Chapter One from *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" from *Deconstruction in Context*. Ed. Mark Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

de Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.

Foucault, Michel. "Two Lectures" from *Power/Knowledge*. New York: The Harvester Press, 1980.

hooks, bell. Extracts from *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.

Irigaray, Luce. "This Sex which is not One." From *New French Feminisms*.

Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism."

Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: A Selection*. New York & London: Norton, 1977.

Liotard, Jean-Francois. "What is Postmodernism?" from *Postmodernism: A Reader*.

Ratti, Rakesh. *A Lotus of Another Color*. London: Allyson Publishers, 1993.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Planetarity" from *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

There have been many -isms that have changed the way humans think. Examples? (A)theism, Feminism, Marxism . . . Two that are still being debated are "Postmodernism" and "Postcolonialism" in their various forms in science, politics, economy, art, architecture, literature and other cultural practices. This course will introduce a few participants in those discussions, and we will make our own sense of these -isms that have become philosophies in some circles (not all) of the world. The fundamental goal will be to understand the intersections of Postmodernism and Postcolonialism with each other and with Feminism, noting the convergences and divergences of each from the other. Texts include writings by Buchi Emecheta, Linda Nicholson, Jacques Derrida, bell hooks, Anthony Appiah, Helene Cixous, Michel

Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Trinh Minh-ha, Chandra Mohanty, Jacques Lacan, Leila Sebbar, Rakesh Ratti, Julia Kristeva, Gayatri Spivak, as well as films and music for a transnational comparative study.

REQUIRED ACTIVITIES:

I am here to help you create an atmosphere of mutual learning, in which you can discuss texts freely and respect your peers' ability to do so. One of the best methods to sharpen your skill of communication is frequent practice in speaking and writing. Here are the requirements that help you to do so:

- A) Forum
- B) Mini-Essays
- C) Presentation

A) FORUM: an online communication, **every week**. The class will be divided into groups or pairs. Each group will take turns posting an online communication through the class email list. This will require that each of the people in the group or pair must post **BY MONDAY NOON (beginning 9/9)**, ONE question involving any TWO texts assigned for the Tuesday of the upcoming week or the Thursday of the past week; if you choose the latter, avoid ideas/themes addressed in class discussions. The question should be followed by a short comment (maximum 200 words) on the relationship of your query to a theme or topic in a discipline/s of your interest. You may refer briefly to other readings from the syllabus or prior familiarity from other courses but make sure that the connection of ideas to the texts under discussion is made clear. Please imagine questions that elicit responses about the implications of textual content, rather than 'yes'/'no' or factual research. Check email to see if any entries have been posted already, to avoid overlap or repetition.

Everyone in the class must check her/his email to read the entries posted and look for correlations to her/his own opinions, even if you were not assigned to post that week. I will check the entries soon after the deadline and bring them to class for discussion. Any entry arriving after I have checked and collected from the Forum will not be considered for a grade. The forum presenters will open classroom discussion, based on their entries.

B) MINI-ESSAYS: an in-class assignment, **every other week**, where a topic or question as well as a structure will be offered by the instructor and on which you will write for about 30 minutes. The focus will be on the readings for the day and/or recent past sessions; you will have access to your books and notes, and extra credit will be given for using short, relevant quotations (a term, phrase, a maximum of 2 lines) from the assigned materials. The assignment is completed in class; absences cannot be made up or compensated. You will be graded individually.

PLAGIARISM: It is defined as the use of another's ideas without acknowledgement. Since this is a serious matter, please consult a style handbook on the correct way to record another person's opinions; ask me if you are still confused.

C) PRESENTATION:

Verbal interaction will make the class a personally enjoyable experience, strengthen your confidence, and enable you to tackle responses. You will be graded individually on this one-time assignment.

Advantages: Your moment in the spotlight! You may grasp this opportunity to display your individuality in ideas.

Disadvantages: None.

What do you do?

Provide a Title to your talk that indicates your approach.

Outline only the important themes of the texts assigned for that day.

Compare/contrast these texts to one or two previous/outside readings.
Pose a couple of questions based on the themes to elicit discussion.

Time allotted: 20 minutes (please observe time-limit). You may consult me beforehand about the presentation, if you have any questions about organization and format. My suggestion is that the presentation be uninterrupted and that general discussion follow afterwards.

Reminder: Sign up as early in the quarter as you can and make a note of this event in your diary. You are responsible for remembering the date for your presentation. If you have to cancel a scheduled presentation, please let me know well in advance so that someone else may take that slot. You must reschedule but are allowed to do so only once. You are most welcome to come during office hours to discuss oral presentations.

Participation in class discussion is also extremely important. One suggestion that might help you put your thoughts in order is to write comments and questions in your notebook or journal while reading. Class participation is also allotted a percentage of the overall grade.

CONFERENCES: I value individual conferences highly and encourage them since, for all of the above, frequent communication is necessary. My office hours are printed at the head of this information sheet and at the top of the syllabus sheet. Email me or talk with me after class if you wish to make an appointment other than the times indicated. I urge you to take talk to me as often as you like, especially because I take great pride in knowing you individually. Please time your appointments and your questions with at least 24 hours notice. I am not available between Friday noon and Monday noon.

Regular attendance is the basis of good performance on your part, and is an inspiration for me to work harder. A maximum of 2 unexplained absences will be allowed, and it will be your responsibility to get updated on class materials and discussion. I will make a record of your attendance. Remember, attendance also means punctuality - I take that aspect very seriously.

Please see the attached grade-guides (page 4 of syllabus).

P.S. This is a challenging, exciting and rigorous course. You must meet all the requirements outlined above, consistently and productively, so that you may reap the maximum benefit. Inability or unwillingness to write reports or papers, to participate in group discussions in an alert manner, or to present one's honest hesitations and opinions in oral reports, will probably result in great disappointment for you and for me. It will defeat the purpose of exploration.

I have been asked by the relevant office to include the following statement in the syllabus and I am pleased to do so—I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. The Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, will serve as the coordinator for services for students with disabilities. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The Associate Dean can be reached in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, by phone at 651-696-6220, or email llandrem@macalester.edu.

Having said all this, **I WELCOME YOU AND I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS COURSE!!**

S. Sarker

WGS 310 ADVANCED FEMINIST THEORY

Fall 2008

Guide to Grading

For the **Forum, Mini-Essays, and Presentation:**

A for entries that raise thought-provoking questions, establish unique/interesting/significant connections to one’s disciplinary interests, within/between texts, or to issues external to the class, maintain precision and clarity of thought, and provide succinct summaries of relevant ideas discussed.

B for entries that adequately summarize selected/relevant ideas from class-discussion, establish a valid and straightforward connection to one’s disciplinary interests.

C for entries that summarize ideas in a sketchy manner, leave connections unclear, and dwell on obvious details that are not stimulating in their significance.

A+	100 - 97
A	96 - 94
A-	93 - 91
A-/B+	90
B+	89 - 87
B	86 - 84
B-	83 - 81
B-/C+	80
C+	79 - 77
C	76 - 74
C-	71 - 73
C-/D+	70
D+	69 - 67
D	66 - 64
D-	63 - 61
F	60 and below

When averaging final grades, any number at the upper limit that carries a +0.5 value will be rounded to the next highest number at the discretion of the instructor – for instance, a final average of 89.5 could become 90, meaning a final grade of A-/B+ rather than a B+ (which is not bad in itself). That will enhance the value of your participation, give you some advantage, and a lot of credit!

GRADE DISTRIBUTION FOR THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Mini-essays	30%
Oral Presentation	20%
Forum	20%
Participation	20%
Attendance	10%

If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to talk to me.

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Week 1

Th 8/28 Introduction

Week 2

T 9/2 **The Organizing Principles: Language**
De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (reserve)--pp. 7-17, 65-70; "Constitutive Graphonomy," *The Postcolonial Reader* (reserve).

Th 9/4 Cha, 44-75; De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (reserve)--pp. 71-78, 114-122; "Relexification" from *The Postcolonial Reader* (reserve).

Week 3

T 9/9 **The Organizing Principles: Sex, Gender, Subjectivity**
Lacan, Chapters 1 and 8 from *Ecrits* (reserve); Irigaray, extract from *This Sex which is not One in New French Feminisms*, pp. 99--106 (reserve).
MINI-ESSAY

Th 9/11 "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" in *The Postcolonial Reader* (reserve); Hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" in *Yearning* (reserve); Trinh, "A Minute Too Long" from WTM, pp. 107-116.

Week 4

T 9/16 Cha, 154-179; Derrida, "Differance" (pp. 396-420) from *Deconstruction in Context* (reserve).

Oral presentations begin

PRESENTATION 1

Th 9/18 Winterson 9-48; Arenas Introduction and 1-53; "Some Thoughts on Bisexuality" (*Lotus*, reserve).

Week 5

T 9/23 **The Organizing Principles: Truth and Reason**
Winterson 48-88; Arenas 53-93; Foucault, "Lecture 1" (reserve).
MINI-ESSAY

Th 9/25 Winterson 89-120; Arenas 93-136; Foucault, "Lecture 2" (reserve); Trinh, "Yellow Sprouts" from WTM, pp. 1-8.

PRESENTATION 2

Week 6

T 9/30 Arenas 136-175; Winterson 123-161; Jean-Francois Lyotard "What is Postmodernism?" (reserve); Trinh, "Cotton and Iron" from WTM, pp. 11-26. **PRESENTATION 3**

Th 10/2

The Organizing Principles: The Body of/in The Nation
Arenas 175-224; Winterson 161-190; Cha 1-41.

Week 7

T 10/7 Arenas 224-273; Cha 78-119; Hooks, "Postmodern Blackness" in *Yearning* (reserve).
MINI-ESSAY

Th 10/9 Arenas 273-317; Cha 123-151; "Sexuality, Identity, and the Uses of History" (*Lotus*, reserve). **PRESENTATION 4**

Week 8

T 10/14 **Economies and Cultures**
Appiah, "Is the Post- in..." (reserve); Trinh, "The World as Foreign Land" from WTM, pp. 185-192; Spivak, "Planetary" from DD, pp. 71-92. **PRESENTATION 5**

Thursday 10/16-Sunday 10/19 FALL BREAK

Week 9

T 10/21 Wicomb 5-42; Trinh, "The World as Foreign Land" from WTM, pp. 192-199; Spivak, "Planetary" from DD, pp. 92-102.
MINI-ESSAY

Th 10/23 Wicomb 42-96; Trinh, "Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear" from WTM, pp. 53-62 and "All-Owning Spectatorship," pp. 81-92. **PRESENTATION 6**

Week 10

T 10/28 Wicomb 96-133; Trinh, "All-Owning Spectatorship" from WTM, pp. 92-105; Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy" (reserve). **PRESENTATION 7**

Th 10/30 Wicomb 133-171; Deleuze and Guattari, 3-10 (reserve); Trinh, "The Other Censorship" from WTM, pp. 225-235.

Week 11

T 11/4 Wicomb 172-213; Deleuze and Guattari, 10-12; Fredric Jameson, extract from *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (reserve).
MINI-ESSAY

Th 11/6 Wicomb Afterword; Deleuze and Guattari, 12-18; "No Apologies" (*Lotus*, reserve). **PRESENTATION 8**

Week 12

T 11/11 Deleuze and Guattari, 18-25; "Breaking Silence" (*Lotus*, reserve).
MINI-ESSAY

Th 11/13 Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa" 245--253 (reserve); "Inverting Tradition" (*Lotus*, reserve); Trinh, "L'innecriture" from WTM, pp. 119-135. **Submit class report on this session.**

Week 13

T 11/18 Trinh, "L'innecriture" from WTM, pp. 135-145; Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 253--264 (reserve). **PRESENTATION 9**

Th 11/20 REDOINGS—Cha, Wicomb, and an essayist of your choice.

Week 14

Th 11/25 REPOSITIONINGS – Spivak, Arenas, and an essayist of your choice.
MINI-ESSAY

Thursday 11/27-Sunday 11/30

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15

T 12/2 REMAKINGS – Winterson, Trinh, and an essayist of your choice.

PRESENTATION 10

Th 12/4 RECOMBINATIONS – you choose them all!