

Icons, Ideas, Instruments: Women Writers of India and the Diaspora

S. Sarker

Fall 2013 WGSS 220

Preceptor: Kelsey Woida

Class: Old Main 9

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Hours: W 7-10 pm

Office Hours: MW 4:30-6pm/appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

India is still described as "exotic" in current cultural vocabularies, by Indians and others. We will investigate the material realities on which these cultural vocabularies rest, through the mirrors held up by Indian women writers who are this nation-state's citizens, expatriates, and diasporans. These writers' historico-political contexts, tussles with language, and other self-imagings, create a compelling force in developing the idea of "India" and its relationships to East Africa, North America and Western Europe.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Desai, Anita. *Clear Light of Day*. New York: Mariner, 2000.
Deshpande, Shashi. *The Binding Vine*. New York: The Feminist Press, 2001.
Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *Heat and Dust*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.
Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*. New York: Signet, 2002.
Mukherjee, Bharati. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove, 1989.
Syal, Meera. *Anita and Me*. New York: New Press, 1996 (not in bookstore)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (on Moodle course page):

- Dasgupta, Sayantani and Samita. "Journeys." In *Our Feet Walk the Sky*. pp. 123-130.
Desai, Anita. "The Indian Writer's Problems." *Perspectives on Anita Desai*. Ed. Ramesh K. Srivastava. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1984.
Deshpande, Shashi. "No Man is an Island."
Mani, Lata. "Contentious Traditions." In *Recasting Women*. Eds. K. Sangari and S. Vaid. NJ: Rutgers UP, pp. 88-126.
Mohanty, Chandra. "Under Western Eyes." In *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*. Eds. L. Chrisman and P. Williams. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 196-220.
Namjoshi, Suniti. Extracts from *Feminist Fables*.
Parmar, Pratibha. "That Moment of Emergence." In *Queer Looks*. Eds. M. Gevert, P. Parmar, and J. Greyson. New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 3--11.
Ratti, Rakesh, ed. Extracts from *A Lotus of Another Color*. Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1993.
Roy, Arundhati. "A Writer's Responsibility."
Suleri, Sara. "'Woman Skin Deep.'" *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 244-256.
Visweswaran, Kamala. "Predicaments of the Hyphen." In *Our Feet Walk the Sky*, pp. 301-312.

REQUIREMENTS:

Your participation is the key to making this course intellectually stimulating and socially vibrant. Our careful reflection on what you and others are saying, and on communicating your different opinions with both respect and precision will make these following tasks exciting:

- A. Forum (including Reserve Readings, radio/other news sources, textbook bibliographies)
- B. Moderator
- C. Oral presentations
- D. Mini-essays

A) FORUM: You will be part of a group and submit entries when it is the turn for your group. Each of you in the group must post on Moodle, **BY TUESDAY MIDNIGHT**, ONE question on one or more of the texts assigned for the Wednesday of the upcoming week.

Check Moodle to read the list of questions already posted, to look for correlations, before you post your entry. Reflect briefly on an aspect of the past week's discussion if you consider it relevant. The question and comment, no longer than 200 words, should relate to a point of personal interest in the materials assigned. Please imagine questions that elicit responses about the implications of textual content, rather than 'yes'/'no' or factual research.

Class discussions will be based partly on the forum entries. Please be prepared to summarize your point in class as a quick refresher. Please make sure you know when your turn is due. You will be graded individually, based on your own entry. When you miss your turn, 5 points will be deducted from your grade and you should wait for the next time your turn is due. For grading guidelines, please see page 4 of this syllabus.

B) MODERATOR: every session, I will select some of you to structure and lead discussion for a small portion of the class. The moderators will be selected randomly; s/he will synthesize the responses submitted on Moodle, decide a focus topic, and present issues based on that topic, in the form of questions or observations, for the class to discuss. If there is an oral presentation scheduled for that session, it will be presented first and the moderator will integrate issues into the already-prepared structure. You will be graded individually.

C) ORAL PRESENTATIONS: a **one-time** in-class activity on which you are graded individually. It is based on the material assigned for the date that you sign up. The presentations can be supplemented with other texts, artwork, or audio/video clips (no more than 2-3 minutes of excerpt) but must be based mainly on your analysis of the readings for the day, not on summary.

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

Disadvantages: None.

What do you do?

- Provide a Title to your presentation that indicates your approach;
- Outline one or two specific aspects/themes/ideas of the texts for that day; points will be deducted for summarizing;
- Pose a couple of questions based on the themes to elicit discussion.

Time allotted: **20 minutes maximum** (please observe time-limit). You are most welcome to consult me beforehand about the presentation, if you have any questions about organization and

format. My suggestion is that the presentation be uninterrupted, followed by general discussion.

Reminder: Sign up for the oral presentation as early as you can and make a note of this event. You are responsible for remembering the date. If you have to cancel a scheduled presentation, please let me know well in advance. You must reschedule but may do so only once.

D) MINI-ESSAYS: an in-class assignment in which a prompt as well as a structure will be offered by the instructor and on which you **will write for about 30 minutes in class.** The focus will be on the readings for the recent past sessions; you will have access to your books and notes, and extra credit will be given for using short, relevant quotations from the assigned materials. The assignment is completed and will be collected in class; absences cannot be made up or compensated. You will be graded individually. There will be an option to revise up to 2 of the mini-essays during the last weeks of this semester.

PLAGIARISM is defined as the use of another's ideas without acknowledgement. Since this is considered a serious matter, please consult a style handbook on the correct way to record another person's opinions; ask a librarian or me, if you are still confused. Please visit www.clic.edu/plagiarism/index for a very informative tutorial.

Participation in class discussion, in the online forum, and in oral presentations, is extremely important. One suggestion is to write comments/questions in your notebook while reading and/or consulting past class notes.

CONFERENCES: I value individual conferences highly and encourage them since, for all of the above, frequent communication is necessary. My office hours are printed on pages 1 and 6 of this syllabus. Leave a note, with your telephone number, in my mailbox (or slip it under my office door), or e-mail me, or talk with me after class if you wish to make an appointment other than the times indicated, for any aspect of the class. I urge you to take advantage of this practice; I take great pride in knowing you individually. Please time your appointments or questions with at least 24 hours notice, if not visiting during office hours. I am not available between Friday 5 p.m. and Monday noon.

Regular attendance is the basis of good performance and is an inspiration for me to work harder. I will make a record of your attendance. Remember, attendance also means punctuality, an important aspect of your membership in the class. **Absences:** you may have 2 unexplained absences. Otherwise, please inform me in advance, by email, voicemail, or in person if you plan to be absent. When it is an emergency, please leave a message as soon as possible.

Please see the Grade-guide on page 4 of this syllabus.

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.

P.S. This is an exciting and rigorous course. You must meet all the requirements, consistently and productively, so that you may reap the maximum benefit. Inability to complete the various

assignments, to participate in an alert manner, or to present one's original and honest opinions, will result in great disappointment for you and for me. It will defeat the purpose of exploration.

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

S. Sarker

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Guide to Grading

W 7-10pm

For the Forum:

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, eg., 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 performance, and give you some advantage and a lot of credit!

GRADE DISTRIBUTION FOR THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

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

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

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WEEK 1

Wednesday, September 4

Introduction

WEEK 2

Wednesday, September 11

Markandaya, chapters 1-14; Mohanty (reserve); Roy (reserve).

WEEK 3

Wednesday, September 18

Markandaya, chapters 15-30; Mani (reserve).
PRACTICE MINI-ESSAY.

Thursday, September 19

7pm, Harmon Room: screening and discussion of excerpts from films.

WEEK 4

Wednesday, September 25

Discussion of films (contd.); review of Markandaya; Jhabvala, pp. 1–55. PRESENTATION #1

WEEK 5

Wednesday, October 2

Jhabvala, pp. 55--137; Suleri (reserve). MINI-ESSAY #1.

WEEK 6

Wednesday, October 9

Jhabvala, pp. 137-181; Desai, chapter I;
PRESENTATION #2.

WEEK 7

Wednesday, October 16

Jhabvala review; Desai, chapter II; Desai's "The Indian Writer's Problems" (reserve). MINI-ESSAY #2.

WEEK 8

Wednesday, October 23

Desai, chapter III; Desai article contd.; extracts from Namjoshi; Review.
PRESENTATION #3.

Friday, October 25 – Sunday, October 27 FALL BREAK

WEEK 9

Wednesday, October 30

Mukherjee, chapters 1-17; Namjoshi contd.; Parmar (reserve); extracts from Alexander. PRESENTATION #4.

WEEK 10

Wednesday, November 6

Mukherjee, chapters 18-26; Dasgupta (reserve); extracts from Ratti's *Lotus of Another Color*; Alexander review; PRESENTATION #5.

WEEK 11

Wednesday, November 13

Mukherjee review; Ratti discussion contd.; Deshpande, part One; Deshpande essay (reserve); Syal, chapters 1-5; MINI-ESSAY #3.

WEEK 12

Wednesday, November 20

Deshpande, parts Two and Three; Syal, chapters 6-8; Visweswaran (reserve); PRESENTATION #6.

WEEK 13

Wednesday, November 27

Deshpande, part Four and Afterword; Syal, chapters 9-13 MINI-ESSAY #4.

Fri, November 29—Sun, December 1 Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 14

Refresh and Review

Optional Mini-Essay Revisions DUE Thursday, December 12, by 5 p.m. through Macalester Email