

LEH 300: Colonial Cultures

Thursdays, 2:00-4:30 (R01W) and 6:00-8:40 (XH82W)

Dr. Joe Sramek (jsramek@yahoo.com)

Office: Carman 292, phone #: 718-960-7323

Office hours: Thursdays, 4:30-5:30 and by appointment

Email: jsramek@yahoo.com

This course examines the cultural aspects of British imperialism in India, Africa, and modern-day Britain, drawing upon the academic disciplines of history, literature, cinema, psychology, and anthropology. The major aim of the course will be to study how the identities of colonizers and colonized peoples were shaped through the “colonial encounter” with particular attention being paid to the roles of race, class, and gender. In addition to providing students with a basic historical and theoretical understanding of British imperialism, the course will consist of us reading several colonial novels and short stories as well as watching various colonial films.

BOOKS FOR PURCHASE

The following five books will be read during the semester and are available for purchase at the college bookstore. However, students may also use other editions. Often, inexpensive editions of the novels we will be reading are available via Amazon Marketplace, Alibris.com, Abebooks.com, and other used book websites.

- E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1924). ISBN: 0156711427
- H. Rider Haggard, *She* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004 [1887]). ISBN: 0760752400
- Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Boston Press, 1990 [1957]). ISBN: 0807003018
- Timothy H. Parsons, *The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999). ISBN: 0847688259
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (New York: Vintage, 2000). ISBN: 0375703861

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

- 3 essays (~5-7 pages each): 25% each
- Class participation: 25%

This is a writing-intensive course at the 300-level. Therefore, over the course of the semester, I will expect approximately twenty pages of satisfactory written work from you. After the first unit on various theoretical approaches to the study of British imperialism, we shall examine three case studies for studying the cultural aspects of British imperialism: the British Raj in India; British colonialism in Africa; and, lastly, contemporary post-imperial Britain. For each unit, I will ask you to write a five- to seven-page typewritten and proofread essay analyzing the films, short stories, and/or novels assigned during that unit in relation to the various theoretical

approaches discussed at the beginning of the course. Each of these essays will be worth 25% each toward your final course grade. The questions for these essays shall be provided by me in advance.

Finally, because this is a participation-centered course, the last quarter of your final course grade shall be comprised of my evaluation of your participation in class discussions as well as your performance on several in-class writing exercises (which shall be informally graded “check+,” “check,” or “check-”).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: Theoretical approaches to studying British imperialism

- February 1 Introduction to class; in-class background lecture on the British Empire
- Parsons, *British Imperial Century*, pp. 1-90, 119-139
- February 8 Imperial roles: the colonizer and the colonized
- Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, pp. 5-18, 79-89, 90-118 (“Does the colonial exist?,” “Mythical portrait of the colonized,” and “Situations of the colonized”)
 - George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant” (handout)
 - Ann Laura Stoler, “Cultivating Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves” (handout)
- February 15 NO CLASS: “CUNY MONDAY”
- February 22 Colonial representation and imperialism
- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1-49, 226-254 (handout)
 - Jeffrey Richards, “Imperial Heroes for a Post-Imperial Age: Films and the End of Empire” (handout)

Part II: The British Raj

- March 1 Rudyard Kipling’s India
- FILM: *Gunga Din* (1939)
 - Kipling, “The Man Who Would Be King” (1888) (handout)
 - Kipling, “Gunga Din” (handout)
- March 8 E.M. Forster’s India
- Class discussion of Forster, *A Passage to India*, chaps. 1-13
- March 15 Forster’s India (cont’d)
- Class discussion of Forster, *A Passage to India*, chaps. 14-24

- March 22 Forster's India (cont'd)
- Class discussion of Forster, *A Passage to India*, chaps. 25-37
 - **PAPER #1 DUE (20%)**

PART III: British Colonialism in Africa

- March 29 British Colonialism in Africa
- FILM: *Four Feathers* (1939)
 - British short-story on Africa?
 - Possibly a short essay on African colonial history?

April 5 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

- April 12 H. Rider Haggard's Africa
- Class discussion of Haggard, *She*, chaps. 1-16

- April 19 Haggard's Africa (cont'd)
- Class discussion of Haggard, *She*, chaps. 17-28
 - **PAPER #2 DUE (20%)**

Part IV: "The Empire Comes Home"

- April 26 Post-Imperial Britain
- FILM: *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) [another film?]
 - Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, pp. 43-71 (handout)
 - Salman Rushdie, "The New Empire within Britain" (handout)

- May 3 "The Empire Comes Home", or Comes Back to Haunt All of Us: Zadie Smith's Modern-Day London
- Class discussion of Smith, *White Teeth*, chaps. 1-7

- May 10 Zadie Smith's London (cont'd)
- Class discussion of Smith, *White Teeth*, chaps. 8-14

- May 17 Zadie Smith's London (cont'd)
- Class discussion of Smith, *White Teeth*, chaps. 15-20
 - **PAPER #3 DUE (20%)**