HUM 4826: Postcolonial Theory  
Spring 2016 Syllabus

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Shelley Park  
Office: Orlando: PSY 239; Brevard: Bldg 4, Rm 145  
Office hours: Orlando: T noon-2, virtual as needed; Brevard by appt.  
E-mail: Please contact me at course mail for matters pertaining to the class. For non-course related matters only, use Shelley.Park@ucf.edu

Course Description:

This course serves as an interdisciplinary overview of postcolonial philosophy, literature, film, art and cultural theory. It provides a historical overview of colonial and postcolonial discourses, with particular attention to the critical vocabulary that has emerged in the last half-century to describe both colonial practices and postcolonial experiences and strategies of resistance. We will interrogate how the struggle against Western colonization leads to a critique of Western
thought and culture, with a focus on questions (and place) of identity, history, nation, race and gender. We will also examine the significance of poststructuralist theory and postmodernism for our understanding of postcolonial theory and practice.

Questions to be addressed include the following: What conceptual backgrounds inform particular ways of understanding, representing and colonizing a culture? Is European humanism a "colonizing" discourse? How is the East represented in the West? What are the meeting places of the global North and the global South? How have "scientific and scholarly" works contributed to colonial practices and policies? How do complex social, political, and philosophical ideas contribute to the ways in which we perceive those who are other than us? How do these same ideas give rise to the potential “self-colonization” of the other? How does understanding colonialism and past and present struggles against colonialism help us to understand contemporary national and international struggles over cultural and political identities, norms and practices? What does it mean to define our contemporary world in terms of a “transnational age”? How might postcolonial theory help us to understand the period of multiraciality, dislocations and globalization in which we live?

Our discussions will attend not only to the subjects (and contents) of these theories and their elaborations, but also to the rhetoric of their arguments (how they say what they say, to what ends, with what audiences in mind, and how they position themselves vis-à-vis these audiences) and to the embodiment of these arguments in non-written forms (for example, art and political protest).

**Learning Objectives:**

The objectives for the class are as follows:

1. To provide you with an understanding of the historical contexts, geographical scope and political consequences of European colonization, anti-colonial resistance, the emergence of postcolonial nationhood, and the subsequent global order we experience today.

2. To introduce you to the powerful creative responses to European colonialism by members of the postcolonial world, both historically and today.

3. To encourage you to engage critically with the issues and texts these creative works address.

4. To provide you with a critical vocabulary for discussing the practices of colonialism and the experiences and creative strategies of postcolonial subjects.

5. To enable you to demonstrate the ability to analyze and interpret the literary, scientific, visual and cultural texts we study from multiple critical and theoretical perspectives attentive to different configurations of power and privilege.
6. To enable you to discuss (both orally and in written form) a wide range of questions and problems facing our contemporary postcolonial world.

7. Finally, through a focus on the postcolonial, the course also aims to satisfy the broader goals and objectives of our Humanities program and the Philosophy department including:

- Developing critical thinking and writing skills.
- Developing skills of visual literacy and aesthetic analysis
- Reading, analyzing and responding to both primary texts and secondary materials.
- Synthesizing ideas drawn from diverse disciplines
- Developing diversity competencies
- Integrating primary and secondary texts into student writing and presentations.
- Developing arguments about (literary, scientific, visual, performative and social) texts.

**Required Texts:**

This course will introduce you to some of the key works that argue for a link between western enlightenment ideals and colonialism, written by anti-colonialist theorists trained in western theory. Readings for the class will range across literary genres (philosophy, literature, science) and visual representations and engage a (sometimes difficult) selection of critical and theoretical texts by scholars who have come to define the field of postcolonial studies, such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, and others. The critical readings are not simply intended as a key to understanding the written and visual texts we’ll study, but as a crucial part of the broader conversation that has emerged between philosophical, literary, scientific, visual, and critical cultural productions.

*Critical readings* will include the following (all required):

Primary texts (in the order we will use them):

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967)

Articles from other authors (e.g. David Eng, Coco Fusco, María Lugones, Trinh Minh-ha, Gayatri Spivak) will be made available online.

*Visual texts* to be used in class include films (shorts and features, fictional and documentary), paintings, sculptures, photographic series, performance and installation art. If you miss class, you are responsible for ensuring you are familiar with materials presented in class. I will attempt
to keep an accurate listing of these on the course website as we go (with links if available). However, you should also check with a classmate.

Course Requirements and Assignments:

More detailed descriptions of each assignment are available at the HUM 4826 course website at the “Assignments” link.

1. Attendance (ongoing) 15%

The best learning happens within the context of a learning community in which each student is an active participant. Since you cannot participate—even as a listener—if you are not present, I will take attendance. Attendance is worth 15 points. You are permitted 2 unexcused absences during the term. For each further unexcused absence, you will lose 1 point. Please note that I also expect you to be present for the full class period, both for your own learning and in order not to disrupt the class. You will lose half a point, if you arrive late or leave early.

2. Participation (ongoing) 15%

Your informed participation is critical to both your own learning and the learning of your classmates. So please come to class prepared to discuss the assigned texts. This portion of your grade will reflect the quantity and quality of your oral participation in class as well as your participation in online surveys and discussions as assigned. Please see the course website for weekly participation assignments.

3. Presentation and Annotated Bibliography 10%

You are required to make an 8-10 minute presentation on research pertaining to our reading assignments. The presenter(s) must also prepare an annotated bibliography of 2-3 sources to be shared with class members. These sources may be visual or written. Student presentations will occur throughout the term starting in Week 3. 15 minutes will be allotted to allow for discussion of the material presented.

4. Midterm Exam 10%

Prior to spring break, you will be examined on your comprehension of primary concepts and themes covered thus far.

5. Analysis of a Cultural Artifact (rough draft): 15%

A brief essay (5-6 pages) demonstrating your ability to apply postcolonial theories by analyzing a cultural artifact (film, novel, photograph, news story, etc.) of your choosing. This draft will be submitted for peer and instructor review during the second half of the semester.
6. **Peer Review 10%**

You will provide 2 of your peers with feedback on their draft essay. This portion of your grade will reflect the quantity and quality of your efforts to provide constructive suggestions aimed at helping your classmates to further develop and refine their drafts prior to final submission.

7. **Analysis of Cultural Artifact (final draft): 25%**

Your earlier cultural analysis (above) will be revised, expanded and developed in accordance with feedback received from peers and instructor during the peer review period at the end of the semester. This final essay (8-10 pages) will be submitted during exam week.

**Evaluation and Grading**

Each individual assignment will be graded on a point system. Final grades will be assigned as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 100</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
<td>Very good</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 62</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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**Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule for further information. I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. In other words, don't cheat on exams or plagiarize words or ideas from others. Always cite your sources. I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not ask me (or expect me) to change your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

**Academic Activity Verification/Financial Aid**

All instructors/faculty are required to document students’ academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please introduce yourself to the class in the online “Introductions” forum by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.
Missed Assignments/Make-Ups/Extra Credit

Late assignments will be docked a half letter grade for each calendar day they are late. I will not accept any assignment more than one week late, unless there are extenuating circumstances related to UCF’s excused absence policy.

Opportunities for extra credit may be provided during the course of the semester at the instructor's discretion. When offered, they will be offered to all students and not just to some. Please do not ask for extra-credit at the end of the semester, as it is too late at that point to remedy a lack of learning during the semester.

Disability Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course should contact me at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Accessibility Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Course Schedule: Daily schedule will be made available on the course website. Links to assignment descriptions (such as specific homework assignments), online readings, and a variety of other online sources we will use in class will also be available at the “Modules” link. This will be updated as we go.