

**HON412: “Seas of Stories”: Postcolonial Literature and Theory  
Spring 2018**



**Professor: Justine K. Van Meter**

Office: DH150B

Office Hours: T 1-2:00, by appointment, and by email (“virtual” hours)

**E-Mail: [vanmeter@chapman.edu](mailto:vanmeter@chapman.edu)**

**Catalog Description:**

Prerequisite, acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor. Using an interdisciplinary approach, we will explore diverse “seas of stories” (as Salman Rushdie terms it) from various parts of the world. We will focus on key issues involved in postcolonial theory as well as the complexities, possibilities, and challenges of this particular theoretical approach to the study of literature and culture.

**Course Objectives/Outcomes:**

In this course, we will read authors and theorists who explore how their cultures, identities, and stories have been interrupted and/or transformed by colonial and postcolonial contacts between East and West. Our study of these authors and their works will primarily be structured around issues that are prevalent within the field of “Postcolonial Studies.” In exploring diverse “seas of stories” that flow between East and West, we will have a greater understanding of the contexts in which these authors are writing and of the issues that comprise this emerging field. We will particularly focus on **anti-colonialism, Orientalism, gender matters, the notion of hybridity, and postcolonial gothicisms.**

**Major Topics Covered:**

- Diverse experiences, definitions and expressions of culture and identity.
- Major historical figures and theorists in the field of “Postcolonial Studies.”
- Postcolonial interpretations/approaches to reading literature.
- Storytelling and stories as creators of community, culture, identity, and nation.
- The “Self,” the “Other,” and the “in-between.”

### Honors Program Learning Outcomes:

- Obtain a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- Sharpen the ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- Understand how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- Develop effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

### General Education Learning Outcomes:

In addition to the outcomes specified above, this course also satisfies the following General Education areas:

- 7AI (Artistic Inquiry): Students compose critical or creative works that embody or analyze conceptually an artistic form at a baccalaureate/pre-professional level.
- 7SI (Social Inquiry): Students explore processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives.

### Required Texts:

Faqir, *Pillars of Salt*

McPherson, *The Weir*

Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

Handouts (posted on Blackboard)

### Requirements:

- I. Readings and informal writing assignments: as you will notice on the syllabus, there are many materials that will be posted on Blackboard. Each of these **must be printed out AND brought to class** on the day on which they are to be read (and I will be checking to make sure that you have them!). **Additionally, if it becomes clear that readings are not completed by the day they are due, quizzes will be added and they will be very difficult! Please also note that there are various informal writing assignments (to be announced throughout the semester). Each of these must be submitted on the date due or a 25 point deduction will be taken for each missed assignment.**
- II. Essay 1 (200 points): Information will be distributed at a later date.
- III. Essay 2 (300 points): your presentation at the end of the semester will be based on this essay (more on this later!). **No late papers accepted!**
- IV. Presentation (100 points): More information will be distributed as this assignment approaches.

- V. Final Exam (300 points): The final will be comprehensive and will involve a choice of essays and short answers. More on this later!
- VI. Participation/Attendance (100 points): It is more than likely that, at this point in the syllabus, you are aware that your active participation in this class is necessary. We are in this together, to critically explore and examine a variety of texts, images and ideas; as such, all of our voices must be heard!

With regard to attendance, excessive unexcused absence (meaning any absence that is not cleared with me **prior** to class and that is not legitimized by either a doctor's/coach's/dean's note or by other satisfactory reason) or excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade according to the table shown below:

|                       |                               |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Absence #3            | 20 point deduction            |
| Absence #4-5          | 50 point deduction            |
| Absence #6 and beyond | Failure in the class          |
| Tardies               | 3 Tardies=1 Unexcused Absence |

**Academic Integrity:** I am assuming that you are all extremely bright and eager students; as such, you are expected to be fully aware and respectful of Chapman's Academic Integrity policy (as described in your Student Handbook). We will discuss guidelines regarding citation throughout the semester, but if you have any questions or doubts at any time, please put your mind (and writing) at ease and discuss them with me.

**Chapman University's Students with Disabilities Policy:** In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Disability Services Office, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

**Special Note:** Please do not use laptops/cell phones during class time; to do so means that you will be marked as absent for the day! If there is an emergency or circumstance in which one or both of these is required, please let me know before class begins.

**Grades:** I am painfully aware of the emphasis that we all place on the grades that we receive. Although I have listed below the point values/percentages assigned to the various course requirements, I would like to remind you to please keep in mind as we proceed that *learning* is a process, one which points and percentages are very often incapable of measuring (corny, but true). Enjoy the process!

|               |                    |              |    |          |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|----|----------|
| Essay 1       | 200 points         | Grade Scale: | A  | 950-1000 |
| Essay 2       | 300 points         |              | A- | 910-949  |
| Final Exam    | 300 points         |              | B+ | 880-909  |
|               |                    |              | B  | 840-879  |
|               |                    |              | B- | 810-839  |
| Presentation  | 100 points         |              | C+ | 780-809  |
| Participation | 100 points         |              | C  | 740-779  |
|               |                    |              | C- | 710-739  |
|               |                    |              | D+ | 680-709  |
|               |                    |              | D  | 640-679  |
|               |                    |              | D- | 610-639  |
|               |                    |              | F  | 0-609    |
| <hr/>         |                    |              |    |          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>1000 points</b> |              |    |          |

**Helpful Resource:**

On the website below, you will find a list of articles about postcolonialism, postcolonial theory, or specific authors/works which might be helpful in the future:

[http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/Literary\\_Criticism/postcolonism/postcolonial\\_link.htm](http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/Literary_Criticism/postcolonism/postcolonial_link.htm)

## Schedule of Classes

\*I reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed.

### Week 1:

|    |       |  |
|----|-------|--|
| T  | 01/30 | Introduction to the Course/Review of Syllabus                                |
| Th | 02/01 | What is the “Postcolonial”? (Informal Response – see Blackboard - due today) |

### Week 2:

|    |       |  |
|----|-------|--|
| T  | 02/06 | (Very, very brief) summary of Empire (handout on Blackboard)<br><b>The “Anticolonial”:</b> Memmi, <i>The Colonizer and the Colonized</i> (handout on Blackboard) |
| Th | 02/08 | Documentary on Frantz Fanon (in class viewing)   |

### Week 3:

|    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| T  | 02/13 | Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> (handout on Blackboard)   |
| Th | 02/15 | <b>The Postcolonial “Moment”:</b> Salih, <i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (reading schedule on Blackboard) |

### Week 4:

|    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| T  | 02/20 | <i>Season of Migration to the North</i>   |
| Th | 02/22 | <i>Season of Migration to the North</i><br>Informal Response due today: contemporary Sudan (see Blackboard) |

### Week 5:

|    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| T  | 02/27 | <b>Orientalism:</b> Said (handout on Blackboard)  |
| Th | 03/01 | <b>Gender Matters:</b> Leila Ahmed, “The Discourse of the Veil” (handout on Blackboard) |

### Week 6:

|    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| T  | 03/06 | The Torah, the Bible, the Quran: Representations of Women in East and West/Islam and Christianity (response assignment on Blackboard) |
| Th | 03/08 | <b>Essay 1 DUE at the beginning of class and as a hard copy. No late papers will be accepted!</b>                                     |

**Week 7:**

|    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| T  | 03/13 | <i>Pillars of Salt</i> (reading schedule on Blackboard) |
| Th | 03/15 | <i>Pillars of Salt</i>                                  |

**Week 8:**

|    |       |                                  |
|----|-------|----------------------------------|
| T  | 03/20 | <b>Spring Break (NO CLASSES)</b> |
| Th | 03/22 |                                  |

**Week 9:**

|    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| T  | 03/27 | <b>Hybridities:</b> The Empire comes “home”: “Britishness” and Black Britain (selections from <i>Writing Black Britain</i> on Blackboard) |
| Th | 03/29 | Continue with <i>Writing Black Britain</i>  |

**Week 10:**

|    |       |  |
|----|-------|--|
| T  | 04/03 | Rushdie, “Imaginary Homelands” (handout on Blackboard)   |
| Th | 04/05 | Bhabha’s “How Newness Enters the World” and “The Third Space Interview” (handouts on Blackboard) |

**Week 11:**

|    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| T  | 04/10 | <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i> (reading schedule on Blackboard) |
| Th | 04/12 | <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i>                                  |

**Week 12:**

|    |       |  |
|----|-------|--|
| T  | 04/17 | Visit with Pico Iyer (tentative)   |
| Th | 04/19 | Finish <i>Haroun</i><br><b>Hauntings: The Postcolonial Gothic</b> and Ireland (handouts on Blackboard) |

**Week 13:**

T 04/24 Ireland and McPherson, *The Weir*

Th 04/26 Ireland and McPherson, *The Weir*  
**Essay 2 DUE at the beginning of class and as a hard copy (No late papers accepted!)**

**Week 14:**

T 05/01 Presentations

Th 05/03 Presentations

**Week 15:**

T 05/08 Presentations

Th 05/10 Presentations

**Final Exam: Tuesday 05/15 (4:15-6:45pm)**