

## English E392– Postcolonial Drama

Spring 2015  
Section #L111  
TF 12:30-1:45  
Room: FN 102

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Office Hours: T 5-7, R 5-6:30, F 3:30-5

### **Course Description:**

This course is a survey of drama from the last seventy-five years which engages with the British Empire. Specifically, we will be looking at dramatic works produced in former British colonies that depict the Empire and the process of colonization, and we will also be looking at works by British playwrights that present the impact of the fall of Empire on Britain. Our discussions will be framed by major issues in postcolonial performance, including the oppression of bodies, the manipulation of languages, the blending of rituals and performance traditions, the dramatization of violence, and the presentation of economic and national conflicts. As such, while the course will be focused on a series of dramatic texts, we will look at those texts as documents for performance – for the bodies, languages and performance venues often become sites for negotiating political and conflicted identities.

The theatre is a place where artists and audiences meet to engage one another through the production and reception of a performance. The study of dramatic literature is necessarily a study of the texts produced and the people and times in which these performances were experienced. As such, we will be exploring the various individuals, places, plays, and trends that helped to shape the dramatic literature of the past and inform the dramatic literature of the present. At the conclusion of this course, students should have an understanding of the development of drama throughout the time period and within particular social, historical, political, and artistic frameworks.

### **Course Philosophy:**

Just as theatre artists and audiences must approach each new project with an open mind, so I ask that you approach each reading with your mind open to new possibilities. As we explore the past and its impact upon the present and future, we will encounter points of view and treatments of subjects that may offend or confound your sensibilities; indeed, the course readings will appear sexist & racist to many modern US readers, and a number of the playwrights we will study have set out to challenge their audiences. Be prepared. While I do not want you to censor your reactions, I do ask that you please view historical documents and traditions as such, and I ask that you contemplate the effectiveness of shocking an audience. Always remember that you are reading this material and considering these events with the eyes of a 21<sup>st</sup> century student. Try to envision, based upon what we know of a particular period, how a text might have been received by that audience, at that time, in that place. You will discover that the fleeting nature of theatre limits such exercises, but acknowledging our biases and the limits of our knowledge will permit us to begin to explore the dramatic past. That said, always be on the lookout for how the past is still with us, and always allow yourself to examine if and how our dramatic traditions have changed throughout history.

### **Course Objectives:**

At the completion of this course, students should have a greater capacity to:

- Be able to place these texts and their subjects within broader literary and performance traditions, including indigenous folk, storytelling, dance and singing traditions, as well as theoretical and historical discussions of the British Empire and its former colonies.
- Be conversant with how playwrights utilize and react to dramatic trends and historical events
- Be able to identify and explain historical developments in dramatic literature within particular social, historical, political and/or artistic frameworks
- Be able to critically analyze plays as texts for performance
- Be able to perform historical research that will enhance their understanding of the text and its reception
- Be able to communicate the above information during class discussions and in written work

**Required Texts and Readings:**

**PLEASE REFER TO THE COURSE SCHEDULE for a complete list of readings and due dates.**

Completely read assigned plays and accompanying introductions before dates listed. Any edition of the plays will serve your needs, but do work to follow along if you have another version. Please bring the plays and other readings to class on the appropriate days.

**Required Texts:**

Gilbert, Helen (ed). *Postcolonial Plays: An Anthology*

Jeyifo, Biodun (ed). *Modern African Drama*

Friel, Brian. *Translations*

Churchill, Caryl. *Cloud Nine*

Teale, Polly. *After Mrs. Rochester*

**iLearn:** Additional articles and out-of-print plays will be available via iLearn. Consult your schedule for details.

**Attendance:**

By enrolling in this course, you have implicitly agreed to be a present and active member of this class.

Production work and other extra-curricular activity are not valid excuses for missing class or being unprepared. *Absenteeism and tardiness will not be tolerated, and excessive amounts (4+ instances) of either will result in at least a 10% reduction in your final course grade, in addition to the obvious impact it will have upon your participation grade.* Be present physically and mentally. ***Shut off the phone.***

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, except in extremely serious cases. If extenuating circumstances develop, please contact CAAS and me as soon as possible so that we can work to keep your academic progress on track.

**Graded Assignments:**

**1. Short Writing Assignments & Participation. 10% (100 points):**

**Short Writing Assignments**

There will be periodic in-class and out-of-class assignments that will comprise part of this grade. These assignments may or may not be announced in advanced. ***Absolutely no make-up short writing assignments will be given.*** Your lowest SWA grade will be dropped.

**Participation**

I expect you to have done the reading and be ready to discuss the texts and their relationships to earlier class discussions. You will be participating in class through lively and intelligent discussion of the texts and application of the material to those texts. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade. **Stay focused – no cell phones or other electronic devices are permitted in class.**

**2. Intercultural Appropriations & Controversies Article Review Paper & Discussion 15% (150 points):**

In order to expose you to two recent controversies about intercultural appropriation and the type of scholarly materials you will need to use for your final paper, we will be having a discussion about scholarly treatments of Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* and David McRuvie's *Kathakali King Lear*; both productions intersect with the major issues we discuss in the class. In addition to participating in the class discussion, you will write a short critical summary of one article from the reading list. Full instructions will follow.

### **3. Exams. 45% (450 points):**

There will be two exams in this course, a midterm worth 20% of your grade and a final worth 25%. Exam dates are listed on the course schedule. No make-up exams will be administered except in the case of dire, unavoidable emergencies or campus closings. The final exam will have one cumulative essay question, options for which will be distributed in advance. Each exam contains quotes & essays, and may include smaller short answer questions.

### **4. Final Research Paper & Presentation 30% (300 points):**

Each student will choose a text from the anthologies & a list of related plays which we have not read in class and write a 12-15 page analytical research paper which explores how the class theories and content are being utilized in that particular play. Presentations will be held on the final day of class and should be a summary of your paper. Full instructions will follow.

### **Assignment Submissions, Extensions and Late Assignments:**

In fairness to students who meet deadlines, *assignments handed in at any time after the beginning of the class period in which they are due will be reduced by one full letter grade* (10% of the point value of the assignment) for each class period it is late; over breaks and exam weeks, the late penalty is applied for each 24-hour period past the due date/time. No incompletes will be granted unless an emergency situation develops.

**I do NOT grant individual extensions.** You know your paper due date months in advance. On opening night you must be off-book, fully painted, hung and focused, etc., and so your paper must be written on the date it is due. No excuses. Save your work to multiple disks. Plan ahead. I will always accept work ahead of time.

**Written assignments are to be submitted to the Assignments section of iLearn unless otherwise noted. I do not accept assignments submitted via e-mail.**

If you know in advance that you will miss a class, I expect you to make arrangements to hand the work in on time and get notes and assignment sheets from a classmate.

### **iLearn, E-Mail, Etiquette and Other Policies:**

- All readings not available in book format will be posted on iLearn. *Consult your schedule.*
- You are in class to learn; be here mentally and physically. Take notes. **Shut off the phone.**
- I will use e-mail to communicate with you. Please check your Marist e-mail regularly.
- Kindly put the course number in the subject line of your e-mail messages, especially if you are not using your Marist account. With all the spam in my inbox, messages entitled "Help!" run the risk of deletion.
- While e-mail is a great communication tool, please remember that you are still addressing a professor. Do not hit that send key until you have taken a moment to reflect upon what you have written. If you respect yourself and present yourself respectfully, the world will take you more seriously than it would if your communications are incomprehensible, full of typos, or generally rude. Remember, it is in print.
- I check email at least once daily on weekdays, but expect a delay on weekends and nights. Please do not email within 24 hours of our class meeting and expect that I will have time to read and respond.
- If you need a quick answer or need to ask a long question, come to my office hours.
- Grades on assignments are not negotiable; if you have questions about an assignment or your grade in the class, then you need to come into my scheduled office hours *with your assignments*. Federal law prohibits faculty from discussing grades over email.
- Unclaimed assignments will only be held until the start of the following semester. Claim them.

**Special requirements or accommodations:**

- If you have any condition that will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it, or which will require extra time in testing situations, please notify me *within the first two weeks* of the class so that appropriate arrangements can be made. An early heads up allows us to work with your situation; a last-minute plea rarely does.
- If you have a disability or other medical condition requiring specific accommodations, please speak with Special Services ([SpecServ@Marist.edu](mailto:SpecServ@Marist.edu)) in order to obtain their assistance and intervention on your behalf. The office provides services that can significantly enhance your learning experience. If you are using their assistance, please notify me early in the semester so that we can be sure that we are working to create an optimal learning environment.
- Extended absences (more than one class period) must be cleared through CAAS.
- If your observance of a religious holiday conflicts with the course schedule, you must also notify me *at least two weeks prior to the holiday* so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- Participation in college-sponsored activities does not excuse you from your responsibilities as a student in this course. You know your schedules ahead of time. Plan accordingly.

**GRADING SCALE:**

A	=	1000-930 points	Outstanding	C	=	769-730 points	Satisfactory
A-	=	929-900 points		C-	=	729-700 points	
B+	=	899-870 points	Very Good	D+	=	699-670 points	Unsatisfactory
B	=	869-830 points		D	=	669-630 points	
B-	=	829-800 points	Good	D-	=	629-600 points	
C+	=	799-770 points		F	=	Less than 600 points	Failure

**Academic Honesty:**

The currency of higher education is knowledge and as you would not steal money, so I expect you not to steal other people's ideas. The exchange of information allows us to improve society and ourselves, but we cannot grow unless we first admit that we need to rely on the thoughts of others to generate our own ideas. When you use someone else's ideas, you must cite that person. When in doubt, cite.

**ANY STUDENT FOUND TO BE IN VIOLATION OF THE MARIST COLLEGE STUDENT HANDBOOK ACADEMY HONESTY CODE AS IT PERTAINS TO OUR CLASS WILL AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE ASSIGNMENT WITH A GRADE OF ZERO AND MAY FACE FURTHER SANCTIONS, INCLUDING FAILURE IN THE COURSE.**

Violations include but are not limited to activities such as plagiarism, which includes copying other artists's work. **If you do not understand how to properly cite sources, *please contact me* and I will gladly walk you through that minefield.**

***Please note that the course schedule is subject to change based on our progress, although readings and assignments will never be due before the published due date.***

		Date	Topic	Required Readings (see iLearn & Anthologies for background, too)	Location	Work Due
1.1	T	1/20	Introduction to the Course			
1.2	F	1/23	Background Theory & History	<b>Poddar &amp; Johnson:</b> Chronology & Maps of the British Empire. <b>Brecht:</b> Excerpts from <i>Brecht on Theatre</i>	iLearn	
2.1	T	1/27	Background, Canada & Apartheid	<b>Thompson:</b> <i>Pink</i> (1986); <b>Fanon:</b> "On National Culture;" <b>Ngugi Wa Thiong'o:</b> "Enactments of Power: The Politics of the Performance Space," sections I-II, VI-XI.	iLearn, Jeyifo, Gilbert	
2.2	F	1/30	South Africa	<b>Maishe Maponya:</b> <i>The Hungry Earth</i> (1979)	Gilbert	
3.1	T	2/3	South Africa	<b>Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona:</b> <i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> (1971)	Jeyifo	
3.2	F	2/6	South Africa	<b>Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona:</b> <i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> (1971)	Jeyifo	
4.1	T	2/10	Nigeria	<b>Wole Soyinka:</b> <i>Death and the King's Horseman</i> (1976)	Jeyifo	
4.2	F	2/13	Nigeria	<b>Wole Soyinka:</b> <i>Death and the King's Horseman</i> (1976)	Jeyifo	
5.1	T	2/17	Nigeria	<b>Femi Osofisan:</b> <i>Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels</i> (1986)	Jeyifo	
5.2	F	2/20	Nigeria	<b>Femi Osofisan:</b> <i>Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels</i> (1986)	Jeyifo	
6.1	T	2/24	Kenya	<b>Ngugi Wa Thiong'o &amp; Ngugi Wa Mirii:</b> <i>I Will Marry When I Want</i> (1982)	Jeyifo	
6.2	F	2/27	Kenya	<b>Ngugi Wa Thiong'o &amp; Ngugi Wa Mirii:</b> <i>I Will Marry When I Want</i> (1982)	Jeyifo	
7.1	T	3/3	Ireland	<b>Brian Friel:</b> <i>Translations</i> (1981)	text	
7.2	F	3/6	Ireland	<b>Brian Friel:</b> <i>Translations</i> (1981)	text	
8.1	T	3/10	Intercultural Appropriations and Controversies Article Review Day		iLearn, Jeyifo	Article Review paper due to iLearn by 9pm Friday 3/6 so that it does not linger into midterms. Discussion is Tuesday 3/10
8.2	F	3/13	Midterm Exam			Midterm in class
<b>Spring Break March 12th - 20th</b>						
9.1	T	3/24	India	<b>Girish Karnad:</b> <i>Hayavadana</i> (1971)	Gilbert	
9.2	F	3/27	India (online discussion)	<b>Girish Karnad:</b> <i>Hayavadana</i> (1971)	Gilbert	
10.1	T	3/31	India	<b>Manjula Padmanabhan:</b> <i>Harvest</i> (1997)	Gilbert	
10	F	4/3	<b>No class- Easter Break</b>			
11.1	T	4/7	India	<b>Manjula Padmanabhan:</b> <i>Harvest</i> (1997)	Gilbert	
11.2	F	4/10	Trinidad	<b>Derek Walcott:</b> <i>Pantomime</i> (1978)	Gilbert	
12.1	T	4/14	Trinidad	<b>Derek Walcott:</b> <i>Pantomime</i> (1978)	Gilbert	
12.2	F	4/17	Egypt	<b>Tawfik Al-Hakim:</b> <i>Fate of a Cockroach</i> (1966)	Jeyifo	
13	T	4/21	<b>No class - Assessment Day</b>			
13.2	F	4/24	Egypt	<b>Tawfik Al-Hakim:</b> <i>Fate of a Cockroach</i> (1966)	Jeyifo	
14.1	T	4/28	Postmodern: UK 1870s & 1970s	<b>Caryl Churchill:</b> <i>Cloud Nine</i> (1979)	text	
14.2	F	5/1	Postmodern: UK 1870s & 1970s	<b>Caryl Churchill:</b> <i>Cloud Nine</i> (1979)	text	Final Research Paper
15.1	T	5/5	Postmodern: Trinidad & UK	<b>Polly Teale:</b> <i>After Mrs. Rochester</i> (2003)	text	
15.2	T	5/8	Postmodern: Trinidad & UK	<b>Polly Teale:</b> <i>After Mrs. Rochester</i> (2003)	text	
16	F	5/15	<b>Final Exam: Friday May 15th 10:30-12:30 am</b>			<b>Final Exam in class</b>