

## Concepts in Postcolonial Theory: Hybridity and Otherness

G41.2900

Instructors: Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and Robert J. C. Young

Tuesdays 6.20-8.20

Room 229, 19UP

**Description:** This course will conduct a detailed examination of two theoretical concepts that have been central to postcolonial theory, otherness and hybridity, both concerned with identity. 'Otherness' is a western philosophical concept that postcolonial theory has primarily sought to critique and repudiate, while hybridity is generally considered an 'invention' of postcolonial thought, a radical substitute for hegemonic ideas of cultural identity like racial purity and nationality.

**Otherness/alterity:** The 'other', variously threat, responsibility, alter ego, and enigma to and of the self, has been a major preoccupation of Western thought. In recent times the figure of the other, hitherto silent and effaced, has made claims to speak, indeed to speak *back*, disrupting the realm of politics in radical ways: thus women, 'natives', minorities, deviants, subalterns, now claim to speak *as* others. Both epistemologically and politically, therefore, the other is central to our contemporary concerns, in the university as well as the larger world. Postcolonial theory has made questions such as the following urgent: what does the 'other' mean to these endeavours? Who is the 'other', historically and symbolically? Do self and other translate inevitably into 'us' and 'them'? How is the other known: is knowledge of the other (always) a form of colonization, domination, violence, or can it be pursued as disinterested truth? Can the other know/speak itself?

We shall begin with a quick survey of some of the key texts of the western tradition that read--or critique—the self in relation to the other (Hegel, Lacan, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Levinas, Charles Taylor); and follow it up with more detailed attention to the postcolonial work that engages with the questions they pose in examining the politics of representation, race, recognition and identity. Texts will include Fanon, Said, Bhabha, Spivak, Fabian, Taussig, Suleri, Jan Mohammed, and a novel by Indra Sinha, *Animal's People* (2007).

**Hybridity:** The concept of hybridity formulated in the work of Homi K. Bhabha in the 1980s was foundational in the development of Postcolonial Studies but has also been subject to some of the most stringent critiques. In this course, we will reconsider some of the original texts, challenges, and subsequent elaborations of the concept. We will begin with a detailed examination of Bhabha's work, and then consider its relation to the earlier use of the concept in literature (Naipaul, Rushdie), linguistics (Bakhtin), translation theory (Benjamin), psychology (Winnicott), as well as later developments in sociology (Hall), anthropology (Canclini, Hannerz), and postcolonial theory (Glissant).

We will focus on the two topics separately as well as in their interconnections, by examining a range of theoretical and literary material through which the conceptual frameworks, the meanings, and the uses of the terms have taken shape in postcolonial studies. Participants will be encouraged to pursue individual research that will allow them to elaborate their own specific ways of conceptualising these issues.

**Course requirements and grading:**

1. Weekly response papers (300 words) for 'Otherness' (in weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8): 10%
2. Mid-term essay (on Otherness), 4000 words, due week 8: 40%
3. Final essay (on Hybridity), 4000 words, due week 14: 40%
4. One Class presentation (on Hybridity): weeks 9-14: 10%

**Otherness section: weekly schedule (weeks 1-7)**

Week 1, September 4: Introduction: Self and other in western philosophy (Hegel); existentialism and ethics (Sartre, de Beauvoir, Levinas, Derrida); psychoanalysis (Lacan); genealogy (Foucault). Connections to postcolonial theory.

Week 2, September 11: Questions of representation (Said, Hartog, Todorov)

Week 3, September 18: Anthropology and the other (Fabian, Taussig, Ghosh, Ramanujam)

Week 4, September 25: Woman, Native, Other (Bhabha, Alloula, Trinh)

Week 5, October 2: Race and Otherness (Fanon, Achebe, Jan Mohammed)

Week 6, October 9: Multiculturalism and minority (Taylor, Mohanty); and Interrogating Alterity (Spivak, Suleri)

\*Week 8, October 23: Human, non-human (Sinha, Hartman, Williams)

**Bibliography: Otherness** (Chapters to be specified)

Achebe, Chinua. 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', *Massachusetts Review* 1978; rpt in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*.

Alloula, Malek. *The Colonial Harem*. Translated by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich. Introduction by Barbara Harlow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex* (1949). Introduction: 'Woman as Other'. Available online at [www2.cddc.vt.edu/marxists/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm](http://www2.cddc.vt.edu/marxists/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm)

Bhabha, Homi. Chapter 3, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism', and Chapter 7, 'Articulating the Archaic: Cultural difference and colonial nonsense', in *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Derrida, Jacques. 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,' in *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Fabian, Johannes *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. Columbia University Press, 1983.

Fabian, Johannes, 'The other revisited: Critical afterthoughts', *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 139-152 (2006). Available online at

Fanon, Frantz. Chapter 5, 'The Fact of Blackness', and Chapter 7, 'The Negro and Recognition', from *Black Skin White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove, 1967.

Foucault, Michel. Chapter 1, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage Books. 1965.

Ghosh, Amitav. 'The Imam and the Indian'. *Granta* 20 (1986): 135-146.

- Hartman, Saidiya. Chapter 3, 'Seduction and the Ruses of Power', of *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; also in *Callaloo*, Volume 19, Number 2, Spring 1996, pp. 537-560.
- Hartog, Francois. *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, tr. J. Lloyd. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford University Press, 1977. Chapter titled 'The Truth of Self-Certainty' which includes a subsection on 'Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage.' (Rpt in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*)
- JanMohamed, Abdul. 'The Economy of the Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature.' *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 59-87.
- Lacan, Jacques. 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977, and revised version, 2002, trans. Bruce Fink. (Rpt in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*)
- Levinas, E. 'Wholly otherwise', in Bernasconi, R. and Critchley, S., editors, *Re-reading Levinas*, London: Athlone Press, 1991; pp. 4-10.
- Levinas, E. *Totality and infinity*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- Levinas, E. *Time and the Other*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- Miller, J. Hillis. *Others*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2001.
- Mohanty, Satya P. 'Colonial legacies, multicultural futures: relativism, objectivity and the challenge of otherness,' *Publication of the Modern Languages Association* 110, 1, 1995: 108-18.
- Mohanty, Satya. 'Us and Them: On the Philosophical Bases of Political Criticism,' *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2 (Spring 1989): 1-31
- Ramanujam, A.K. 'Annaya's Anthropology,' online at [www.indiastar.com/hegde1.html](http://www.indiastar.com/hegde1.html).
- Ricoeur, P. *Oneself as another*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Rosello, M. *Postcolonial hospitality*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1979.
- Said, Edward. 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors.' *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1989).
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. From *Being and Nothingness*.
- Sinha, Indra. *Animal's People*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2007.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Who Claims Alterity?' In B. Kruger and P. Mariani (eds.), *Remaking History*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. From *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Suleri, Sara. 'Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition.' *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Summer 1992): 756-769.
- Suleri, Sara. Chapter 1, 'The Rhetoric of English India', in *Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Taussig, Michael. *Mimesis and Alterity*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Taylor, Charles. 'The Politics of Recognition,' in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America*, trans. Richard Howard. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984.
- Trinh T. Minh-ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Williams, Patricia. Chapter 12, 'On being the Object of Property', in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

### **Hybridity: Weekly schedule (weeks 8-14)**

- \*Week 7, October 16: Introduction: hybridity in theory
- Week 9, October 30: Hybridity in biology, race—Young
- Week 10, November 6: Hybridity in language—Bakhtin
- Week 11, November 13: Hybridity in translation—Benjamin
- Week 12, November 20: Hybridity in culture—Hall, Bhabha, Rushdie
- Week 13, November 27: Hybridity in anthropology—Hannerz, Canclini
- Week 14, December 4: Hybridity in Latin America/Caribbean —Freyre, Brathwaite, Glissant.

### **Bibliography: Hybridity**

- Ahmad, Dohra. (2007) ed. *Rotten English: A Literary Anthology*. New York: WW. Norton
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1981), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, University of Texas Press
- Benjamin, Walter (1996), 'The Task of the Translator', in *Selected Works*, eds Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, Harvard, I, 253-63. Also in *Illuminations*, London, Fontana, 1973
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1994), *The Location of Culture*. London, Routledge
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1990), 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi K. Bhabha'. In Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London, Lawrence & Wishart, 207-221
- Brah, A. and Coombes, Annie E., eds (2000), *Hybridity and its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture*. London, Routledge
- Brathwaite, Edward (1971), *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*. Oxford, Clarendon Press
- Canclini, Néstor Garcia (1995), *Hybrid Cultures. Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press
- Chambers, Iain and Curti, Lidia, eds (1996), *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. London, Routledge.
- Freyre, Gilberto (1946) *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf
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- Hall, Stuart (1987), 'Minimal Selves', in *The Real Me: Post-Modernism and the Question of Identity*. London, ICA Documents 6, 44-6
- Hall, Stuart (1988), 'New Ethnicities', *Black Film British Cinema*. London, ICA Documents 7, 27-31. Reprinted in 'Race', *Culture and Difference*, ed. James Donald and Ali Rattansi. London, Sage, 1992, 252-259
- Hall, Stuart (1990), 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture,*

- Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London, Lawrence and Wishart, 222-37
- Hannerz, Ulf (1996), *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London, Routledge
- Rushdie, Salman (1988), *Midnight's Children*. London, Vintage.
- Rushdie, Salman (1991), *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta
- Walcott, Derek (1990), *Omeros*. London, Faber
- Werbner, Pnina and Modood, Tariq, eds (1997), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*. London, Zed
- Young, Robert J.C. (1995), *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Culture, Theory and Race*. London, Routledge
- Young, Robert J.C. (2000), 'Gilberto Freyre and the Lusotropical Atlantic', in *Terras e gentes. Ano 2000 ANAIS*, Proceedings of the VII congresso Abralic (CD publication, Associação Brasileira de Literatura Comparada, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil); reprinted in *Unisa Latin American Report*, 22:1-2 (2006), 5-21
- Young, Robert J.C. (2003), 'Raï and Islamic Social Space', in *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 69-79

**Texts:**

The following texts are required and will be available at the book-store:

- Ahmad, Dohra. (2007) ed. *Rotten English: A Literary Anthology*. New York: WW. Norton
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1994), *The Location of Culture*. London, Routledge.
- Rushdie, Salman (1988), *Midnight's Children*. London, Vintage.
- Sinha, Indra. *Animal's People*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2007.
- Young, Robert J.C. (1995), *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Culture, Theory and Race*. London, Routledge

The rest of the material will be made available in course-packs.