

V41.0975.002 Topics: Post-Colonial:
Thurs 2.00pm-4.45pm

Colonial Modernisms

Robert JC Young

rjy2@nyu.edu

13 University Place, room 514

Office hours: Tuesdays 11.00-12.30

Wednesdays: 4.00-5.30

In the twentieth century, it was not only Anglo-Saxon Americans, colonials and emigrés who came to the imperial centres of London and Paris. Much twentieth-century Commonwealth or postcolonial (particularly Caribbean) literature was written in London, although its writers are usually treated as a separate tradition from the Modernists in a literary version of 'separate development'. Historically, however, they often interacted with each other, and shared common transnational perspectives. To what extent were colonial writers constructing forms of counter-modernity through modernism? How far were they drawing on the precepts of modernism and using the techniques of its challenges to traditional forms to develop their own anti-colonial ethics, as in the case of Gandhi? At the same time, to what extent were they deploying an international or cosmopolitan modernism as a revisionist impulse against the forms of their own traditional cultures or nationalisms? In this course, we will investigate how far their writings can be seen as offering aesthetic responses to the conditions of modernity through innovative literary forms and a common concern to rework the paradigms of literary and cultural tradition, of language and history, of gender and class, of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, from a range of specific regional contexts. We will analyse and compare the different modernisms and forms of 'counter-modernity' developed by writers from three regions: South Asia, Southern Africa and the Caribbean (writers to be studied will include Rabindranath Tagore, M.K. Gandhi, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Olive Schreiner, Sol Plaatje, Daphne Rooke, Bloke Modisane, Jean Rhys, C.L.R. James, George Lamming, and V.S. Naipaul).

Course requirements:

Attendance and participation 20%, Mid-term paper 40%, Final 40%

The course will be run as a discussion seminar rather than a lecture class: students are expected to participate actively in each class throughout the semester. In addition to completing the assigned reading for class, each student will also be required to present a framing discussion of at least one of the assigned readings. Participants should highlight key features of the material and present to the class a series of questions that will develop class discussion.

Written requirement: two 2000 word (8 pages) papers, due as indicated below.

SEPT

1 Th 6

Introduction

Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (1959)

2 Th 13

Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World* (1915-16)

3 Th20

M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1908)

4 Th27

Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (1935)

OCT

5 Th4

Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (1938)

6 Th11

Kushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan* (1956)

7 Tuesday 16: Consultations for first paper

8 Th25

First paper due, paper copy to be handed in in class.

Olive Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm* (1883)

NOV

9 Th1

Magema M. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came: A Zulu View* (1922)

10 Th8

Sol Plaatje, *Mhudi* (1930 [written 1920])

11 Th15

George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953)

Th22 **THANKSGIVING** No class

12 Th29

V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961)

DEC

13 Th6

C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963)

14 T11 (THURSDAY SCHEDULE)

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)

Final exam: take-home paper (requirement: one 8 page essay). Questions will be given out Tuesday 11th December; paper due Tuesday 18th December, 5.00pm (sent by email).

Bibliography

Related material:

Daphne Rooke, *Mittee* (1952)

Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History* (1963)

Further Reading

Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996)

Ann L. Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict: 1880-1922* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly, eds., *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy 1970-1995* (Cambridge, 1998).

Houston A. Baker, *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, 1989)

Tani E. Barlow, ed. *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* (Duke University Press, 1997)

Antoinette Burton, ed. *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (Routledge, 1999)

Dipesh Chakravorty, *Provincialising Europe* (Princeton, 2000)

Michael Chapman, *Southern African Literatures* (Longman, 1996)

Alison Donnell, *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature* (Routledge, 2005)

Laura Doyle and Laura A. Winkiel, eds, *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Indiana University Press, 2005)

Saurabh Dube, Ishita Banerjee-Dube, eds, *Unbecoming Modern: Colonialism, Modernity, Colonial Modernities* (New Delhi, Social Science Press, 2006)

Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, 2003)

Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India* (Columbia University Press, 2002)

Delia Caparoso Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation* (Palgrave, 2002)

Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, eds, *Bad Modernisms* (Duke University Press, 2006)

Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (University of California Press, 2001)

Arvind Mehrotra, *The Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English* (London: Hurst, 2003)

Charles Pollard, *New World Modernisms* (University of Virginia Press, 2004)

Sukhdev Sandhu, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City* (Harper, 2004)
David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke University Press, 2004)
Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London, Routledge, 1998)
Gay Wakman, *Lesbian Empire: Radical Crosswriting in the Twenties* (Rutgers UP, 2001)
Rebecca Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (Columbia University Press, 2006)
Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Blackwell, 2001)

A fuller bibliography will be made available on Blackboard.