

**COLI 331P/ENG 450E**  
**The Politics of Friendship**  
**Spring 2008**  
**TR 11:40-1:05; SW 307**

O my friends, there is no friend.

Aristotle

“Enemies, there are no enemies!”  
Cry I, the living madman.

Nietzsche

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Office Hours: T 8:30-10:30; R 4:30-6:00; LT 1509A

You can view this syllabus online on Blackboard.

### **1 Course description**

This course examines the politics of friendship in postcolonial fiction by Coetzee, Djebbar, Kincaid, Rhys, and Salih, along with critical writings by Balibar, Fanon, Said, and Spivak, among others. Crucial questions to be considered here include: How is the intra- or transcultural encounter mediated by the postcolonial literary imagination? How are the contradictions of decolonization exposed in such encounters? What kinds of friendships are imagined to cross racial or ethnic, religious, national, and socio-economic borders, and what are the ethics and politics of such friendships? Which of these encounters "succeed" and which ones "fail," and why? In developing answers to these questions, this seminar will historicize the contested term "post-colonial" and explore the new directions the field is taking today. Topics to be discussed include gender and postcoloniality, indigenous cultures, metropolitan migrancy, and "global apartheid."

### **2 Required texts**

These titles are available at the University Bookstore:

Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso)  
Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Monthly Review Press)  
Coetzee, *Disgrace* (Penguin)  
Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Penguin)  
Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Norton)  
Djebbar, *Women of Algiers In Their Apartment* (University of Virginia Press)  
Kincaid, *Lucy* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux)  
Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Norton)  
Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (Heinemann)

All required articles and book chapters are available as e-reserves on Blackboard **except** two selections by

Young and Fanon. These readings will be available at the Comparative Literature Office (LT 1503) for photocopying.

There will also be two in-class film screenings.

Note that all required books are also available from Bartle Library Reserves.

Please bring a copy of each of the required texts to every class meeting for which the readings are assigned.

### **3 Course requirements**

#### **3.1 Attendance and class participation**

At the beginning of each class period, I will circulate an attendance sheet. You must sign this sheet and remain in class for the entire period in order to be counted present. If you arrive to class late, you will sign a separate sheet for late arrivals, available at the end of class. If you sign neither of these sheets, you may be counted absent.

You are allowed three “free” absences during the course of the semester, which you are urged to save for religious observance, illness, or personal tragedy. If you exceed your allowed number of absences, your final grade will be lowered by one-third of a grade for each subsequent absence. For example, a final grade of a B would be lowered to a B- on the fourth absence, to a C+ on the fifth absence, and so on.

You are allowed a maximum of three late arrivals during the course of the semester, after which your final grade will be reduced by one-third of a grade for each subsequent late arrival, in accordance with the schema above.

This course is a seminar, and your participation is extremely important. I will keep an ongoing record of your general level of participation. All contributions are valuable; do not hold back for fear of being “wrong” or seeming unintelligent.

#### **3.2 Presentation**

Each of you will give **one in-class presentation** together with a classmate on an assigned reading. The class schedule indicates the slots as well as the topics for which you may sign up.

Each presentation must (1) last ten minutes; (2) direct us to at least two specific passages in the readings; and (3) end with a question for your classmates.

You are expected to turn in the paper copy of your presentation at the end of your presentation.

#### **3.3 Quizzes**

**Announced** quizzes (a total of **three**) will be given in class, and are intended to measure your fulfillment of the reading assignments. They will be graded. Missed quizzes may not be made up. Exceptions will be made only for *documented* serious illness, personal tragedy, extracurricular activities, or religious observance.

#### **3.4 Writing assignments**

You are expected to submit **six 300-word writing assignments** during the semester. Three of these will take the

form of brief explication papers; the other three will be summaries. The class schedule indicates readings for which you must write explication papers or summaries. These writing assignments will not be individually graded, but points will be deducted from your final course grade for failure to complete them (or to complete them on time). (See “Grading,” below.)

Writing assignments must be word-processed and printed on paper. I will accept them only (1) at the end of the class period on the date due; (2) if you are absent from class, in my Comparative Literature department mailbox in LT 1503 by 1:30 pm on the date due. Please note that you are also required to send an electronic copy of your assignments to my Blackboard digital dropbox on the date due. Name your documents as follows: Your Last Name-Summary1.doc or Your Last Name-Explication1.doc. Example: Erturk-Summary1.doc or Erturk-Explication2.doc.

A successful explication paper (1) identifies an important passage in the reading (of your own choice), (2) analyzes its literary attributes, and (3) explains its significance in relation to the main argument of the text.

A successful summary is your *paraphrase* of the primary text’s entire argument, following its key turns.

A separate handout will provide guidelines for summaries and explication papers.

### 3.5 Papers

You will write **one midterm paper** (4 pages) and **one final paper** (6 pages) for this class. Note that these are not research papers, but rather critical readings of one or more of the assigned texts. The midterm paper is due in my mailbox by noon on Wednesday, March 12 and the final paper in class on Thursday, May 8. Students who are taking the course for C (composition) credit are required to submit a first draft of the midterm paper in class on Thursday, February 28. The draft will be returned to you ungraded, with detailed comments for a final revision due on March 12. The formal requirements of this draft are the same as the final version (four pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, Times 12, etc.)

Paper questions will be distributed with an evaluation rubric two weeks before the due dates. Papers must be word-processed in a 12-point font (such as Times), double-spaced, with one-inch margins and stapled. Citations should follow MLA format. Please note that you are also required to send an electronic copy of your assignments to my Blackboard digital dropbox on the date due. Name your documents as follows: Your Last Name-Paper1.doc. Example: Erturk-Paper2.doc.

Also, be aware that late papers will lose a third of a letter grade (e.g., B+ to B, B to B-, etc.) per day late. Exceptions will only be made for *documented* serious illness, personal tragedy, extracurricular activities, or religious observance.

### 4 Academic integrity

Plagiarism is passing off another writer’s words or ideas as one’s own. It is your responsibility to understand what plagiarism entails. See me if you have any questions.

Plagiarized midterm or final papers will receive a grade of 0. Plagiarism in explication papers or summaries will carry penalties for your final grade. (See “Grading,” below.) Acts of plagiarism will also be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs.

## 5 Grading

Scale: A = 94; A- = 90; B+ = 87; B = 83; B- = 80; C+ = 75; C = 70; C- = 65; D = 60; F = 50

Class participation	15%
Presentation	10%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm paper	25%
Final paper	35%

Your final grade for the course will be lowered for any excess of the allowed three absences or three late arrivals, in accordance with the schema outlined above.

### *Other modifications to your final course grade*

Points are deducted from your final course grade as follows:

- 5 Each missing (or plagiarized) explication paper or summary
- 2 Each late explication paper or summary

## 6 Class Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to revise this schedule to respond to unforeseen circumstances.

### **Week 1:** Introducing key concepts

01/29: Syllabus

01/31: Young, selection from *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*

### **Part 1 — Colonial Encounters**

### **Week 2:** Literature of colonialism

02/05: Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1-77)  
Explication paper due

02/07: Conrad, continued  
Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” 336-349 in the Norton edition of *Heart of Darkness*

### **Week 3:** Theorizing colonial discourses

02/12: Du Bois, “The Negro Mind Reaches Out”  
Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (31-78)

Presentation topic: Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Césaire's critique of colonialism.

02/14: Said, selection from *Orientalism*  
Summary of Said due  
Midterm paper topics handed out

**Week 4:** Psychopathologies of empire 1

02/19: Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (9-71)  
Quiz 1

02/21: Rhys, continued (71-112)  
Selection from Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (119-132)

**Week 5:** Psychopathologies of empire II

02/26: Fanon, “The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized Peoples”  
“The Fact of Blackness” (available at LT 1503 for photocopying)

Presentation topic: How does the narrator describe the “fact of blackness”?

02/28: First draft of midterm papers due for students taking the course for C credit  
Film screening: Isaac Julien, *Black Skin, White Mask*

**Week 6:** Still waiting for the barbarians

03/04: Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1-89)  
Quiz 2

03/06: Coetzee, continued (90-156)

Presentation topic: How do you assess the novel's representation of torture?

**Part 2 — Nation and Its Politics of Friendship**

**Week 7:** Nationalism and anti-colonial struggles

03/11: Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (chs. 1-7)  
Summary due

Presentation topic: What does Anderson mean by nation as an imagined community?

03/12: Midterm papers due for all students in my mailbox by 12:00 pm

03/13: Anderson, continued (ch. 8)  
Fanon, “On National Culture”

Presentation topic: What does national culture mean for Fanon?

**Week 8: Nation and identity**

03/18: Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

Presentation topic: How does the novel represent the identity crisis of the postcolonial intellectual?

03/20: Workshop

**Week 9: SPRING RECESS (Mar 21-30)**

**Week 10: Women and nation**

04/01: Djebbar, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (1-52; 133-154)

Explication paper due on ONE of the two selections

Presentation topic: How does Djebbar interpret Delacroix's painting "Women of Algiers in their Apartment"?

04/03: Kandiyoti, "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation"

Presentation topic: What are the contradictions inherent in the gender politics of nationalist projects for Kandiyoti?

**Week 11: Violence and forgiving in the postcolony**

04/08: Coetzee, *Disgrace* (chs. 1-15)

Quiz 3

04/10: Coetzee, continued (chs. 16-24)

Derrida, "On Forgiveness"

Presentation topic: What do "reconciliation" and "forgiveness" mean for Derrida?

**Part 3 — Postcoloniality In the Age of Globalization**

**Week 12: Metropolitan migrancy**

04/15: Kincaid, *Lucy*

Explication paper due

04/17: Kincaid, selection from *A Small Place*

Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy"

Final paper topics handed out

Presentation topic: How does Appadurai build on Anderson's argument(s) in *Imagined Communities*?

**Week 13: Specters of the colonial past**

04/22: Film screening  
Michael Haneke, *Caché* (2005)

04/24: Film screening continued

**Week 14: Strangers as enemies**

04/29: Arendt, “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man”  
Summary due

05/01: Schmitt, selection from *The Concept of the Political* (19-37) (e-reserve)  
Balibar, “Strangers as Enemies: Further Reflections on the Aporias of Transnational Citizenship”  
(available at <http://globalization.mcmaster.ca/wps/balibar.pdf>)

Presentation topic: Discuss what Balibar calls the “aporias of transnational citizenship.”

**Week 15: Towards a new ethics and politics of friendship**

05/06: Spivak, selection from *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet*

05/08: Final papers due  
Final paper presentations  
Course conclusion