Postcolonialism and Religious Studies

Course Syllabus

Course Description:
The history of European and U.S. imperialism has impacted academic study in multiple ways, including the humanities and the social sciences. This course considers the ethical and theoretical issues raised by the complex relationship between colonialism and knowledge, and explores as a case study possible approaches to the study of religion that respond to such critiques through anti-imperialist and postcolonial approaches. Materials to be examined range from the histories of such disciplines as anthropology and history of religions to contemporary theology, Native American practices, and feminist and postcolonial theory. Students will write a seminar paper attempting to apply postcolonial methods to the decolonization of a topic of their choice.

Course Objectives:
1. Develop familiarity with the postcolonial and anti-orientalist critiques of the academy generally and specifically of the disciplinary field of religious studies;
2. Become acquainted with major terms and arguments and thinkers in postcolonial studies, including feminist critiques of and engagements with postcolonial studies;
3. Learn how to construct an object of knowledge with an awareness of the power/knowledge aspects of the process from a Foucauldian perspective;
4. Develop a working familiarity with the politics of the category of “religion” and other objects of knowledge from a postcolonial and anti-imperialist perspective;
5. Understand what the ethical, political, and intellectual costs are of constricting “religion” or “theology” or other central disciplinary objects of knowledge in a manner that excludes “knowledge,” “power/knowledge,” and “thought”;
6. Develop familiarity with a range of anti-imperialist and postcolonial approaches to the study of religion from different disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields;
7. Successfully apply in a seminar paper a particular anti-imperialist and postcolonial approach (or a combination of such approaches) to both a critical and constructive analysis of a topic in a field of interest to the student.
**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**
Course attendance and discussion participation: 40%
One short paper (5-7 pages): 10%
Oral presentation of seminar paper 5%
Constructive peer critique of seminar presentations: 5%
Seminar paper (25-35 pages): 40%

Note: Students with learning or physical disabilities will be given reasonable accommodations.
If you need to request accommodations or other assistance, please contact the CGU Dean of Students Office, extension 79448.

**Course Required Readings:**
(All textbooks are available both for purchase and at the Honnold Libarary reserve desk; other readings are available on Sakai and at Honnold reserve desk.)

**Recommended Readings** (one or more of the following–on reserve at Honnold):
Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005. PE1580 .N49 2005
Course Schedule:
Asterisks (*) indicate that the reading is found in course textbook; other readings may be found in the course readings packet. All textbooks are available both for purchase and on reserve at the Honnold Library reserve desk; other readings are available on Sakai and at Honnold reserves. Some course packet readings are also available on the web through the Honnold Library Reserve Readings website, using the course electronic reserve number: jparker465 (lower case only).

9-3 Course Introduction
Readings: Handouts.
Film: Sherman Alexie, The Business of Fancydancing.

9-10 Postcolonialism: History and Theory.
Readings:
* Young, Postcolonialism, Ch. 1-3, 1-42.
Recommended:
Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 1-2.
Young, White Mythologies, Ch. 1.

9-17 Postcolonial History: NeoColonialism, Postcolonialism, and Beyond.
Readings:
* Young, Postcolonialism, Ch. 4-5 & 24-25.
Recommended:
Fanon, Wretched of the Earth.
Young, White Mythologies, Ch. 2 & 4.

9-24 Postcolonialism Theory I: Beyond Said and Young.
Readings:
* Yeğenoğlu, “Mapping the Field,” 14-38.

10-1 Postcolonial Theory II: Foucault.
Readings:
Recommended:
Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 3, 48-57.
Said, Orientalism, “Introduction.”
Carrette, Foucault and Religion.
Young, White Mythologies, Ch. 5 & 7.

10-1 Short Paper Due.

10-8 Postcolonial Theory III: Bhabha and Irigaray.
Readings:
Recommended:
Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 3, 57-62.
Young, White Mythologies, Ch. 8.

10-14 Last Day to Drop without Transcript “W”

Readings:
Suleri, “Woman Skin Deep,” 244-56.
Recommended:
Massad, Desiring Arabs.
Course Schedule (cont.)

Happy Fall Break
Readings:  *Young, Postcolonialism, Ch. 28.
Recommended:  Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 4.
              Young, White Mythologies, Ch. 1 & 9.

10-29 Decolonizing the Category of Religion?
Recommended:  Chidester, Savage Systems.

11-5 Postcolonial Feminist Perspectives on Religion
          *Donaldson & Kwok, Intro., Ch. 1(Donaldson), Ch. 4 (Dube) and Ch. 6 (Cooke).

11-5 Paper Proposals Due.
11-12 Decolonizing Indigenous Religions?
           *Deloria, Jr.

11-12 Final Paper Proposals Due.

11-19 Decolonizing Indigenous Religions? (cont.)
Readings:  *Deloria, Jr.,

11-26 Postcolonialism and Christianity’s Others
Readings:  *Almond, British Discovery.
           Schopen, “Protestant Presuppositions,” 1-23.

Happy Imperialism Day

12-3 Postcolonialism and Europe’s Others
Readings:  *Taussig, xiii-xiv, Ch. 3, 6, 7, 8,10, 11,24, 28.

12-3 Paper Drafts Due.

12-10 Student Seminar Presentations
Readings:  Peer Review of Papers.

12-10 Written Peer Evaluation Due.

12-15 Exam Week:  **Revised Papers Due** Thursday, Dec. 18, 2 pm (hand in at Pitzer office).
Other Course Readings
(Available on Sakai and at Honnold Reserve Desk)