

**E60B CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL AND CRITICAL
THEORY:
POST-STRUCTURALISMS AND POST-COLONIALISMS I
1999-2000**

Lecturer: R. Clarke
Contact hours: Two 1.5-hour seminars per week
 (Tu and Thurs: 11 AM - 12.30 PM; Room A27)

Building upon the foundation provided by E60A Modern Cultural and Critical Theory: Dialectical Theories, this course seeks to introduce students to three contemporary schools of cultural and critical theory inspired by post-Saussurean notion of difference with which Post-colonial theorists have extensively engaged in recent times.

To these ends, after exploring the implications of Saussure's critique of traditional models of signification for traditional notions of selfhood, linguistic representation and self-expression, students will devote the first half of the semester to reading and discussing seminal essays drawn from the following three Post-Structuralist schools:

Deconstruction (e.g. Derrida, Barthes, De Man, Cixous);
 Dialogical criticism (e.g. Bakhtin, Bauer); and
 Foucauldian Discursive criticism (e.g. Foucault, Butler).

The goal in so doing is to explore the ways in which each school of thought has mounted a radical challenge to both traditional liberal humanist and modern dialectical conceptions of:

subjectivity;
 knowledge;
 the structure of the social formation;
 the discursive construction of gender;
 the discursive construction of race;
 literary realism;
 literary self-expression;
 literary history; and
 the role of the reader.

Students will devote the second half of the semester to exploring related seminal essays by prominent Post-colonial and African American theorists such as

Edward Said;
 Gayatri Spivak;
 Stuart Hall;

Homi Bhabha; and
Henry Louis Gates.

The goal in so doing is to explore how each of these thinkers has sought to utilise post-Saussurean concepts of difference in order to rethink the dominant ways in which colonial and post-colonial cultural phenomena and practices have come to be conceptualised.

Assessment:	Regular seminar participation / presentations	20%
	1 shorter research paper (c. 10 p.)	30%
	1 longer research paper (c. 20 p.)	50%
Required Texts:	Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, eds.	<u>Critical Theory Since 1965</u>
	Pam Morris, ed.	<u>The Bakhtin Reader</u>
	Michel Foucault	<u>The Archaeology of Knowledge</u>
	Edward Said	<u>Orientalism</u>
	Homi Bhabha	<u>The Location of Culture</u>
	Gayatri Spivak	<u>In Other Worlds</u>
	Henry Louis Gates	<u>The Signifying Monkey</u>

(All/most of the above are probably not on sale in the bookshop [only God knows why] but have been placed on reserve in the library.)

Selected essays by Stuart Hall, Cornel West, Gwendolyn Mae Henderson, et al. in the E33D/E60B folder in the library to be photocopied by students.

Recommended:	Terry Eagleton	<u>Literary Theory: an Introduction</u>
	Ania Loomba	<u>Colonialism/Post-colonialism</u>
	Bart Moore-Gilbert	<u>Post-colonial Theory</u>

READING SCHEDULE

Students should note that this course will largely take the seminar format. The degree to which seminars are productive is a function of the effort which students put into a) their preparation of assigned materials and b) the effectiveness of the presentations and reports made to their colleagues. Students must be prepared to read, reread and re-reread the assigned readings. (I have always found the best way to come to grips with difficult readings is to make detailed notes for myself.) They must also be prepared to engage in class in a vigorous exchange of ideas with their colleagues. It is, in short, through a combination of careful preparation and dialogue that students will be able to glean for themselves the important information to be drawn from the assigned readings.

Students are also reminded that where the **Required Readings** are absolutely essential, should be read in the suggested order, and must be prepared ahead of class, the **Recommended Readings** are *suggested* readings only designed to provide necessary background and clarification. It is entirely up to you whether you choose to read them or not. You may, however, find them useful, especially when it comes to preparing oral presentations, writing term papers and revising for the final exam. Please check the lists at the end of this course outline to see which texts have been placed on reserve.

Week 1, Session I: Introduction

Discussion Topics: General discussion of the aims of the course, requirements, etc.;

Some Preliminary Questions to Consider:

1. **Subjectivity/Mind/Consciousness:** What is the nature of human identity (the self)? Are we merely physical bodies and nothing more? What, then, is responsible for the fact that we are conscious, sentient beings? In other words, how do we explain the fact of consciousness? Do we also have a soul imprisoned, as Plato averred, in the dungeon of the flesh? In other words, does our true self (the essence of who we really are) belong to another world that transcends the physical (what Plato termed the world of Ideal Forms/Essences)? Is our identity, thus, pre-given (i.e. something that precedes our birth) as a result of which we may be said to have an essential self? If there is no soul, is consciousness synonymous with the mind? What is the nature of the mind? What is the nature of the relationship linking mind and body? Does it precede and is it, thus, distinct from the body (the Cartesian subject)? On the other hand, is the mind derived in some way from and, thus, dependent upon the body? I.e. is the mind synonymous with the brain and, as such, a product of our biological existence? Is our consciousness socially constructed or a product of our social existence? Are we entirely conscious or is there an unconscious dimension to our mind? How do human beings think? Where do our ideas come from? Do they originate with a pre-given self or are they derived from our intercourse with the external physical and social world (so-called reality)?
2. **Metaphysics/Epistemology:** What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of the relationship between the ideas which we have in our minds about external reality and the real world out there? How can we be sure that our ideas accurately correspond to what really exists external to our consciousness? What is the nature of knowledge? How do we know anything? Is certitude possible? Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Is truth, by contrast, relative? What is the principal medium of thought and, thus, of our knowledge of reality (i.e. that which links our ideas of reality with reality itself)?
3. **Language/Signification:** How do words (signs) mean/signify? By mirroring or reflecting reality? By expressing the ideas of the speaker/writer? By both?
4. **Literary Texts:** How do literary texts mean/signify? By mirroring or reflecting reality? By expressing the ideas of the author? What is the nature of the relationship between a literary text and the socio-historical context in which it is produced? What is the nature of the relationship between a literary text and the reality which it purports to represent? What is the nature of the relationship between a literary text and its author? Do literary writers express themselves or pour their hearts into their texts?

5. **Interpretation:** Do we read a literary text in order to measure how accurate its representation of reality is? Do we read a literary text for insights into the life and mind of its writer? Does the reader play a passive or active role? Is meaning simply found in a literary text or is it constructed or produced by the reader?
6. **Post-Structuralism:** What is Modernity? Modernism? Postmodernity? Postmodernism? Structuralism? Post-Structuralism?
7. **Post-colonialism:** What is a Colony? Colonisation? Colonialism? Imperialism? Decolonisation? Independence? Neocolonialism? Anti-colonialism? Post-Colonialism?

Useful Preliminary Readings:

<u>Philosophy:</u>	Nigel Warburton	<u>Philosophy: the Basics:</u> Mind The External World
	Nigel Warburton	<u>Philosophy: the Classics:</u> Plato <u>The Republic</u> René Descartes <u>Meditations</u> John Locke <u>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</u> Immanuel Kant <u>Critique of Pure Reason</u>
<u>(Post-)Structuralism:</u>	Terry Eagleton	<u>Literary Theory: an Introduction:</u> Structuralism and Semiotics Post-Structuralism
<u>(Post-)Colonialism:</u>	Jurgen Osterhammel	<u>Colonialism: a Theoretical Overview:</u> Colonization and Colonies Colonialism and Colonial Empires Colonial Epochs
	Ania Loomba	<u>Colonialism/Postcolonialism:</u> Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies
	Bart Moore-Gilbert	<u>Postcolonial Theory:</u> Postcolonial Criticism or Postcolonial Theory

MODULE ONE: SAUSSUREAN LINGUISTICS / SEMIOTICS

Week 1, Session I: Saussure's Model of Signification

Required Readings: Ferdinand de Saussure From Course in General Linguistics (in Adams and Searle)

<i>Recommended Readings:</i>	Terry Eagleton David Robey	<u>Literary Theory: an Introduction:</u> <u>Modern Literary Theory:</u>	Structuralism and Semiotics (section on Saussure) Modern Linguistics and the Language of Literature (section on Saussure)
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Seminar Presentations

1. How did Plato conceive of the nature of reality? Did he believe that it is possible to know reality as it really is?
2. Plato held what linguists refer to as a referential (or reflectionist or mimetic or correspondence) model of language. What do you understand by this term? To what degree has this become a widely shared view of language?
3. Plato also held what linguists refer to as an instrumental or expressivist model of language. What do you understand by this term? To what degree has this also become a widely shared view of language?
4. How exactly, according to Saussure, do signs signify (i.e. how is meaning produced)? Would you agree that this represents a radical departure from and critique of the conventional linguistic models discussed above?
5. Define the following key Saussurean terms: sign, referent, signifier, signified, signification, system or structure, différence, binary oppositions, diachrony, synchrony, langue, parole, the paradigmatic axis, the syntagmatic axis.
6. Does Saussure's model of the sign explain why human beings have a tendency to comprehend reality (i.e. to think) in terms of binary oppositions? If so, how?
7. What do you understand by what philosophers term the Cartesian subject or the Cogito? Compare Descartes' model of human subjectivity with Plato's and John Locke's respectively.
8. In what ways does Saussure's model of language contribute to the decentering of the Cartesian subject?
9. Explain, in the light of Saussure's essay, the following statement: The meaning of any utterance occurs at the intersection of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes.

Week 2:	The Saussurean Critique of a) Realism and b) Self-expression	
<i>Required Readings:</i>	TU:	1) Roland Barthes The Discourse of History (in Keith Jenkins, ed. <u>The Postmodern History Reader</u>) 2) Hayden White <u>Metahistory</u> : Introduction: The Theory of the Historical Work, Explanation by Emplotment and Explanation by Formal Argument (pp. 5-21) 3) Roland Barthes The Reality Effect (in First)

TR: 1) Emile Benveniste The Nature of Pronouns (in his Problems in General Linguistics; also in Paul Cobley, ed. The Communication Reader)

Recommended Readings: Richard Clarke The Literary Nature of the Historical Text: Some Implications of the Postmodernist Critique of Realism for Caribbean Historiography Journal of Caribbean History 32 (1998)

Seminar Presentations

1. *On what grounds does Barthes ask us to rethink the paradigmatic axis of the historical work?*
2. *What do you understand by White's use of the terms 'enplotment' and 'formal argumentation'? How are these concepts related to Saussure's notion of the 'syntagmatic axis'?*
3. *How does the view that historical works, like their literary counterparts, have plots undermine the view widely shared by historians that historical works merely 're-present' the past as it really occurred?*
4. *If meaning in language arises not from the reference of signs to something outside words but from differential relations among the signs themselves, then the notion that a literary text reflects reality can no longer be taken for granted. Use the essays by White and Barthes to explore, in the light of this statement, the challenge posed by Saussure's model of signification to the concept of literary Realism espoused by critics like Auerbach, Ian Watt or Lukács.*
5. *Benveniste's point is that words are not vehicles merely used by persons to express themselves. Rather, it may be the other way around: given the oppositional structure inherent in language, people are in fact assigned subject-positions by the very words which they only think they use. Explain.*
6. *The claim has typically been made for literary genres like lyric poetry that the author retrospectively puts into words the thoughts and feelings inspired by his/her actual experiences. From this point of view, the writer uses words to explore and reveal a 'self' that exists in reality prior to the act of writing. Saussureans are of the view, however, that for poets like Wyatt or Sidney, for example, it is not so much that they actually experienced unrequited love and found in Petrarch the perfect expression of their experiences. Rather, the discourse of Petrarchanism which predominated in Europe at that time assigned them a certain way of looking at themselves which they absorbed and regurgitated in their poetry and even in turn came to use to alternative ends. Discuss.*

MODULE TWO: DECONSTRUCTION

Week 3: Derrida's Model of Signification
Required Readings: Jacques Derrida Différance (in Adams and Searle)

Recommended Readings: Terry Eagleton Literary Theory: an Introduction; Post-Structuralism (section on Derrida)

Seminar Presentations

1. *In Saussure's scheme of things, signs are differentiated from each other within a sign-system by pure distinction. Because each sign is distinct, it can be said to be possessed of plenitude. In Derrida's scheme of things, there is no pure difference or distinction separating signs from each other. Signs relate to each other, rather, by means of what he calls *différance* or the play of difference. From this point of view, signs do not possess plenitude. Rather, what Derrida calls the *trace of the other* inheres in each sign.*

*Explain Derrida's concept of *différance* as outlined in the essay *Différance* in the light of this statement.*

*2. What are the implications of Derrida's notion of *différance* for the existence of the binary opposites so central to Saussure's understanding of the sign-system?*

*3. To what extent may Derrida be said to be writing back to Saussure's notion of *différance*?*

Week 4: Deconstruction and Literature

<i>Required Readings:</i>	TU:	1) Hayden White	<u>Metahistory</u> : Introduction: The Problem of Historiographical Styles and The Theory of Tropes (pp. 29-38)
		2) Paul de Man	Semiology and Rhetoric (in Selden, ed. <u>TOC</u>)
		3) Stanley Fish	Is There a Text in this Class? (in Adams and Searle)
	TR:	1) Roland Barthes	The Death of the Author (in Rice and Waugh)
		2) Roland Barthes	Textual Analysis of Poe's <u>M. Valdemar</u> (in Lodge <u>MCT</u>)
		3) Harold Bloom	Poetry, Revisionism, Repression (in K.M. Newton, ed. <u>Twentieth Century Literary Theory: a Reader</u>)

Recommended Readings:

Terry Eagleton
Ann Jefferson

Literary Theory: an Introduction: Post-Structuralism
Structuralism and Post-Structuralism (in Jefferson and Robey, eds. Modern Literary Theory)

Seminar Presentations

1. What is the nature of the poetic act (31) by which, according to White, the historian both creates his object of analysis and predetermines the modality of the conceptual strategies he will use to explain it (31)? Define the four so-called master tropes by which the historian, according to White, accomplishes this.

2. Using de Man's essay as your guide, explain how, no matter what a speaker/writer may have intended, the *différance* intrinsic to language results potentially in an excess or surplus of signification and thus in the indeterminacy of the utterance in question.

3. Interpretation is a necessarily Procrustean act that involves forcibly arresting the play of difference between signs. Discuss Fish's views, given the inevitability of a surplus of meaning, on the role of the listener/reader and the importance of contextualisation in the production of a single meaning.

4. Why do the binary oppositions explicit or implicit in a particular thesis deconstruct themselves? What is the role played in this deconstruction by the surplus of signification discussed by de Man and Fish?

5. On what grounds does Barthes proclaim the death of the Author?

6. If authors are not the source of meaning, how then, according to Barthes, do texts mean? (Your answer should include a discussion of the various codes to which Barthes alludes in *Textual Analysis of M. Valdemar*.)

7. How does Bloom rethink his earlier views on literary history (e.g. in *The Dialectics of Poetic Tradition*) in the light of Derrida's model of signification?

8. Deconstruction, perhaps because of its seemingly exclusive focus on the text itself, has frequently been accused of ahistoricism and of thus being apolitical. What do you understand by this charge?

MODULE THREE: DIALOGICAL CRITICISM

Week 5: The Dialogical Model of the Sign

Required Readings: The Bakhtin Circle Critique of Saussurian Linguistics
Language as Dialogic Interaction
Reported Speech as Index of Social Change
Social Heteroglossia
(all in Pam Morris, ed. The Bakhtin Reader)

Recommended Readings: Simon Dentith Bakhtinian Thought: an Introductory Reader; Volosinov and Bakhtin on Language

Seminar Presentations

1. Where Saussure emphasised language and synchrony, the Bakhtin Circle extols parole and diachrony. Why does the Bakhtin Circle think it vital to emphasise the latter?

2. The Bakhtin Circle accused, implicitly or explicitly, Saussurean linguistics of ahistoricism. How did they restore the connection between the sign and its socio-historical context without resorting to the traditional mimetic model of the sign which Saussure had so effectively

criticised?

3. Is subjectivity, for the Bakhtin Circle, something pre-given? If not, how does it arise? Does the Bakhtin Circle adhere to an expressivist model of signification?

4. Is signification, for the Bakhtin Circle, ever a solipsistic affair?

5. In what sense may the sign be described as hybrid or double-voiced?

6. Discourse and dialogism are key terms used in connection with the Bakhtin Circle's view of signification. What do you understand by each of them? To what terms are they opposed?

7. In what ways is the Bakhtin Circle's philosophy of language different from that subscribed to by conventional Marxist thinking?

8. Epistemologically-speaking, would it be fair to describe dialogism as a relativist philosophy? How is this different from the point of view of conventional Marxism?

9. Where conventional Marxists (eg Lukács) stress the dialectic, the emphasis of the Bakhtin Circle is on the dialogic. What do you understand by this claim?

10. If the Bakhtin Circle used Marxism to critique Saussure, they also used Saussure to rethink the conventional Marxist notion of the nature of ideology. How, given Bakhtin's premises, would you conceptualise the relationship between Marxism and Saussurean linguistics in Bakhtinian thought?

11. Compare the Saussurean/Derridean view of language with the Bakhtinian.

Week 6: Dialogism and Literature

Required Readings: **TU:** 1) Mikhail Bakhtin Folk Humour and Carnival Laughter (in Morris)

TR: 1) Mikhail Bakhtin Literature as Ideological Form (in Morris)
 Genres as Ideological Forms (in Morris)
 The Heteroglot Novel (in Morris)

Recommended Readings:

1) Simon Dentith Bakhtinian Thought: an Introductory Reader
 2) ---. Bakhtinian Thought: an Introductory Reader

Bakhtin's Carnival
 Bakhtin on the Novel

Seminar Presentations

1. For the poor, the festivities associated with carnival during the Middle Ages served to temporarily suspend or displace the structures of authority. The dominant social hierarchies were parodied in the process of being inverted. Similarly, there was no question of establishing the truth or a single, unified verbal-ideological centre. There was merely a playing with various official

languages and versions of reality in order to show that none of them could lay claim to authenticity or absolute fidelity to the truth. Is this an accurate summation of Bakhtin's views on the Carnavalesque?

2. What links does Bakhtin perceive between the rise to dominance of the genre of the novel in eighteenth century Europe and carnival in Medieval Europe?

3. Why, according to Bakhtin, is there no simple, unmediated relationship between the novel and that which it purports to re-present?

4. What exactly does Bakhtin mean when he describes the novel as heteroglot or polyphonic? What link does Bakhtin perceive between the polyphonic nature of the novel and the heteroglot nature of language?

5. What are the implications of Bakhtin's critique of realism for our traditional notions of authorship (to be precise, the view that the novelist has a privileged access to reality and that it is this view alone which his/her novel privileges)?

6. What do you understand by the term intertextuality? How does Bakhtin explain this phenomenon? Is intertextuality another way of thinking about what other theorists term literary history?

7. To what literary genre does Bakhtin expressly oppose the novel and for what reasons? Why were critical methods appropriate to this genre mistakenly applied, in his view, to the study of the novel? Are both genres susceptible, in your view, of the same kind of critical analysis?

8. Compare Derridean and Bakhtinian views on A) Realism; B) the Author; C) Intertextuality.

MODULE FOUR: DISCURSIVE CRITICISM

Week 7: Foucault's Model of Discourse

Required Readings:	TU:	1) Michel Foucault	The Formation of Objects (chapter 3 of his <u>The Archaeology of Knowledge</u>)
		2) Michel Foucault	<i>Extract from</i> Nietzsche, Genealogy, History (in Paul Rabinow, ed. <u>The Foucault Reader</u>)
	TR:	Michel Foucault	<i>From</i> Panopticism (in Kiernan Ryan, ed. <u>New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: a Reader</u>)

Recommended Readings: David Shumway Michel Foucault *passim*

Seminar Presentations

1. What precisely does Foucault mean when he speaks of the formation of objects? What exactly are the three rules of formation to which he alludes?
2. What do you understand by Foucault's terms discourse? How is his use of the term different from the Bakhtin Circle's?
3. What does Foucault mean by the terms discursive formation and discursive practice?
4. Compare Foucault's notion of discourse with the Marxist concept of ideology.
5. What does Foucault mean when he speaks of undertaking an archaeology (as in, for example, an archaeology of knowledge)?
6. What exactly is involved in tracing the genealogy of a concept? Can you think of any examples of concepts and the genealogies thereof that may be traced?
7. Compare the terms archaeology and genealogy as used by Foucault.
8. Does the following comment by Benveniste shed any light on Foucault's project in works like *Discipline and Punishment*: [c]onsciousness of self is only possible if it is experienced by contrast. I use I only when I am speaking to someone who will be a you in my address?
9. For Foucault, the exclusion of lepers from mainstream European society in the Middle Ages is paradigmatic of a whole host of other exclusions: mad people, criminal delinquents, homosexuals, women, etc. were each in their own way demonised, that is, rendered deviant and thus excluded from the mainstream of society. What ends, according to Foucault, did this serve?
10. What does Foucault mean by the term discipline?
11. Foucauldians claim that normalisation and the compulsion to conform are the basis of disciplinary power. What is the link envisaged by Foucault between power, knowledge and subjectivity?

Week 8:**Discursive Criticism and Literature**

- Required Readings: **TU:** Michel Foucault What Is an Author? (in Adams and Searle)
- TR:** Edward Said Secular Criticism (in Adams and Searle)
Stanley Fish What Makes an Interpretation Acceptable
(in his *Is There a Text in this Class?*)

Seminar Presentations

1. Given that the original title of this essay is *What Is (Not Was) an Author*, to what seminal

essay is Foucault writing back here? What is his thesis here?

2. Why does Foucault speak of an author-function rather than author per se?

3. What are the three main functions which the author's name performs, according to Foucault?

4. What are the four main characteristics of authored discourses, according to Foucault?

5. Discuss some of the implications of Foucault's views on transdiscursive authors for questions of literary and theoretical history.

6. How does Said envisage the process of literary criticism? To what extent is his view in this regard indebted to Foucault?

7. In what ways may literature be said to be complicit, according to Said, in the exclusionary processes of which Foucault writes?

8. What, according to Fish, are the main institutional constraints which determine literary interpretation?

MODULE FIVE: POST-COLONIAL THEORY

Week 9: Empire, the Discursive Construction of the Other, and Cultural Difference

Required Readings: **TU:** 1) Edward Said *From Orientalism* (in Chrisman and Williams)

TR: 1) Homi Bhabha *Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences* (in Ashcroft, et al., eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*)

Recommended Readings: Bart Moore-Gilbert *Post-colonial Theory:* chapters on Said and Bhabha
Robert Young *White Mythologies:* chapters on Said and Bhabha

Seminar Presentations

1. According to Said, the greatest oversight in Foucault's work is consideration of the factor of race. *Orientalism* represents an effort to fill this gap by treating the process by which Europeans gained a sense of their own identity by differentiating themselves from Easterners. Discuss.

2. Is the process described by Said in *Orientalism* applicable to Europe's relationship with other regions of the world? If so, which?

3. He shows us not only how we were constructed as Other by Western regimes of knowledge

but also, more importantly perhaps, how we were made to internalise these views to our own detriment. Is this an apt description of Said's Orientalism?

4. What differences does Bhabha perceive between the traditional notions of cultural diversity and that which he terms cultural difference ?

5. How does Bhabha conceptualise the concept of a national culture ? How is this significantly different from traditional notions thereof (what Bhabha terms the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People [208])?

6. What exactly do you understand by Bhabha's notion of the Third Space ? To which intellectual precursors is this notion indebted?

7. What challenge does Bhabha's notion of the Third Space pose for conventional notions of national cultural self-expression?

Week 10: Post-colonial / African American Hybridity and Cultural Self-Expression

Required Readings: **TU:** 1) Stuart Hall Cultural Identity and Diaspora (in Chrisman and Williams)
TR: 1) Cornel West The New Cultural Politics of Difference (in Simon Daring, ed. The Cultural Studies Reader)

Recommended Readings: Bart Moore-Gilbert Post-colonial Theory: chapter on Bhabha
 Robert Young White Mythologies: chapter on Bhabha

Seminar Presentations

1. Discuss Hall's use of Derrida's notion of différance to reconceptualise cultural identity in the Caribbean. Is Hall's model applicable to other Post-colonial regions?

2. Compare Hall's model of cultural hybridity with Brathwaite's notion of creolization. Are they informed by the same problematic?

3. How does West employ post-Saussurean notions of difference in order to rethink African American cultural identity?

4. How is West's model of African American identity different from Du Bois's notion of the African American's double consciousness ?

Week 11: Post-colonial / African American Linguistic Signification

Required Readings: **TU:** 1) Henry Louis Gates, Jr. The Signifying Monkey:

The Signifying Monkey and
the Language of
Signifyin(g) : section
I

- TR:** 1) Homi Bhabha The Other Question: Stereotype,
Discrimination and the Discourse of
Colonialism . . . (in his The
Location of Culture)
- 2) Homi Bhabha Signs Taken For Wonders (in Ashcroft, et
al., eds. The Post-Colonial Studies
Reader; also in his The Location of
Culture)

Recommended Readings:

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|--------------------|---|--|
| Bart Moore-Gilbert | <u>Post-colonial Theory:</u> | chapter on Bhabha |
| Robert Young | <u>White Mythologies:</u> | chapter on Bhabha |
| Houston Baker, Jr. | <u>Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature:</u> | Discovering America: Generational Shifts, Afro-American Literary Criticism, and the
Study of Expressive Culture |
| Brad Bucknell | Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and the Theory of Signifyin(g) | <u>Ariel</u> 21 (1990): 65-83 |
| Dorothy Hale | Bakht in in African American Literary Theory | <u>ELH</u> 61 (1994): 445-471 |

Seminar Presentations

1. Explain Gates' concept of Signifyin(g).
2. To what degree is Gates's concept of Signifyin(g) informed by the Bakhtin Circle's notion of double-voiced discourse?
3. Exactly how, according to Bhabha, does the (racist) stereotype function in a manner analogous to the fetish in the Freudian scheme of things?
4. What does Bhabha mean when he writes that the racist stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of reality. It is a simplification because it is, rather, an "arrested, fixated form of representation" (27) that denies the "play of difference (that the negation through the Other permits)" (27).
5. Why exactly, according to Bhabha, is the (racist) stereotype a "contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive" (22)?
6. What does Bhabha mean when he speaks of the ambivalence of colonialist discourse?
7. For Bhabha, symbolic resistance (i.e. to what extent is it an effect of capture of the world) took the form of what Spivak describes as *catagchresis*. understand by this term? To what extent is it an effect of and to what degree is it a function of the agency of the colonised?

8. Discuss some of the analogies between C and Spivak's concept of catachresis.

9. Compare the concepts of ambivalence, catachresis, and Signifyin(g), on the one hand, with Brathwaite's notion of nation language, on the other. Are they similar or different?

10. How do the concepts of ambivalence, catachresis, and Signifyin(g) relate to the dominant notions of symbolic resistance and counter-discourse?

Week 12: Rethinking a) Post-colonial Self-Exp Realism

Required Readings: TU: 1) Henry Louis Gates *Binary Opposites: Binary Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (In K. M. Theory into Practice)

TR: 1) Homi Bhabha *Representation and the Colonial: Critical Exploration of Mimeticism* (in Frank Mimeticism (ed. *The Theory of Reading*))

Seminar Presentations

1. Does Gates conceptualise Frederick Douglass' autobiography in conventional terms of self-expression? If not, how does he conceptualise it?

2. How does Bhabha use Saussure's concept of realism which informs both universalist and nationalist modes of Anti-colonial criticism?

Week 13: Rethinking Post-colonial / African American Literary Histories

Required Readings: TU: 1) Gayatri Spivak *Three Women's Texts and Imperialism* (The Post-Colonial Studies Reader)

TR: 1) Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: Figures Of Signification*

Recommended Readings:

Houston Baker, Jr. *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: Discovering America: Generational Shifts, Afr Discov Study of Expressive Culture*
Brad Bucknell Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and the Theory of Signifyin(g) *Ariel* 21 (1990): 65-83
Dorothy Hale Bakhtin in African American Literary Theory *ELH* 61 (1994): 445-471

Seminar Presentations

1. How does Spivak conceptualise the relationship between c1. How does Spivak conceptualise the relationship between c1.

texts?

2. Using Spivak's essay as your guide, would you agree that she is in fact a *catachrestic reader* of the canon?

3. To what extent is every non-European who reads a canonical text in an act of *catachresis*?

4. Gates uses the term *Signifyin(g)* to denote the trope of relationship between, firstly, the earliest African American literary precursors and, secondly, between the authors themselves who have come to form the African American canon. Is this an accurate assessment of Gates' notion of *Signifyin(g)*?

5. To what degree is Gates' understanding of the process of literary revision Bakhtin's concept of literary history?

6. Is Gates' concept of *Signifyin(g)* applicable to emergent Post-colonial literatures?

7. What do you understand by the term *abrogation and appropriation*? Compare this notion with Gates' notion of *Signifyin(g)*. Writes Back?

SOME USEFUL SURVEYS OF / INTRODUCTIONS TO PHILOSOPHY, LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

R - on reserve

REF - in Reference section

Ashcroft, Bill, <i>et. al.</i>	<u>The Empire Writes Back: The</u>	
	<u>colonial Literatures</u>	R
Barry, Peter	<u>Beginning Theory: an Intro</u>	
	<u>Theory</u>	
Belsey, Catherine	<u>Critical Practice</u>	
Eagleton, Terry	<u>Literary Theory: an Introduction</u>	R
Grayling, A.C., ed.	<u>Philosophy: a Guide Through the Subject</u>	
Green, Keith, and Jill LeBihan	<u>Critical Theory and Practice: a Coursebook</u>	
Griffiths, Gareth	<u>The Post-colonial Project: Critical Approaches to Post-colonial Problems (in Bruce King, Post-colonial Literatures)</u>	
Harrison-Barbet, Anthony	<u>Mastering Philosophy</u>	
Hutcheon, Linda	<u>A Poetics of Postmodernism</u>	
---	<u>The Politics of Postmodernism</u>	
Jefferson, Ann & D. Robey, eds.	<u>Modern Literary Theory: a Comparative Introduction</u>	R
Kim, Jagwon	<u>Philosophy of Mind</u>	
Loomba, Ania	<u>Colonialism/Postcolonialism</u>	R
Lynn, Steven	<u>Texts and Contexts: Writing About Literature</u>	
	<u>Theory</u>	
Moi, Toril	<u>Sexual/Textual Politics</u>	
Moore-Gilbert, Bart	<u>Postcolonial Theory</u>	R
Osterhammel, Jurgen	<u>Colonialism: a Theoretical Overview</u>	R
Pojman, Louis	<u>What Can We Know? An Introduction to Knowledge</u>	
Selden, Raman	<u>A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory</u>	R
	<u>Practising Theory and Reading Literature: an Introduction</u>	
Slemon, Stephen	<u>Post-colonial Critical Theories (in Post-colonial Critical Theories and Post-colonial Literatures)</u>	
Warburton, Nigel	<u>Philosophy: the Basics</u>	R
Warburton, Nigel	<u>Philosophy: the Classics</u>	R
Wolfreys, Julian, and William Baker	<u>Literary Theories: a Case Study in Critical Performance</u>	
White, Robert	<u>White Mythologies: Writing History and the West</u>	R

SOME ANTHOLOGIES OF PHILOSOPHY, LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

R - on reserve

REF - in Reference section

Adams, Hazard, ed.	<u>Critical Theory Since Plato</u>	REF
Adams, Hazard and L. Searle, eds.	<u>Critical Theory Since 1965</u>	R
Appleby, Joyce, et al., eds.	<u>Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective</u>	
Ashcroft, Bill, et al., eds.	<u>The Post-colonial Studies Reader</u>	R
Belsey, Catherine and J. Moore, eds.	<u>The Feminist Reader</u>	R
Brooker, Peter, ed.	<u>Modernism/Postmodernism</u>	
Cameron, Deborah	<u>The Feminist Critique of Language: a Reader</u>	
Cobley, Paul, ed.	<u>The Communication Theory Reader</u>	
Currie, Mark, ed.	<u>Metafiction</u>	
Docherty, Thomas, ed.	<u>Postmodernism: a Reader</u>	
Dukore, Bernard, ed.	<u>Dramatic Theory: Greeks to Grotowski</u>	
Easthope, Anthony, and McGowan, eds.	<u>A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader</u>	
Ellman, Richard, and C. Feidelson, eds.	<u>The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds</u>	
	<u>Literature</u>	
Furst, Lillian, ed.	<u>Realism</u>	
Gates, Henry Louis, ed.	<u>Black Literature and Literary Theory</u>	
---	<u>Race, Writing and Difference</u>	
Gould, James, ed.	<u>Classical Philosophical Questions</u>	
Kaplan, Charles, ed.	<u>Criticism: the Major Statements</u>	R
Kearney, Richard, and Mara Rainwater, eds.	<u>The Continental Philosophy Reader</u>	
Lodge, David, ed.	<u>Twentieth Century Literary Criticism: a Reader</u>	R
---	<u>Modern Criticism and Theory: a Reader</u>	R
Marks, Elaine and I. Courtivron, eds.	<u>New French Feminisms</u>	R
Mast, Gerald, et al., eds.	<u>Film Theory and Criticism</u>	
Mongia, Padmini, ed.	<u>Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: a Reader</u>	R
Moore-Gilbert, Bart, Gareth Stanton, and Willy Maley, eds.	<u>Post-colonial Criticism</u>	
Newton, K.M., ed.	<u>Twentieth Century Literary Theory: a Reader</u>	
---	<u>Theory into Practice: a Reader in Modern Literary Criticism</u>	
Nicholson, Linda, ed.	<u>Feminism/Postmodernism</u>	
Oaklander, L. Nathan, ed.	<u>Existentialist Philosophy</u>	
Pojman, Louis, ed.	<u>Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings</u>	R
Rice, Philip and P. Waugh, eds.	<u>Modern Literary Theory: a Reader</u>	R
David Richter, ed.	<u>The Critical Tradition</u>	R
Ryan, Kiernan, ed.	<u>New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: a Reader</u>	
Rylance, Rylance, Rick, ed.	<u>Debating Texts: Readings in Twentieth</u>	
	<u>Method</u>	<i>(on order)</i>
Selden, Raman, ed.	<u>The Theory of Criticism: a Reader</u>	R

