

Spring 2005  
TuTh 11:00 a.m. -12:15 p.m.

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### English 361: Postcolonial Women's Narratives

This course will examine the interrelationships between gender, sexuality, race and class in narratives about nationalism and/or nation formation by postcolonial women writers. (An earlier version of this course was, in fact, entitled "Women, Nation, Narrative.") Although we will examine texts from Africa (Southern Africa and Ghana, in particular) and Trinidad, a substantial number of readings for this course are about India. But while the concerns elaborated in the readings and narratives from India are particular to women's concerns there, they resonate as well (in differential ways to be sure) with the concerns of the texts from places other than India. I have deliberately chosen works whose relationship with nationalism/nation formation is complex and vexed. Virtually none of them can be read straightforwardly as narratives about nationalism/nation formation. This relationship will have to be teased out and worked through. Among other things, we will do so by attending to the following:

\*Women's roles in narratives of nationalism: how are women inserted (or how do they insert themselves) in these narratives? Are these narratives hospitable or inhospitable (or both) to their concerns? Do these narratives challenge or accommodate or modify (or all three) dominant accounts?

\*Narrative strategies and structures: who speaks what and for whom? Or, how is the narrative organized—whose (or what) perspective/agenda is fore-grounded or privileged? whose (or what) perspective/agenda is displaced, elided, suppressed?

**Course Format:** In general, and once we have finished with some introductory materials, the course will run as a discussion class, with student groups leading and/or facilitating the class discussion. I will divide you into groups of 4-5 students, and urge you to function as study groups outside of class as well.

**Requirements:** You will be required to keep up with **all** the reading for the course, whether or not you are part of the group that leads/facilitates class discussion for a given text. I also have an attendance policy, which I expect you to abide by: you are allowed 3 unexcused absences. For every day you miss beyond that, your grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade (e.g., if you have 4 unexcused absences your grade will go from B+ to B; if you have 5 unexcused absences, it will go from B+ to a B-, etc.)

**Written Work:** The grade for your written work will be based on 2 brief analytical responses (no more than a couple pages in length) to any one of the theoretical essays assigned in this course, due on **February 17** and **April 12** respectively; two long papers

(10-12 pages), due on **March 17** and **May 12** respectively, preceded by two short proposals (no more than a long or two short paragraphs) outlining the subject of and rationale for your papers, due on **March 9** and **May 6** respectively.

For the 1<sup>st</sup> brief analytical response, you will select from the essays we assigned from February 10-17; for the second, the essays assigned from April 5-12. For each response, you should briefly recapitulate its argument before analyzing it.

For the first long paper (and proposal) you will select your subject from one or more of the texts we have covered until March 17; for your second paper (and proposal) you will select your subject from one or more of the texts we cover after March 17.

**Grade:** Papers 1 and 2 will count for 50% of the grade (25% each); the two proposals will count for 10% of the grade (5% each); the two brief responses will count for 20% of the grade (10% each), and class participation will count for 20% of the grade.

**Honor Code:** In this course, as in all others, you are expected to adhere to the spirit and letter of the Honor Code and to sign the Honor Code on all work you turn in. ("I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.")

**Texts:** Available at Barnes and Noble:

Aidoo, Ama Ata, *Our Sister Killjoy* (required)

Cliff, Michelle, *No Telephone to Heaven* (required)

Devi, Mahasweta. *Imaginary Maps*, translated and introduced by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (required)

Head, Bessie, *Maru* (required)

Hosain, Attia, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (required)

K.Lalitha et al, "*We Were Making History*": *Life Stories of Women in the Telangana Struggle*. (Apparently this book is out of print, so I have put a copy on reserve, as well as two Xeroxed copies along with the materials on reserve in the library. Additionally, I have put the selections we will discuss on ERES)—(required)

Sangari, Kumkum and Sudesh Vaid, eds., *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (recommended)

Along with the texts above, you will need to make copies of essays we will read that I have also put on ERES and on reserve at the library.

**Schedule:**

**February 8:** Intro to course—brief discussion of its focus; expectations regarding attendance, class participation, and writing assignments.

**February 10, 15, 17:** Questions of Method and Knowledge Production: We will begin with the following essays that address some of the methodological issues involved both in examining/evaluating gender in the context of the so called Third (or postcolonial)

World in metropolitan spaces (including especially those of the academy); thereafter we will move to some theoretical considerations of gender in the narratives of nationalism: by Mohanty, Busia, Oldenburg, McClintock, Burton (“Memory Becomes Her: Women, Feminist History, and the Archive”), Heng, and Guha.

**February 17: Response 1 due**

**February 22, 24:** Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy*

**March 1, 3:** Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*

(As preparation for the discussion of the texts by Aidoo and Cliff, you may wish to read my chapters on the two in *Using the Master’s Tools* that I have put on reserve at the library.)

**March 8, 10:** Head, *Maru* (We may need to reschedule the second class if I have to leave for a conference on early Thursday.)

**March 9: Proposal for Paper 1 due**

**March 14, 15:** Conferences for paper 1

**March 17: Paper 1 due;** lecture on historical background and contexts for India by Professor Michael Fisher, History Department.

**March 22, 24:** Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*.

As preparation for this novel, you may wish to look through an essay I have written, “Multiple Forms of (National) Belonging,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 39.1 (Winter 1993): 93-112 (on reserve with other library materials for this course, though not on ERES) and the chapter on Hosain by Burton, “A Girlhood Among Ghosts,” which I have also put on reserve as well as on ERES)

**March 26- April 3:** Spring Break

**April 5, 7:** Selections from Sangari and Vaid, eds. *Recasting Women* (“Introduction” [1-26]; Chakravarti, “Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi?” [27-88]; Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question” [233-253]

**April 6:** Film: “Garam Hawa”; at 4:30 pm (Mudd 050)

**April 12:** Chapters 13 and 14 from Spivak’s *In Other Worlds* (“The Breast Giver” by Mahasweta Devi and “A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman’s Text from the Third World”)—on ERES and reserve.

**April 12: Response 2 due**

**April 14, 19:** From *Imaginary Maps*: “The Author in Conversation,” “Translator’s Preface” and Devi’s “The Hunt” and “Douloti the Bountiful.”

**April 21, 26, 28:** Selections from *We Were Making History* (ERES), beginning with the chapters on “The Telangana People’s Struggle: A Background” and “Writing About Women in Struggles” (also on ERES). We will also return to Guha’s “The Small Voice of History” during this segment, and discuss another essay, “Chandra's Death,” also by Guha.

**April 27:** Film: “Ankur”; at 4:30 pm (Mudd 050)

**May 3:** background on Phoolan Devi, the “bandit queen”; and SunderRajan, “Outlaw Woman.”

**May 4:** “The Bandit Queen”—a film by Shekhar Kapur; at 4:30 pm (Mudd 050)

**May 5:** discussion of film, in conjunction with essay by Fernandes.

**May 6: Proposal 2 due**

**May 9, 10, 11:** Conferences for paper 2

**May 12:** Conclusion; **paper 2 due**