World Literature in English II: Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific

Class code: ENGL-UA 9164

Instructor Details
Dr Tanya Serisier
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Consultations: Wednesdays 12.00-1.00pm

Class Details
World Literature in English II: Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific

Wednesdays: 2.00pm-5.00pm
Room 304
NYU Sydney Academic Centre

Prerequisites
None

Class Description
This course is an introduction to the literatures of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region, with a focus on indigenous, migrant and diasporic writing. In addition to major texts from Australia and New Zealand, we will also encounter a range of works from Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and the Pacific islands. Some questions we will tackle include: How have the cultural, historical, and economic processes of colonialism, diaspora and migration connected and shaped this diverse region? How have issues of race and indigeneity been central to various discourses of nationalism? What particular roles have Australia and New Zealand, as sub-imperial powers, played in the region? Finally, what can the latest generation of migrant writing in Australia show us about new forms of interconnections across the globalizing Asia-Pacific? Students in this course will examine novels, poetry, films and theoretical texts to develop critical thinking, reading and writing skills. Along the way, they will gain a solid grounding in the problematics of postcolonialism, race, diaspora, indigeneity, nationalism and gender.

This class will be run as a weekly 3-hour seminar with required readings and class participation every week.

Desired Outcomes

- To develop an understanding of the cultural context of Australian, New Zealand, and Asia-Pacific Literature.
- To develop students' abilities in critical analysis, reading and writing.
- To develop an understanding of postcolonial concepts and theories, and apply these to literary texts.
- To develop an understanding of race, diaspora, indigeneity, nationalism and national identity in the cultures of Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific.
Assessment Components

• 15%: Attendance and class participation
   This is a seminar class, so active participation is required.

• 15%: Presentation (beginning week 2)
   You will be responsible for a 10-minute presentation on one of the texts.
   Details released week 1 (August 29) (including assessment guidelines and marking criteria.)

• 30%: Midterm paper. – 4-6pp
   This is a short paper based on one of the literary or critical texts read.
   Due Week 8 – October 17
   Details Released Week 4 – September 17 (including question and marking criteria)

• 40%: Final paper – 12-15pp
   This is a research paper that should go beyond the scope of the class, but include at least two readings from the syllabus.
   Due Week 16 (December 12)
   Details Released Week 7 (October 12) (including questions and marking criteria)

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning. Written work is of a highly sophisticated standard.

Grade B: Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research. Written work is of a superior standard.

Grade C: Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level. Written work is of an acceptable standard.

Grade D: Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations. Written work is of a basic standard.

Grade F: Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Written work is weak, unfinished or unsubmitted.

Grade conversion

NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A=94-100
A-=90-93
B+=87-89
B=84-86
B-=80-83
C+=77-79
C=74-76
C-=70-73
D+=67-69
D=65-66
F=below 65

Where no specific numerical equivalent is assigned to a letter grade by the class teacher, the mid point of the range will be used in calculating the final class grade (except in the A range, where 95.5 will be used).

Grading Policy

NYU Sydney aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square. At the College of Arts and Sciences, roughly 39% of all final grades are in the B+ to B- range, and 50% in the A/A- range.

We have therefore adopted the following grading guideline: in any non-Stern course, class teachers should try to insure that no more than 50% of the class receives an A or A-. (Stern has a different grading policy that we follow in all Stern courses).

A guideline is not a curve. A guideline is just that: it gives an ideal benchmark for the distribution of grades towards which we work.

Attendance Policy

NYU Sydney has a strict policy about course attendance for students. Faculty will not give students permission to be absent for any reason. Students should contact their instructors to catch up on missed work but should not approach them for excused absences.

All non-medical absence requests must be presented by the student to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Non-medical requests should be made in advance of the intended absence. All medical-based absence requests MUST be presented to the Student Life Coordinator. In the case of illness, the student should contact the Student Life Coordinator within three days of the absence or as soon as practicable and provide medical documentation. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Student Life staff and Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Any absences of which faculty have not been informed by the NYU Sydney staff will be presumed to be unexcused.

Students are expected to arrive to class promptly both at the start of class and after breaks. Arriving more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered an unexcused absence.

This attendance policy also applies for classes involving a field trip or other off-campus visit. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the agreed meeting point on time.

The faculty will report all unexcused absences to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, and students’ final grades will be negatively impacted by each such absence. Each unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 3 percentage points from the final grade. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.

There will be no adjustment of attendance records after the end of the semester. If you wish to contest an unexcused absence, you must do so before you leave Sydney. Contact the Assistant Director, Academic Programs to discuss the attendance record as soon as you think there may be a discrepancy about your attendance in class on a given day.

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.
Students must notify their professor and the Assistant Director, Academic Programs in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

Late Submission of Work

Written work due in class must be submitted during class time to your instructor.

Late work should be submitted in person to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs during regular office hours (9:30-5:00, Monday-Friday). You must also submit an electronic copy of late written work to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs – megan.carryg@nyu.edu - for submission to Turn-it-in.

The Assistant Director, Academic Programs will mark down the date and time of submission in the presence of the student. In the absence of the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work in person, following the same protocol.

Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale for each day the work is late.

Written work submitted beyond five (5) weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

Plagiarism Policy

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

Any course work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form. All students must submit an electronic copy of each piece of written work to www.turnitin.com. Instructions will be provided to you in class.

Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are severe and are dealt with by the Director, NYU Sydney, not your instructor. Your home school will be notified and you will be dealt with according to the standards of that school. The codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges are outlined in the respective school’s academic resources.

Required Text(s)


Film – *Once Were Worriers* (dir. Lee Tamahori) 1994

Additional supplementary materials to be posted in the online discussion group.

**Internet Research Guidelines**
None

**Additional Required Equipment**
None

**Session 1**

### August 29

**Unit 1: Theorizing Race, Nation and Region (weeks 1-3)**

**Race and Cultural Production in the Asia/Pacific**

**Readings**
- Arif Dirlik and Rob Wilson. “Introduction: Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production.” In *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*

**Questions for consideration**
- Is it possible to talk about a regional culture? Literature? Identity?
- What distinguishes cultural production and literature in the Asia/Pacific from other regions?
- How can literature help us to think about race and nation in the Asia/Pacific?

**Assessment**
Details and criteria for participation and presentation assessment items released and discussed. Presentation topics and weeks allocated.
Session 2
September 5

Race and the Colour Line

Readings
- David Malouf. “The Kyogle Line.” In 12 Edmonstone Street
- Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds. Extracts from Drawing the Global Color Line.

Questions for consideration
- How does race intersect with nation and geography?
- Is Australian culture still structured through colonial power relations?
- Should Australia be understood as a historically ‘white’ culture?

Session 3
September 12

National Identity and Multiculturalism in Australia

Readings
- Ghassan Hage. Extracts from White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society.
- Hsu-Ming Teo. Behind the Moon

Questions for consideration
- What precisely does multiculturalism mean in Australian public discourse?
- How do Ang, Stratton and Hage conceive of race, national identity and power intersecting in contemporary Australia?
- How does Hsu-Ming Teo’s work help to draw out issues of multiculturalism and identity.

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 4

Unit 2: Indigeneity and Race 1: Australia (weeks 4-6)
Postcolonialism and Australian Literature

Readings
- Hodge and Mishra. Extracts from Dark Side of the Dream.

Questions for consideration
- What does postcolonialism mean in an Australian context? Is this different to elsewhere?
- What is the relationship between postcolonialism and Indigeneity in contemporary Australia?
- How can we understand indigeneity in relation to concepts such as diaspora and hybridity?

Assessment
Questions released for midterm paper September 17.

Session 5
September 26

Writing Aboriginality in Postcolonial Australia – Kim Scott

Reading
- Kim Scott. True Country
Questions

- How does the novel represent conflict, difference and cooperation within and between white and Indigenous Australian cultures?
- How does the novel relate to history? To the future?
- How does the novel position its readers in relation to questions of race and power?

Assessment

This week is available as a presentation week.

SEMESTER BREAK OCTOBER 1 - 5

Session 6

October 10

Fiction and Nonfiction in Indigenous Writing – Alexis Wright

Readings

Questions

- Is it useful to think of a novel like *Carpentaria* as ‘political’?
- How does the novel position its readers in relation to questions of race and power?
- What do you think are the significant similarities/differences between Wright and Scott’s novels?

Assessment

This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 7

October 17

Unit 3: Indigeneity and Race 2: New Zealand and the Pacific Islands (weeks 7-9)

Introducing Pacific Island and Polynesian Writing

Readings

Questions

- What is the significance of writing in English for Polynesian poets?
- What if any, are the distinguishing features of postcolonial poetry?
- How does poetry communicate around issues of race and colonialism differently to prose fiction?

Assessment

This week is available as a presentation week.

Midterm paper due October 17

Session 8

October 24

Representing Maori Culture – The Bone People and Once Were Warriors

Readings
- Keri Hulme. *The Bone People*.
- LeeTamahori, dir. *Once Were Warriors*. (film)
Questions
• How do these texts negotiate representations of cultural damage and cultural strength in Maori communities?
• How does gender work to complicate issues of race and power in these texts?
• How is Indigeneity represented differently within the context of New Zealand as opposed to the Australian authors discussed previously?
• How does history manifest in the present in these texts?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week – 2 possible presenters.

Session 9
October 31
Postcoloniality in the Pacific – Epeli Hau’ofa

Readings
• Epeli Hau’ofa. Tales of the Tikongs.
• Epeli Hau’ofa. Extracts from We Are the Ocean.

Questions
• How does Hau’ofa relate to history, modernity and development?
• How does geography impact on Hau’ofa’s writing and the sense of cultural identity conveyed in the text?
• How does postcolonial literature and culture differ in a non-settler society?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 10
November 7
Unit 4: Postcolonial Asia: Diaspora, Migration, Hybridity (weeks 10-12)
Writing the Asian Diaspora

Readings
• Yasmine Gooneratne. A Change of Skies.

Questions
• Is it useful to think of Gooneratne’s novel as diasporic fiction?
• What does Ang’s critical writing on diaspora add to a reading of Gooneratne’s novel?
• Does the process of migration necessarily construct hybrid cultural identities?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 11
November 14
Writing, Migration and Hybrid Identity – Adib Khan

Readings
• Adib Khan. Seasonal Adjustments

Questions
• How does Seasonal Adjustments communicate experiences of hybridity and dislocation?
• How does the novel address questions of national identity and national belonging?
• How do Khan and Gooneratne’s texts differ in their presentation of migrant experience?
Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 12
Hybridity within Asia – Rex Shelley

November 21

Reading
- Rex Shelley. *The Shrimp People*

Questions
- How is hybridity represented in *The Shrimp People*?
- How does the novel represent and complicate notions of race and national belonging?
- How does the hybridity represented here relate to the experiences of migration discussed in the previous two weeks?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 13
Unit 5: Race and Identity in Contemporary Australia (Weeks 13-14)

White Memory in a Settler Society

November 28

Reading
- Kate Grenville. *The Secret River*
- Kate Grenville. *Searching for the Secret River* (extracts)

Questions
- Does this novel destabilize or reinforce white governmental belonging as discussed by Hage? (Week 3)
- What are the effects of basing a narrative of colonialism around an attempt to understand the experience of the colonizers?
- How does the novel position contemporary readers in relation to questions of race and power?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 14
White Identity in a Settler Society – Andrew McGahan

December 5

Reading
- Andrew McGahan. *The White Earth*

Questions
- How does McGahan’s work relate to Grenville’s? Is it a different treatment of whiteness?
- Can these books (Grenville’s and McGahan’s) be said to be postcolonial?
- How does McGahan position his reader in terms of race, nation and power?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.
Final Paper due in class December 5.
This is a seminar subject and requires active participation. It also requires respectful and engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Eating is not permitted in any classrooms. Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.

Beyond the required readings note that Session 8 requires you to view the film *Once Were Warriors* before class.

None.

Dr Tanya Serisier teaches in cultural studies and gender studies at the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney. Her research specialisations are in the area of women’s narratives of sexuality and sexual violence and the intersections between race, coloniality and feminism in the Australian context. She has presented her work widely in both Australia and internationally, most recently at the Crossroads Association of Cultural Studies in Paris July 2012. Her forthcoming book is titled *Scheherazade’s Daughters: Rape, Feminism and the Narrativization of Politics*. 