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

Class code: ENGL-UA 9164

Instructor Details: Eve Vincent
Consultations: Monday 1.00-2.00pm

Class Details: World Literature in English II: Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific
Mondays: 9.30am-12.30pm
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, 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 colonial powers in their own right, played in the region? Finally, what can the latest generation of migrant writing from 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 their critical thinking, reading and writing skills. Along the way, they will gain a solid grounding in the concepts of postcolonialism, race, diaspora, indigeneity, nationalism and multiculturalism.

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’ critical analysis, reading and writing skills.
- To develop an understanding of postcolonial concepts and theories, and apply these to literary texts.
- To develop an understanding of the concepts of race, diaspora, indigeneity, multiculturalism, nationalism and national identity and their relevance to Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific.
Assessment Components

- **15%: Attendance and class participation**
  This is a seminar class, so active participation is required.
  Marking criteria released Week 1: Feb. 11.

- **15%: Presentation (beginning week 2)**
  You will be responsible for a 10-minute presentation on one of the texts.
  Details released Week 1: Feb. 11 (including assessment guidelines and marking criteria).

- **30%: Midterm paper. 1,500 words**
  This is a short paper based on one of the literary or critical texts read.
  Due Week 7: Monday March 25.
  Details Released Week 3: Feb 25 (including question and marking criteria).

- **40%: Final paper. 4,000 words**
  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 15: May 27.
  Details Released Week 8: April 8 (including questions and marking criteria).

Failure to submit or fulfil 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 absence requests must be presented by the student to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Wherever possible, requests should be made in advance of an intended absence. In the case of illness, the student should contact the Assistant Director, Academic Programs within three days of the absence or as soon as practicable and provide medical documentation. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Assistant Director, Academic Programs.

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.

Be aware that absences from class may also impact on the participation grade awarded by your instructor.

Students are expected to arrive to class promptly both at the start of class and after breaks. 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.

**Late Submission of Work**

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

Late work should be submitted in person to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs during regular office hours (9:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday). In the absence of the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work in person. Students must also submit an electronic copy of late written work to Turn-It-In within 24 hours.

Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) 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.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

All written coursework 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 the plagiarism detection software turn-it-in. Instructions will be provided to you in class.

Required Text(s)


Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase)

Films

- *Once Were Warriors* (dir. Lee Tamahori) 1994
- *Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji* (dir. Suzy Bates) 2010

Additional supplementary materials to be posted in NYU Classes.

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<th>Internet Research Guidelines</th>
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<td>Additional Required Equipment</td>
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Session 1

**Postcolonial Literature in the Asia-Pacific**

**February 11**

**Reading**


**Film**

- *Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji* (dir. Suzy Bates) 2010

**Assessment**

Details and criteria for participation and presentation assessment items released and discussed. Presentation topics and weeks allocated.

Session 2

**Unit 1: Postcolonial Indigenous Identities – Australia (Weeks 2-4)**

**February 18**

**Writing Aboriginality in Postcolonial Australia – Kim Scott**

**Readings**

- Kim Scott. *True Country*

**Questions to guide your reading**

- How does the novel represent conflict, difference and cooperation within and between white and Indigenous Australian people?
- How does the novel relate to the past? 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.

Session 3

**Fiction and Nonfiction in Indigenous Writing – Alexis Wright**
February 25

Readings
- Alexis Wright. *Carpentaria*.
- Alexis Wright. ‘Where to Point the Spears?’ in Oboe and Bassi, eds, *Experiences of Freedom in Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures*

Questions to guide your reading
- 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.
Questions released for midterm paper (including marking criteria).

Session 4

Indigenous identities – Tony Birch

March 4

Readings
- Tony Birch, *Shadowboxing* (extracts)

Questions to guide your reading
- How does this book confound the reader’s expectations of ‘Aboriginal literature’?
- What is the relationship between indigeneity, place and belonging in *Shadowboxing*, as compared to *True Country* and *Carpentaria*?
- How can we understand Indigenous identities in relation to concepts such as hybridity?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 5

Unit 2: Indigeneity and New Zealand (Weeks 5 & 6)
Representing Maori Culture – Keri Hulme

March 11

Reading
- Keri Hulme. *The Bone People*.

Questions to guide your reading
- How does gender work to complicate issues of race and power in this text?
- What role does landscape and place play in this novel?
- How does history manifest in the present in this text?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.
Maori Film Adaptations

Films (to be viewed before class)

March 18

- Lee Tamahori, dir. *Once Were Warriors*. 1994 (film)

Questions to guide your viewing

- 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 New Zealand context, as opposed to the Australian texts previously discussed?
- How do these films compare to *The Bone People*, in terms of the question of what it means to be Maori?

Assessment

This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 7

Unit 3: Indigeneity and Race in the Pacific (Weeks 7 & 8)

Postcoloniality in the Pacific – Epeli Hau’ofa

March 25

Readings

- Epeli Hau’ofa. *Tales of the Tikongs*.
- Epeli Hau’ofa. ‘Our Sea of Islands’ and ‘The Writer as an Outsider’ in *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.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 29 – APRIL 5.

Session 8

Polynesian Poetry

April 8

Readings

- Michelle Keown. ‘Introduction: Voyaging Through the Pacific.’ *Pacific Islands Writing*.

Questions to guide your reading

- 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 issues to do with race and colonialism differently to prose fiction?

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.
Questions released for final paper (including marking criteria).

Session 9
April 15
Unit 4: Postcolonial Asia: Diaspora, Migration, Hybridity (weeks 9-11)
Writing the Asian Diaspora – Dewi Anggraeni

Readings
• Ien Ang, ‘Undoing Diaspora.’ *On Not Speaking Chinese*
• Dewi Anggraeni, *Snake.*

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

Assessment
This week is available as a presentation week.

Session 10
April 22
Hybridity within Asia – Rex Shelley

Reading
• Rex Shelley, *The Shrimp People.*
• Robbie B. H. Goh, ‘Writing Race and Asia-Pacific Mobilities – Constructions and Contestations.’ In *Narrating Race: Asia, (Trans)Nationalism, Social Change*

Questions to guide your reading
• 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 11
April 29
Multiculturalism in Australia – Hsu-Ming Teo

Readings
• Hsu-Ming Teo, *Love and Vertigo*

Questions to guide your reading
• What precisely does ‘multiculturalism’ mean in Australian public discourse?
• How do Ang and Stratton 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 12
May 6
Unit 5: Race and Identity in Contemporary Australia (Weeks 12-14)

Malouf 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 to guide your reading
- 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 13
May 13
White Memory in a Settler Society – Kate Grenville

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 Ghassan Hage?
- 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
May 20
White Identity in a Settler Society – Andrew McGahan

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 by 5pm Monday May 27.
**Classroom Etiquette**

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.

**Required Co-curricular Activities**

Beyond the required readings note that Session 6 requires you to view the films *Once Were Warriors* and *Whale Rider* before class.

**Suggested Co-curricular Activities**

None.

**Your Instructor**

Eve Vincent (Ph.D. currently under examination, University of Sydney) is an ethnographer and writer. She conducted long-term fieldwork for her doctoral thesis in Far West South Australia. Her research interests include Aboriginality as an unstable identity category, representations of Aboriginality, and Aboriginal-white progressive relations. As well as publishing scholarly work related to the above, Eve is a cultural critic and writer of literary non-fiction, whose work has appeared in *NewMatilda.com, Meanjin, Overland*, and *Griffith REVIEW.*