

Contemporary British Literature

Dr. Joy Wang

Overview

This course examines British Literature from the immediate post-World War II period to the present. How are today's most influential British novelists, both relying on and departing from the grand tradition of English fiction, reimagining what it means to be English, to be citizens (or noncitizens) of a postwar, postcolonial, multicultural, not-so-United Kingdom, confronting radical social change and political uncertainty? How do these novelists testify to a post-imperial Britain? This course will be approached from a historical perspective, contextualizing each writer within a specific social and political milieu. Readings are chosen from writers such as Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess, Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith.

Course Requirements

Students will complete each of the eight assigned novels prior to class and will be expected to be active participants in discussion (20%). Each novel will be discussed for two class periods, and at the end of the third and sixth week, a day will be set aside for student presentations (20%). In addition, a one page (single-spaced) reaction paper will be handed in every third day at the start of discussing a new novel (30%). There will also be a take-home exam, an extended essay of approximately 3-4,000 words that will be submitted at the end of the six week period (30%). This longer essay may be an extension of one of the response papers or it may combine a discussion of one or more of the novels as well as secondary critical resources.

Grading

30%: Response Papers
30%: Final Exam Essay
20%: Class Presentation
20%: Class Participation and Attendance

Required Reading

Graham Greene, The Quiet American (1955)
Anthony Burgess, One Hand Clapping (1961)
Kazuo Ishiguro, Remains of the Day (1989)
Julian Barnes, A History of the World in 10.5 chapters (1990)
Hanif Kureishi, The Buddha of Suburbia (1990)
Alistair Gray, Poor Things (1992)
Zadie Smith, White Teeth (2000)
Ian MacEwan, Saturday (2005)

Syllabus

Week 1

(T, W) Graham Greene, The Quiet American (1955)
(Th) Anthony Burgess, One Hand Clapping (1961)

Week 2

(T) Anthony Burgess, One Hand Clapping (1961)
(W, Th) Kazuo Ishiguro, Remains of the Day (1989)

Week 3

(T, W) Julian Barnes, A History of the World in 10.5 Chapters (1990)
(Th) *Student Presentations

Week 4

(T, W) Hanif Kureishi, The Buddha of Suburbia (1990)
(Th) Alistair Gray, Poor Things (1992)

Week 5

(T) Alistair Gray, Poor Things (1992)
(W, Th) Zadie Smith, White Teeth (2000)

Week 6

(T, W) Ian MacEwan, Saturday (2005)
(Th) *Student Presentations