English 461: Studies in Film Culture
Fall 2014
Re-Visioning Colonialism in Film

Meetings: Tu, Th 2-3:40 (L & L 307) + Tu 3:45-6:00 (L & L 422)

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Office phone: x3178
Office hours: Mon 1-1:45; Th 3:45-4:30 and by appointment

Texts

CWU Coursepack 2014: “Re-Visioning Colonialism in Film”
Occasional handouts and documents posted on Canvas

In-class Films:

The Letter (1940), dir. William Wyler** ##
A Passage to India (1984), dir. David Lean## ++
Out of Africa (1985), dir. Sidney Pollack** ## ++
The Quiet American (2002), dir. Phillip Noyce ** ## ++
Rabbit Proof Fence (2002), dir. Phillip Noyce** ## @@ ++
Chocolat (1988), dir. Claire Denis##
Nowhere in Africa (2002), dir. Caroline Link** ## @@
Cache (2005), dir. Michael Haneke## ++
Course description:

This course is designed to explore the ways in which the sweeping ideology and practice of (primarily) European colonialism has been examined, critiqued and ultimately re-validated by contemporary Western filmmakers. We will probe the ways imperial powers portrayed themselves in the context of the indigenous worlds they occupied, and the hybridized cultures that grew out of their practices. We will study feature-length films that dramatize and interrogate colonialist institutions and behaviors and interpret their consequences. Our objectives will be to familiarize ourselves with the complex debates around imperialism, to come to an understanding of the ways that film can simultaneously question and corroborate ideology, and to comprehend how issues of colonialism are interwoven in the Western mind with issues of race, gender, and class. We will study film as a mode of imaginative expression and a vehicle to transmit cultural ideology, in the process coming to understand the constructedness of cinematic imagery and narrative. Students will build a vocabulary of critical language and theoretical concepts, developing progressively more sophisticated approaches to the film medium and to fictional narrative. Students will read a range of essays theoretical and critical, view a number of films, both in class and independently, and develop a body of analytical work around this material.

Assignments and projects:

Students will engage in a series of regular written exercises, designed to enhance their familiarity with the critical vocabulary and their ability to use it to examine and articulate meaningful insights about the films we view. In addition to reading, viewing, and discussing, the course will entail:

- Regular short written assignments ("notes") focusing on responses to films viewed and essays read.
- A mid-term exam, covering critical vocabulary, films viewed, and concepts studied.
- A capstone project done in teams, involving close analysis of a film from a list prepared by the instructor, assessing how that film portrays colonialism. Project will be presented orally to the class using clips with accompanying written documentation. Teams will be assigned early and then will select their respective films for presentation. The capstone presentations will be made during the final Thursday class for the course (Thur, Dec. 4) and the scheduled final exam time for the course (Mon, Dec. 8, from 2-4 PM).
- Ongoing discussion of films we view in class in the context of assigned readings

Learner Outcomes:
• Master a critical vocabulary of cinematic and colonial/post-colonial theory, and be able to employ it for critical analysis.

• Develop a comprehensive overview of the cinematic presentations of colonialism in history and be able to discern what ideological positions are being advanced by those films.

• Understand the ways in which films function as a textual system, and both challenge and reinforce cultural ideas.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

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<tr>
<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/participation/discussion</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short written assignments</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Capstone project</td>
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**Expectations:**

• Regular attendance and keeping up with reading, writing assignments, and film viewing are required of everyone.

• Readings should be prepared carefully and must be completed by the day designated for discussion.

• Viewings of in-class films will take place usually during class viewing time, but sometimes on your own. You are expected to be present for screenings, but if for any reason you miss the in-class screening, you are to secure the film and view it in advance of the next class meeting. Discussion will usually follow viewings. **Because you have a list of films and viewing dates for each, please plan ahead if you need to secure your own copy of the film.**

• Thoughtful involvement in class discussions is expected. We want to encourage an open atmosphere where issues can be explored provocatively, without making people feel pressured or silenced. Respecting opposing views and listening to others are crucial elements of good discussion. Since many of our discussions will be about the construction of gender, race, and class in our culture, a level of comfort and candor needs to be established.

• Written assignments will include weekly written responses ("notes") to films and/or readings which may be turned in during class or submitted as a Word document in advance by email. All written assignments should be printed and double-spaced. Observe length limits diligently.

• You will need to consult the Canvas site regularly, as announcements, assignments, and other class materials will be posted there.

**Disability Services:** Students with disabilities who wish to set up academic accommodations in this class will be fully supported.
Topics and Readings:

Weeks 1 and 2: Colonialist Paradigms and Discourses

- READING:
  Ashcroft: Read entries for the following terms: aboriginal/indigenous peoples; colonial desire; colonial discourse; colonial patronage; colonialism; Euro-centrism; exotic; exoticism; globalization; imperialism; metropolis; miscegenation; native; orientalism; Other/other; othering; race; third world; universalism.

- VIEWING: Tue, 9/30: The Letter
- WRITING: "Note" due Thur, 10/2

Week 3: Gender and Race in Colonialist Contexts

- READING:
  Ashcroft: Entries on terms: agency; binarism; class and post-colonialism; dislocation; essentialism; exploration and travel; feminism and post-colonialism; hegemony; marginality; place; race; savage/civilized; subaltern; subjectivity.
  Coursepack: "Women/Migrants/Victims," 57-64; "The Phantom Twitchings," 65-74

- VIEWING: Tue, 10/7: A Passage to India
- NO CLASS: Thur, 10/9
- WRITING: "Note" due Tue, 10/14

Week 4: Imperializing the Landscape

- READING:
  Ashcroft: post-colonialism; post-colonial body; post-colonial state
  Coursepack: “The Matter of Whiteness,” 75-97
  Handouts: "Out of Africa"; "Basking in Farah’s Gaze"

- VIEWING: Tue, 10/14: Out of Africa
- WRITING: "Note" due Thur, 10/16
• PLANNING: List of capstone films passed out in class; teams assigned

Week 5: Eastern Empire

• READING:
  Handouts: Short articles on *The Quiet American*

• VIEWING: Tue, 10/21: *The Quiet American*

• WRITING: Thur, 10/23 Take-home midterm passed out; due Tue, 10/28

Week 6: Imperialist Africa

• READING:
  Coursepack: “Long Road Home,” 113-116

• VIEWING: Tue, 10/28: *Rabbit Proof Fence*

• WRITING: “Note” due Thur, 10/30

Week 7: Colonial Memory: Past and Present

• READING:

• VIEWING: Tue, 11/4: *Chocolat*

• WRITING: "Note" due Thur, 11/6

• PLANNING: Capstone film selected; team work planned

Week 7: Transculture, Transgender

• READING:
  Handout: Short articles on *M. Butterfly*

• VIEWING: *M Butterfly on your own; no class Tue, 11/11: Veterans’ Day*

• WRITING: "Note" due Thur, 11/13

Week 8: Colonized and Colonizers

• READING
  Handout: Muller essay
- VIEWING: Tue, 11/18: *Nowhere in Africa*
- WRITING: "Note" due Thur, 11/20

**Week 9: Colonial Impacts in Europe**

- READING
  
  *Handout: Short article on Cache*

- VIEWING: Tue, 11/25 *Cache*

**Week 10: Wrap Up: The Imperial Legacy**

Tue, 12/2

- Discuss *Cachet*

- Preview team projects. Each team will:
  
  --Prepare and present to classmates a 2-page precis of their film
  
  --Prepare a 3-5 minute oral preview of their project film and main idea

Thur, 12/4

Team presentations

Mon, 12/8

Continue team presentations