

**STUDIES IN CRITICAL THEORY:  
GLOBALIZATION AND AMERICAN LITERATURE**

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and by appointment

**ENGL 369—01A, spring 2010**  
time: even days, 1:00—2:10 pm  
place: SJU Quad 353

**INTRODUCTION**

Globalization is one of the new buzzwords these days—both in newspapers and in the halls of academia. Since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1990 and the commencement of the World Trade Organization in 1995, thousands of books have been published that analyze, celebrate, criticize, or attack this very abstract phenomenon called “globalization.” The question for this course will be what this means for the study of American literature and culture. In the course we will read three kinds of literature. One will be some of the most important theoretical statements about globalization made in the past decade such as those by Fredric Jameson, Antonio Negri, and Naomi Klein. Two will be the forms of popular culture such as movies and hip hop, which have changed significantly in response to the changing socio-economic conditions. Three will be some of the classic texts of American literature including Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* and Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible*, as well as a powerful new voice on the American literary scene—the winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize, Junot Diaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. The aim of the course is to put the theory, popular culture, and classic literary texts in conversation with each other so that we can see all three in a new light.

**TEXTS IN BOOKSTORE**

Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*  
Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, eds., *The Cultures of Globalization*  
Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*  
C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*  
Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

**ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:**

Unit One Paper (3-4 pages) .....	10%
Unit Two Paper (4-5 pages) .....	15%
Unit Three Paper (5-6 pages) .....	15%
Unit Four Paper (5-6 pages) .....	15%
Unit Five paper (3-4 pages) .....	15%
Oral Presentation .....	10%
Participation and Attendance .....	20%

## **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

Half of your attendance and participation grade is your attendance. You are allowed three absences. Unless you have a documented excuse, I will reduce your attendance grade by 20% for each absence in excess of those three.

The other half of this grade is your participation. I expect you to be prepared to discuss the reading every day and to listen respectfully to your classmates.

## **GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK**

All written work should follow standard MLA guidelines for college work.

All written work should follow the default settings for most word processing software: one-inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman font.

Detailed explanations of each written assignment will be posted on Moodle.

## **ORAL PRESENTATION**

Each of you will sign up for a specific day and give a 15-minute oral presentation in which you suggest your own critical insight, point of view, or argument about the assigned reading. Make your case as best you can. In your presentation, I recommend that you also have selected a few key passages from the assigned reading and explain why you think they are significant or relevant. Your presentation should conclude with several open-ended questions for the class to discuss. You can provide a small handout, PowerPoint presentation, or e-mail the class ahead of time with an outline and list of quotes and questions if you wish.

## **POLICIES**

Any act of plagiarism can result in an F for the course and can go on your permanent academic record. Please see The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University's official policy on plagiarism here: <[http://www.csbsju.edu/catalog/2003-2005/Academic\\_Programs/Rights\\_and\\_Responsibilities/002.htm](http://www.csbsju.edu/catalog/2003-2005/Academic_Programs/Rights_and_Responsibilities/002.htm)>.

All students have the right of non-discriminatory access to the programs at the colleges. If you have a disability and require special consideration, you must inform me as soon as possible.

I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time during the semester and will inform you of all changes in a timely manner.

## CALENDAR

### Unit One – What is Globalization?

**Questions:** How do we define globalization economically, politically, and culturally? How is this concept better or worse than other concepts such as international, transnational, *mundialization*, world system, etc., for understanding our reality? What is the debate over the meaning of the word and the implications of the phenomenon?

Jan. 12 (Tue) Introduction

Jan. 14 (Thu) Concepts: definition(s) and history of “globalization”

Reading: MacGillivray, “Introduction” to *A Brief History of Globalization*;  
Draper and Shultz, “Introduction” to *Dignity and Defiance*

Jan. 18 (Mon) Concepts: definition, causality, value, and policy

Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr. “A Time to Break the Silence” and “I See the Promised Land”; Thomas Friedman, “Flat World”; Martin Wolf, ch. 1-2 and 14 of *Why Globalization Works*; “Joseph Stiglitz, “Globalism and Its Discontents”; Naomi Klein, “Preface” and “Seattle” from *Fences and Windows* and “Introduction” and “Conclusion” of *No Logo*

Jan. 20 (Wed) Concepts: free trade, free market, market fundamentalism, fair trade

Reading: from *Cultures of Globalization*—Noam Chomsky, “Free Trade and Free Market...”; David Held, “Global Left Turn” from *Prospect* (2004)

; In-class movie: “The Take”

Jan. 22 (Fri) Concept: theory

Reading: Suman Gupta, ch.1 of *Globalization and Literature*; from *The Cultures of Globalization*—Jameson’s “Preface”, Dussel’s “Beyond Eurocentrism”, and Mignolo’s “Globalization...”

Jan. 26 (Tue) 3-4 page paper due critiquing the word “global”

### Unit Two – Globalization Theory and Popular Culture

**Questions:** What is the relationship between popular culture and the economics of multinational capitalism? How do we theorize the relationship between local and global? What is a cultural identity in the context of globalization? Is there such a thing as a “global” or cosmopolitan identity? Is popular culture simply reflective of irresistible socio-economic forces or can it also play a role in resisting those forces?

Jan. 28 (Thu) Concept: popular culture, sports and music

Reading: excerpts from *How Soccer Explains the World*; NPR on global hip hop; and American hip hop (Kanye West, Mos Def, and K’Naan)

- Feb. 1 (Mon) Concepts: dialectic, hegemony, culture industry  
Reading: from *Cultures of Globalization*—Trent’s “Media...” and Jameson’s “Notes...”
- Feb. 3 (Wed) Concepts: rhizome, opposition, identity, union  
Reading: excerpts from Negri and Hardt’s *Multitude* and excerpts from Gopal Balakrishnan’s *Debating Empire*
- Feb. 5 (Fri) Concepts: movies, paradigm, agency, gender, cosmopolitan, community  
Reading: Steven Thomas, “The New James Bond and Globalization Theory”; from *Dignity and Defiance*—Shultz, “The Chochabamba Water Revolt...” and Draper, “Workers, Leaders, and Mothers”
- Feb. 9 (Tue) workshop for paper topics
- Feb. 11 (Thu) 4-5 page paper due on two events or sites of popular culture (e.g., two movies)

### Unit Three -- Globalization and the Academic Discipline of Literature

**Questions:** How do we conceptualize literary traditions in the context of globalization? What are the purposes of English and Comparative Literature departments? How do we perform literary analysis of individual texts in the context of globalization?

- Feb. 15 (Mon) Concepts: nation, literature, interdisciplinary  
Reading: from *Cultures of Globalization*—Paik Nak-chung’s “Nations and Literatures” and Masao Miyoshi’s “‘Globalization,’ Culture...”; Edward Said, “Globalizing Literary Study,” *PMLA*
- Feb. 17 (Wed) Concepts: transnational, multinational, finance capital, ethnicity  
Reading: “Introduction” to *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*; from *Cultures of Globalization*—Subramani, “The End of Free States”
- Feb. 19 (Fri) Concepts: representation, otherness  
Reading: *Poisonwood Bible*, book 1; from *Cultures of Globalization*—Ioan Davies, “Negotiating African Culture”; Emily Dickinson, selected poems.
- Feb. 23 (Tue) Concepts: mission, assimilation, culture, acculturation  
Reading: *Poisonwood Bible*, book 2; Cotton Mather, “The Negroe Christianized”; Harriet Beecher Stowe “The Freeman’s Dream: a Parable”
- Feb. 25 (Thu) Concepts: death  
Reading: *Poisonwood Bible*, book 3; Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write about Africa”

Feb. 27—Mar. 7 SPRING BREAK

Mar. 8 (Mon) Reading: *Poisonwood Bible*, book 4; excerpts from Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*; on-line bio of Patrice Lumumba

Mar. 10 (Wed) Reading *Poisonwood Bible*, finish;  
Michael Berube, "American Studies without Exceptions," *PMLA*;  
McKee and Trefzer, "Preface: Global Contexts, Local Literatures,"  
*American Literature* 78: 4 (2006);

Mar. 12 (Fri) 5-6 page paper on *Poisonwood Bible* and the field of "American Literature"

Mar. 13 (Sat) CSBSJU Global Studies Conference

#### **Unit Four – Re-thinking American Literary History**

**Questions:** What is literary history? What is the relationship between literary history and an individual work? What is the relationship between literary history and cultural identities or political governance? How might we think critically about literary history? What does a reader's critical (or uncritical) perspective do to a text?

Mar. 16 (Tue) Concept: literary history, intertextuality  
Reading: *Moby Dick*, "Etymology"—ch. 19, plus the editorial Forward

Mar. 18 (Thu) Concepts: identity, governance  
Reading: *Moby Dick*, ch. 20—41

Mar. 22 (Mon) Concepts: national, transnational, post-national, multinational, supranational  
Reading: *Moby Dick*, ch. 42—58; John Carlos Rowe, "Nineteenth-Century United..." *PMLA*

Mar. 24 (Wed) Reading: *Moby Dick*, ch. 59—87

Mar. 26 (Fri) Concepts: empire, anarchy, "world order"  
Reading: *Moby Dick*, ch. 88—109; excerpts from Amy Kaplan's *The Anarchy of Empire...*

Mar. 30 (Tue) Reading: finish *Moby Dick*

Apr. 1—Apr. 5 EASTER

Apr. 6 (Tue) Reading: *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, pp. vii—33

Apr. 8 (Thu) Reading: *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, pp. 34—89

Apr. 12 (Mon) Reading: *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, pp. 90—167

Apr. 14 (Wed) 5-6 page paper due on *Moby Dick*, C.L.R. James, and re-thinking American literary history

### **Unit Five – Global Capitalism and the Future(s) of American Literature(s)**

**Questions:** What is the present and the future of this phenomenon we might (or might not) still call “American literature”? What is problematic about whatever “present” and/or “future” that we might imagine? What questions from previous units remain trenchant for this unit? What questions have we not yet asked?

Apr. 16 (Fri) *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, pp. 1—75; Wai Chee Dimock, “African, Caribbean, American,” *Shades of the Planet*

Apr. 20 (Tue) *Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, pp. 76—165

Apr. 22 (Thu) *Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, pp. 166—201; other reading TBA.

Apr. 26 (Mon) *Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, pp. 202—261; from *Cultures of Globalization*—Sherif Hetata, “Dollarization...”

Apr. 28 – Scholarship and Creativity Day

Apr. 29 (Thu) *Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, pp. 262—307; from *Cultures of Globalization*—Miyoshi, “In Place of a Conclusion”

May 3 (Mon) *Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, pp. pp. 308—335; excerpts from Pease and Wiegman, eds., *The Futures of American Studies*

Finals Week 4-6 page final paper due on Junot Diaz, globalization, and the future(s) of American Literature(s)