**ERO TIC EMPIRES**

**ANDREW RAGNI**

**OFFICE HOURS:** TBD

**Course Description**

“Africa! In my imagination it was big with terrors, with alluring horrors, with hopes and expectations; and throughout the hot night I turned my longing eyes towards the sultry promise of that lightning-swathed horizon.” In his memoirs, the French novelist André Gide writes in rapturous prose about voyaging south. Indeed, such tales form an important genre in the history of European fiction and travel writing. These narratives deploy stereotypes to characterize non-European geographies and people as excessively sensual and cast outside the progressive flow of time, waiting to be discovered by the white traveler. The literary critic Edward Said termed this projected fantasy of sexual decadence “Orientalism,” or the cultural/historical reduction of “the East” into a stockpile of recognizable tropes. This reduction serves an ideological goal: to portray the North/West as the intellectual/cultural elite, and the South/East as the mere object of the latter’s cataloguing fetish.

This First-Year Seminar interrogates canonical texts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European literature and travel writing by formulating questions about the erotic dimension of empires, with Said’s critical intervention as our point of departure. How is sexuality configured in colonial writing? What are the differences in this configuration or perception of sexuality from British, French, and Belgian empires? What do these configurations tell us about the ideological map superimposed over the colony and the metropole? How is the historical practice of literary criticism informed by this sexual hierarchy, as in the psychoanalytic tradition of literary interpretation? Students will be introduced to literary criticism by closely reading a diverse collection of theoretical and primary texts that offer a global perspective on the history of European colonization. Moreover, the course is designed as an introduction to writing life at a global research university by tailoring exercises to build competency in several styles of writing within the humanities.

**Texts**

Camus, Albert. “The Adulterous Woman”
Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*
Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*
Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*
Gide, André. *The Immoralist*
Jameson, Fredric. “Modernism and Imperialism”
Lim, Eng-Beng. *Brown Boys and Rice Queens*
McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather*
Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes*
Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*
---. *Orientalism*
Waugh, Evelyn. *Black Mischief*
Woolf, Virginia. *The Voyage Out*
Reading and Class Schedule

UNIT ONE – What is Orientalism?

Week 01: Writing response due.

Week 02: Writing response due.
Gide, André. The Immoralist. (pp. 7 – 55)

Week 03: Précis writing workshop.
Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness. (pp. 1 – 38)
Said, Edward. “Connecting Empire to Secular Interpretation,” (pp. 51 – 53); “Narrative and Social Space,” Culture and Imperialism. (pp. 62 – 80)

Week 04: Précis due.
Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness. (pp. 39 – 76)
Jameson, Fredric. “Modernism and Imperialism.”

UNIT TWO – Sexuality and Colonialism

Week 05
Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1. (pp. 1 – 49)
Waugh, Evelyn. Black Mischief. (pp. 1 – 60)

Week 06: Writing response due.
Waugh, Evelyn. Black Mischief. (pp. 61 – 120)

Week 07: Close reading writing workshop.
Waugh, Evelyn. Black Mischief. (pp. 121 – 180)

Week 08: Close reading due.
Waugh, Evelyn. *Black Mischief*. (pp. 181 – 240)

**Week 09**


Waugh, Evelyn. *Black Mischief*. (pp. 241 - 300)

**Week 10: Research topic writing workshop.**


**UNIT THREE – Bon Voyage!**

**Week 11: Topic selection/annotated bibliography due.**

Pratt, Mary Louise. “Mapping Ideology: Gide, Camus, Algeria.” (pp. 158 – 174)

Pratt, Mary Louise. “Postcolonial Hyphens,” *Imperial Eyes*. (pp. 217 – 220)

**Week 12**

Pratt, Mary Louise. “The lady in the swamp,” *Imperial Eyes*. (pp. 209 – 212)

Woolf, Virginia. *The Voyage Out*. (pp. 1 – 80)

**Week 13**

Woolf, Virginia. *The Voyage Out*. (pp. 81 – 180)

**Week 14**

Presentations of final papers.

**Assignments**

- **Class Participation | 10%**
  
  Students are expected to arrive to class on time, attend every class, and read the material assigned for that day before class begins. A vibrant and intellectually inspiring environment flourishes when students actively participate in discussions and respond respectfully and thoughtfully to one another’s contributions. Students are evaluated based on their contributions toward the creation of this environment.

- **Weekly Response Papers | ~300 words | 3 Responses Total | 10%**
  
  Students will submit three total responses over the course of the semester. These responses address one reading assignment delineated on weeks one, two, and six. *Responses are due before the text is discussed in class.* Responses may raise questions for discussion, draw comparative connections to other class materials, evaluate a text’s arguments, or offer other interpretive remarks. Responses are not given letter grades.
- Précis of a Theoretical Text | 1000~1500 words | Due: Week 04 | 20%

A précis is a concise summary of a text’s principal arguments. Students must identify and explain the arguments of the text while also demonstrating how the text constructs, defends, and advances these arguments. A précis does not simply reproduce the organization or sequential structure of the text in a more condensed form. Rather, the main ideas of the text are presented in whichever order assists the reader in acquiring a sense of clarity about the author’s purpose for writing the text.

- Literary Close Reading | 1000~1500 words | Due: Week 08 | 20%

A close reading offers a creative interpretation of a text by analyzing how the text’s form interfaces with the text’s content. In other words, the formal, stylistic, or rhetorical conventions in a text fall under as much scrutiny as its themes, dialogue, and plot. Good close readings take nothing in the text for granted and often concentrate their analysis on a short paragraph in order to dig deeply into the text’s unconscious. Oftentimes, a close reading will apply a critical frame of analysis to the text in order to underscore an unaddressed theoretical concern. Close readings are not summaries of what happened in the text; they move against the text’s grain to tell us something other than the surface narrative presented in the text.

- Topic Selection/Annotated Bibliography | Due: Week 11 | 20%

In preparation for their final papers, students will write a paragraph proposing an area of research in accordance with the themes/texts of the course. The paragraph need not contain a fully-developed argument, but it should attempt to narrow down a field or question of focus for the writer. Students must then choose five sources to annotate that will assist in their research. No more than three of their sources may be selected from the syllabus. Annotations will briefly summarize the text’s argument/content and its relevance to the research topic proposed. The primary goal of this assignment is to acquire a sense of the state of the field in which the student situates his or her research.

- Final Paper | 1500~2000 words | 20%

The final paper explores a question crafted in consultation with the instructor. Research papers provide scholarly context for the writer’s own argument, address the principal argument(s) of a theoretical text, and offer close readings of a text’s language. These component parts defend the thesis of the research paper.