

IAS Sophomore Seminar

Spring 2009

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Office hours (Dewing 203H): M, T, W, F 12:00-1:00 or by appointment

IAST 290. BORDER KNOWLEDGE: HYBRID IDENTITIES, LANGUAGE AND CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

This course takes into consideration the college's international focus along with IAS majors' explicit intentions to engage with the global community while becoming aware of their own country's critical position in it. When students participate in foreign language programs here, the overarching objective is literacy. Literacy is the ability to understand and communicate. When it comes to a second language and another culture, literacy requires that we occupy a position in between two communities and two cultural traditions. This is a difficult position. The learner must have the skills not only to comprehend cultural artifacts and listen to people from another tradition, but also to attempt to interpret them without being entrenched in his or her own cultural biases. There are, however, many individuals and communities that do straddle two or more cultural, linguistic or national traditions as a normal part of their daily lives. In this course students will read texts by and about people who live on the border. It may be a border between nations, between cultures, between languages, or between ethnic or racial identities. Rather than viewing these subjects as people of only incompletely embody one identity or another, we will take the attitude that these writers may actually occupy a privileged knowledge position and have a lot to teach us as we negotiate between two worlds in the classroom, on study abroad, and in our work on international and regional issues.

This course will be organized around the following learning outcomes:

- a. improving critical reading skills by reading a variety of literary, non-literary texts with an eye to deciphering normative and dissident discourses of identity, reading "between the lines" and "against the grain."
- b. an introduction to emerging fields of cultural and literary studies such as cosmopolitanism, transnational culture, post-colonial studies and subaltern studies.
- c. acquiring basic research skills in the humanities and social sciences, and applying them to assignments and projects within the students' geographic area of specialization and more global topics.
- d. improving formal writing skills through smaller exercises in summarizing, synthesis, comparison and arguing a position, as well as a final project.
- e. reflection: 1) on the ways in which "life on the hyphen" provides an important set of knowledge and experiences for understanding an increasingly complex world; and 2) on the students' own foreign language, other internationally oriented course work and imminent study abroad experience as a way of (humbly!) approximating this kind of knowledge-position.

Texts: Markandaya's, Roy's, Argueda's, Perez-Firmat's and Dorfman's books are available from the college bookstore.

Components of the final grade

Formal essay (10-12 pages, a guide and rubric will be distributed)	35%
Bibliographical assignment (based on student's area of study)	10%
Formal writing exercises (3 short pieces on summarizing, synthesizing and defending a point of view)	30%
Reflection exercises (2 short pieces, a guide will be distributed)	15%
Participation in class discussions (a rubric will be distributed)	10%

Attendance: Students are allowed two absences from class. Any subsequent absence will result in 2 points being subtracted from the final grade unless a medical excuse is provided. Varsity athletes who will be missing more than two classes due to "away games" must speak with me during week 1 to find out what documentation they must provide.

Students with a documented learning disability that will affect their performance should speak with me as soon as possible.

Program

Week One: March 30 – April 3

Monday: Introduction to course and class

Wednesday: Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," Public Culture 12.1 (Winter 2000): 1-19. (Project Muse)

Friday: Walter D. Mignolo, "Remodeling the Store: The End of Foreign Languages and the Beginning of Plurilingual and Transcultural education." (e-reserves)

Week Two: April 6 – 10:

Monday: Albert Memmi, selections from The Colonizer and the Colonized (e-reserves)

Wednesday: Frantz Fanon, chapter from Black Skin, White Masks (e-reserves)

Friday: Hand in first writing assignment. (summary)

Week Three: April 13 – 17

Monday: Kamala Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve

Wednesday: Kamala Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve

Friday: Library research workshop

Week Four: April 20 – 24

Monday: Kamala Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve

Wednesday: Assia Djebar, selections from Fantasia and “Annie and Fatima” (e-reserves)

Friday: Hand in second writing assignment (Reflection)

Week Five: April 27 – May 1

Monday: José María Arguedas, Deep Rivers

Wednesday: José María Arguedas, Deep Rivers

Friday: José María Arguedas, Deep Rivers;
Preliminary investigations for final paper due.

Week Six: May 4 – 8

Monday: selections from Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze’s anthology (e-reserves)

Wednesday: Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things

Friday: Hand in third writing assignment (synthesis)

Week Seven: May 11 – 15

Monday: Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things

Wednesday: Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things

Friday: Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things

Week Eight: May 18 – 22

Monday: Ariel Dorfman, Heading South, Looking North

Wednesday: Ariel Dorfman, Heading South, Looking North

Friday: Turn in fourth writing assignment (defense)

Week Nine: May 27 – 29

Monday: no classes; keep reading!!!

Wednesday: Gustavo Perez-Firmat, Next Year in Cuba

Friday: Gustavo Perez-Firmat, Next Year in Cuba
Class discussion on final project (have outline and working bibliography ready)

Week Ten: June 1 – 5

Monday: Gustavo Perez-Firmat, Next Year in Cuba

Wednesday: Gloria Andaldúa, selections from Borderland/La frontera

Friday: José David Saldívar, “Unsettling Race, Coloniality and Caste,” Cultural Studies
21.2-3 (2007): 339-367. (reserves)
Turn in fifth writing assignment

Week Eleven:

June 10th: Final project due.

HAPPY SUMMER!!