

**Instructor:** Dr. Oishani Sengupta  
**Class Time:** Th 6-8.50pm  
**Location:** Hudspeth Hall

**Office:** Hudspeth Hall 317  
**Office Hours:** Th 4-6 PM, by appointment  
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## ENGL 5304: Cultures of Difference in the British Empire



"Tableau to accompany Louis Agassiz's 'Sketch,'" from Josiah Clark Nott's *Types of Mankind*, Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854. *From the collections of the Boston Medical Library.*

### Course description

How do people justify discriminating between individuals and human groups? If race is no longer accepted as scientific reality, then what kinds of beliefs inspire racist violence? As soon as we begin pondering these questions, we realize that discriminatory behavior is rooted not only in the global histories of colonialism, enslavement, and extraction but in the stories and pictures circulated about them. Representations, visual and verbal, are therefore at the heart of the everyday politics of classifying humans according to a sliding scale. In this course, we will examine the symbolic and material processes by which human difference is constructed in the British empire—with the understanding that transatlantic imperialism and its attendant forms of capital continue to shape the world we live in. We will observe the production and sanctification of human difference through narrative, image, history, and theory, with the aim of denaturalizing these all-too-familiar frames

Our understanding of the historical and material textures of cultural difference within the British empire will develop gradually as we put together a range of primary texts (novel, poem, short story, travelogue, newspaper, magazine, illustration, photograph) and secondary sources (monographs, video lectures, essays, articles, and collection data) to make sense of the multiplicity of ways in which people across the nineteenth-century world grappled with human hierarchies. As we encounter this material, we will keep asking ourselves how race—a system of classifying humans that has been declared defunct by modern genetics—is being *culturally constructed* using a combination of textual and visual symbols; and being *shared* across large territories—from London to Mumbai and Cape Town, from Paris to Pondicherry and Martinique, and from Brussels to the Congo. Conversely, we will also study how the colonized spaces revised and remade cultural ideologies of class, caste, race, and gender by refracting it through indigenous discourses and methodologies.

In conjunction with literary texts, our syllabus includes histories of colonization and the creation of racial ideology (Brantlinger, Wheeler), iconographic methods (McClintock, Mitchell), cultural studies (Gilmore, Hall), as well as feminist, psychoanalytic, postcolonialist, and Marxist critiques of empire. I expect you to conduct your own processes of research and discovery in conversation with the materials assigned in this class and read as widely as possible.

**Required primary texts (available at the UTEP bookstore/as pdfs online\*/digital databases\*\*):**

TITLE	AUTHOR/EDITOR	PUBLISHER
<i>The Half-Caste</i>	Dinah Mulock Craik/Melissa Edmundson	Broadview Press
<i>Kim</i>	Rudyard Kipling	Penguin
<i>King Solomon's Mines</i>	Henry Rider Haggard	Penguin
<i>The Annihilation of Caste</i>	B. R. Ambedkar/S.Anand	Verso
<i>The Woman of Color</i>	Anonymous	Broadview Press
<i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>	Frantz Fanon/Richard Philcox	Grove Press
<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	Joseph Conrad	Norton
<i>Petals of Blood</i>	Ngugi wa Thiong'o	Penguin
<i>Orientalism</i>	Edward Said	Vintage

NOTE: At the graduate level, there is a practical value to using physical copies of the main assigned texts. However, I have no objection to you using digital copies/pdfs of any book on the syllabus. However, please make an effort to match the edition (if available), since that makes class discussion smoother. If you cannot find a digital text, please let me know.

NOTE: Texts marked with an asterisk (\*) in the syllabus are additional primary texts such as poems, plays, or short stories, or scholarly articles, available on JSTOR or MLA EBSCO on the UTEP Library website (<https://www-jstor-org.utep.idm.oclc.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>). It is paramount that we, as members of the College of Liberal Arts, frequently use the databases that contain these scholarly articles; if we do not access them, the university will cancel these (fairly

expensive) subscriptions, which will make future scholarly research very challenging. I will therefore only post book chapters or other sources not readily available on these databases and will ask you to access the assigned scholarly articles yourselves. This will ensure that we will both keep our subscriptions and that you will hone your research skills.

### **Course Expectations:**

As a graduate course in English, this is a reading, writing, and thinking intensive environment. Combining curiosity with rigor, we will navigate the learning material in collaboration and conversation with each other through the semester. You will find yourself commenting on the course materials as well as your peers' perceptions and written material and receiving their valuable feedback in return. Therefore, you are expected to engage with all the reading/viewing material before the class in which they are due and come to class not only with hardcopies or electronic versions of any assigned texts and secondary sources (articles, reviews, etc.) but with your original *reactions, arguments, and perceptions* about them. The challenge will be to explore our own scholarly tendencies as we work through these ideas of colonial cultural history and power, all the while sticking close to the texts. We can discuss time management and strategies for reading/writing/revision as part of our class sessions.

**Grading:** The following components will cumulatively determine your grade.

#### **I. Attendance and Participation (10%)**

Creating a collaborative classroom involves the active and attentive participation of every member, who will not only be invested in their own learning but also that of others. By active participation I mean coming to each class on time, bringing class materials and notes, as well as posing concrete questions or specific comments that deepen our understanding of the materials. 10% of the grade will depend on your enthusiastic and focused involvement within the classroom community. You may miss two classes without any repercussions on your attendance grade. However, be aware that missing even one class will adversely impact your understanding and therefore may lower your overall course grade.

#### **II. Keyword Analysis Assignment (15%)**

This assignment is in two parts. First, it asks you to select a keyword of your choice that represents an important concept that we find ourselves using in this class (I will provide a list, but you are free to choose from beyond that); and write 500 words explaining why you think it deepens our understanding of difference under colonization. Second, it asks you to locate a primary text from the syllabus and examine (in 700-100 words) how your selected keyword is explored in that given text. More instructions will be provided 2 weeks before the due date.

#### **III. Visual Analysis Essay (10%)**

This assignment asks you to employ the tools of visual analysis to racial imagery produced with the context of British colonization. Select an image (illustration, painting, photograph) that you find particularly arresting in connection to the context of this class—we will explore relevant resources for this purpose—and then write 500 words about how it tells us something interesting/important/useful about how difference finds visual expression within colonial contexts. Pay attention to the form, genre, and materiality of the image as well as its content and composition. More instructions will be provided 2 weeks before the due date.

#### **IV. Research Proposal and Bibliography (15%)**

Your submission consists of one document, made up of two parts: **one**, a proposal, consisting of 2-3 paragraphs, in which you offer an original thesis on one or more of the assigned texts, and present how your essay will contribute to existing scholarly conversations about the text(s) of your choice (one way to do this is to focus on one of the key terms and/or key debates and offer an important revision—a different and/or dissenting view—based on consideration of new types of evidence or a fresh approach to the texts; and **two**, an annotated bibliography featuring at least 6 scholarly sources (these could be monographs, articles from JSTOR, Project Muse, or other databases, and edited collections. Only one of these 6 articles may be taken from the syllabus. Each entry in the annotated bibliography should be 5-6 sentences long, explaining why you have chosen this source, what is its scholarly importance (in general and/or to you), how do you plan to incorporate it into your final paper.

#### V. **Class Presentations (20%)**

During this semester, you will be asked to do a 10-min in class presentation two times—once on primary materials, and once on historical context or theory. These informal presentations, which will occur at the start of a class segment and act as a jumping off point for class discussion, will allow you to frame the day's discussions and highlight elements you find interesting/raise the questions most important to you for our peers to discuss. It will also ensure that you develop and express expertise on the topics we discuss. These presentations should be impromptu/written speech accompanied by handouts or slides that emphasize your key points.

#### VI. **Final Paper (30%)**

Your final project in this class is a research paper on one (or possibly more) of the texts assigned in this class in which you articulate an original argument that engages current theories and debates on the elusive concept of culture. If productive for your thesis, and of interest to you, you are encouraged to connect your essay to current events. Feel free to build on your abstract and conference presentation and on your keyword assignment. Your paper needs to be 3000-4000 words, or 12-16 pages, long (Times New Roman font size 12, double spaced), excluding the works cited list, which forms the last page of your document. More details will be posted on Bb 4 weeks before the deadline.

#### **Contacting your instructor**

I encourage you to be in touch with me about your questions/issues with this class or regarding any other academic needs you might have. Feel free to drop in during office hours (consult sign-up sheet or send me an email) or communicate your concerns via email. If your concern is brief and requires a short response from me, email is preferred. Anything that needs more time should be discussed during an office hours slot. When sending me an email, remember to always put a relevant subject in the subject line, to address me in an appropriate way, and to sign your emails with your full name, so I know who you are and in which context you are writing me. This is a professional setting, and I expect everyone to act and write accordingly. Please note that I do not read or respond to emails on the weekend. I will also only send an email to you during the weekend in case of an emergency.

#### **Accommodations**

If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will first need to contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) within the first two weeks of classes. I am happy to make any reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, including

learning disabilities. Please see me before or after class in the first two weeks, or make an appointment, to discuss any special needs so that I may assist you in the best way possible.

CASS (<http://www.utep.edu/cass>) can be reached in the following ways:

E-Mail: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu)/Phone: (915) 747-5148

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is an offense against academic honesty and any instance of plagiarism will immediately be handed over to the Dean of Students without exception, who will decide on your penalty. Be aware that I take all instances of plagiarism very seriously. Each plagiarized assignment will automatically receive 0 points. I do not accept revisions or late submissions, or assignments that do not meet the minimum length requirement of original work, therefore you will fail each plagiarized assignment. Every time you use someone else's ideas or words in your papers you must reference the source. This is true for both direct quotes and paraphrasing. The same rules that apply to print sources also apply to web-based sources. You may safely assume that if you find a source on the internet, so will I. If you have any questions or uncertainties, contact me well before your paper is due. I also strongly encourage you to consult the following useful website for further information: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/2/>.

## **Syllabus (subject to change)**

### **Week 1, 01/19/23: Introduction to syllabus; what is difference?**

Stuart Hall, "Race: The Floating Signifier" (1997) [Feel free to watch this video before class if you wish, but we will watch it during class as well]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PodKki9g2Pw>

### **UNIT 1**

#### **Week 2, 01/26/23: Racial capitalism's keywords: empire, race, class**

Basic awareness and timeline of British and French colonial expansion from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (This will take time. You can start by consulting Wikipedia, Encyclopedia Britannica, or any such standard reference. I will provide a more extensive reading list in unit two.)

<https://antipodeonline.org/geographies-of-racial-capitalism/>

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Chapter 1.i "Empire, Geography, and Culture," "Images of Past, Present, And Future"

Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Introduction

Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, Chapter 1 "Glimpsing Urban Savages"

#### **Week 3, 02/02/23: Seeing difference: material culture and the reading public**

Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation*, "The Spectacle of the "Other"

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Introduction, Chapter 1: "Knowing the Oriental"

Christine Weisenthal, Brad Bucknell, and W.J.T Mitchell, "Essays into the Imagetext: An Interview with W. J. T. Mitchell"

Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, "Introduction: Criticism in the Contact Zone"

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**Week 4, 02/09/23: Nineteenth-century anthropology: developing a visual grammar of difference**

George Stocking Jr., *Victorian Anthropology*, Chapters 1-2  
 Londa Schiebinger, “The Anatomy of Difference: Race and Sex in Eighteenth Century Science”  
 Snait B. Gissis, “Visualizing “Race” in the Eighteenth Century”  
 Excerpts from James Cowles Pritchard TBD

Keyword Analysis Essay Due.

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**UNIT 2**

**Week 5, 02/16/23: Complex Complexions in the Caribbean**

Anonymous, *The Woman of Color*  
 Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth Century British Culture*, Chapter 1: “Christians, Savages, and Slaves: From the Mediterranean and the Atlantic”  
 Stuart Hall, “Pluralism, Race, and Class in Caribbean Society”  
 Chloe Northop, “Satirical Prints and Imperial Masculinity: Johnny Newcome in the West Indies”  
 Early Caribbean Digital Archive and Library of Congress Collections

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**Week 6, 02/23/23: How Whiteness was Made: British Adventurers in Africa**

Henry Rider Haggard, *King Solomon’s Mines* + appendices in Broadview edition  
 Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914*, Chapter 6: “The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent”  
 Melissa Free, *Beyond Gold and Diamonds*, Introduction  
 Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion*, Chapter 2: “Down and Out: Adventure Narrative, Extraction, and the Resource Frontier”

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**Week 7, 03/02/23: Africa as Racialized Geography**

*King Solomon’s Mines* contd.  
 Sadiyah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, Chapter 2: “Artful Promotion”  
 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, Chapter 5: “Soft-soaping Empire”  
 Leila Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth Century British Travel Accounts*, TBD  
 Kate Holterhoff, *Imperial Middlebrow*, “Picturing Africa: Illustration in the Allan Quatermain Adventure Fictions of H. Rider Haggard”  
 Visual Haggard Website

Visual Analysis Essay Due.

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**UNIT 3**

**Week 8, 03/09/23: The Slippery Spies of Empire**

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*

C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, Introduction

Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*. Chapter 1: The Beginnings of English Literary Study in India”

Emily Laskin, “Geography, Genre, and Narrative in Kipling's *Kim*”

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### **Week 9, 03/16/23: SPRING BREAK**

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### **Week 10, 03/23/23: Racial Mixture in the Infectious Orient**

*Kim* contd.

Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians*, Chapter 5: “Race and Class in the 1860s”

*Orientalism*. Chapter 1.2 “Imaginative Geography, and Representations: *Orientalizing the Oriental*”

<https://www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/2009/05/mimicry-and-hybridity-in-plain-english.html>

*Black Skin White Masks*, Chapter 1 “The Black Man and Language”

Alisha Walters, “A ‘white boy...who is not a white boy’: Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, Whiteness, and British Identity.”

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### **Week 11, 03/30/23: Conrad and the Madness of Scientific Racism**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

George Stocking Jr., *Victorian Anthropology*, Chapter 6: Victorian Cultural Ideology and the Image of Savagery”

Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man*, Introduction

*Culture and Imperialism*, Chapter 2.1: “Narrative and Social Space”

Research Proposal and Bibliography Due.

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### **Week 12, 04/06/23: Retelling Africa—colonial and postcolonial**

*Heart of Darkness* contd.

Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Chapter 6: Colonialism as a System of Underdeveloping Africa”

Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness;” “Africa’s Tarnished Name”

Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism”

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### **Week 13, 04/13/33: Caste before and after independence**

B. R. Ambedkar, *The Annihilation of Caste*

Dinah Mulock Craik, “The Half-Caste”

Selections from *Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal*

Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd, *Why I am not a Hindu*, Introduction, Chapter 1: “Childhood Formations”

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**Week 14, 04/20/23: Postcolonial rubrics of difference**

*The Annihilation of Caste* contd.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood*

--*Decolonizing the Mind*, Introduction, Chapter 1: "The Language of African Literature"

*Black Skin White Masks*, Chapter 6: "The Black Man and Psychopathology"

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**Week 15, 04/27/23:**

*Petals of Blood* contd.

Stuart Hall, "Why Fanon?"

Cedric Robinson, "The Appropriation of Fanon"

"On the Coloniality of Being"

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**Week 15, 05/06/23: Peer Review and Writing Workshop**

**Final essay due: 05/11/23.**