

LIT 160M: The War on Terror

Literature Department | University of California, Santa Cruz

2019 Summer Session

Instructor: Talib Jabbar | E-mail: tjabbar@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12.45pm-2pm or by appointment, Cowell 211

Critical Approaches: Geographies, Power & Subjectivities



Fernando Botero, from the *Abu Ghraib* series

War is a cruel caricature of what in us can respond. You cannot be answerable to war. –Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2004)

Course Description

In September of 2001 the Bush Administration declared a war on terror in the still settling dust of 9/11. This course will investigate the cultural logic of U.S. imperialism in its contemporary forms, using the War on Terror as a contextually bound case. The course will highlight the use of metaphor—*terror* for the targets of military force—and language in constructing enemies at home and abroad and reinforcing notions of “homeland.” This course will take a global perspective on both the theoretical underpinnings of U.S. imperialism and the cultural artifacts produced in tandem and in response. Drawing on the history of U.S. settler-colonialism and liberal empire as racial projects, the course will also investigate contemporary forms of racialization surrounding the Muslim as figure for foreign enemy. Students will work with theoretical texts in critical race and ethnic studies, history, and literature and with a diverse range of media—novels, poetry, film, graphic literature, and music. The close analysis of texts from a global perspective will allow students to look at 9/11 as an event with an imperial afterlife and develop ideas around the particular forms that cultural production takes in an age of permanent war.

Learning Objectives

- Develop an understanding of key theoretical concepts related to racialization and imperialism.
- Use and develop critical reading skills to analyze texts and discuss the ways language and form interact with society (for example: *How do texts mediate and produce our social world and history? How does language produce and counter war?*)
- Develop and demonstrate interpretive analysis skills through the generation of clear and convincing arguments related to course material.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Please let me know if you need accommodation of any kind. We can work in tandem with services provided by the UCSC Academic Support Center or make other arrangements. Additional information regarding the ASC can be accessed here:

<http://arc.ucr.edu/tutoring/tutoringservices.html>

Communication: I encourage you to take advantage of class time and office hours as an opportunity to pose questions relevant to the class. E-mail is the best way to reach me outside of these times.

During class I expect everyone to be respectful of differing views and to actively participate in creating an enriching dialogic environment for all students and teachers.

Canvas: As mentioned above, most of the readings for this course are accessible via Canvas (<https://canvas.ucsc.edu>). I will also use it to post any assignments, optional readings, and to make course-related announcements.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a violation of UCSC campus policy and is strictly prohibited. Please review the academic integrity Policies and Procedures here: http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is mandatory. You are allotted one unexcused absence; anything after that must be excused by me in advance. Participation requires not only attendance but engagement—come awake, fully prepared, and with questions to generate discussion. Coursework gives us the opportunity to discuss texts and ideas together; discussion is only as engaging as its participants. Also,

please turn off all cell phones in the classroom. People texting or using their cell phones in ways unrelated to class will be asked to leave and given an absence for the day.

Course Evaluation

- Attendance and Participation – 35%
 - See above policy on attendance and participation.
- Weekly Reading Responses – 35%
 - Weekly reading responses (300-500 words) will be due each week on a topic of your choice. You will also be prompted to write briefly your thoughts surrounding a key text or concept from the week.
- Analytical Paper – 30%
 - Your final paper (1250-1500 words/4-6 double-spaced pages) will be a well-argued analysis of a major work in the course. We will discuss in detail ways to develop interpretive skills and structure an argumentative analysis.

Note: The credit workload for a 5-unit Summer Session course is an average of 30 hours per week. This includes class attendance; outside reading, watching, and preparation; and class assignments.

Course Materials (required)

- 1) Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Harvest Books, 2008.
- 2) Akhtar, Ayad. *Disgraced*. Back Bay Books, 2013.
- 3) All other texts will be available via Canvas or as in-class handouts.

Course Schedule

Week One – Racialization and U.S. liberal empire

Tuesday, 6/25

- Singh and Rana. "Universalizing Settler Liberty" (2014), *Jacobin* interview
- Prashad, Vijay. "Orientalism" (2007), selection from *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Thursday, 6/27

- Kaplan, Amy. "Homeland Insecurities: Transformations of Language and Space" (2003), in *September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment?* pp. 55-69

Optional:

- Beydoun, Khaled A. "War on Terror, War on Muslims" (2018), Chapter 4 in *American Islamophobia*, pp. 92-194.
- Singh, Nikhil, "Racial formation in an age of permanent war" (2012)
- Said, Edward, "Overlapping territories, intertwined histories" (1993), in *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 3-61.

Week Two – 9/11: Tragedy and Imperial Histories

Tuesday 7/2

- Hammad, Suheir, "First Writing Since" (2001), available online courtesy of Def Poetry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDyLNgLHprl>
- Rankine, Claudia. *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* (2004) [excerpt], pp. 79-85.
- Roy, Arundhati, "The Algebra of Infinite Justice" (2015)
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2013) [excerpt], pp. 3-26.

Thursday 7/4 – HOLIDAY/NO CLASS

Week Three – Poetics from Abroad: Embodying War, Deploying Torture

Tuesday 7/9 – (9/11 continued)

- Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) – entire book

Thursday 7/11

- Puar, Jasbir. "abu ghraib and u.s. sexual exceptionalism" (2017), Chapter 2 in *Terrorist Assemblages*, pp. 79-114.
- Metres, Philip. *Sand Opera* (2015) [excerpted poems]
- Sharif, Solmaz. *Look* (2016) [excerpted poems]

Optional:

- Ahmad, Eghbal. "Taliban's Unlikely Story" (2006), in *Selected Writings of Eghbal Ahmad*, pp. 504-508.
- Bigelow, Kathryn. *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012).

Week Four – The War At Home: Surveilling the Diasporic Body

Tuesday 7/16

- Maira, Sunaina. "Coming of Age under Surveillance: Surveillance Effects and the Post-9/11 Culture Wars" (2016), Chapter 5 in *The 9/11 Generation*, pp. 194-233.
- Rana, Junaid. "The Muslim Body" (2011), Chapter 6 in *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*, pp. 153-173.

- Swet Shop Boys. "T5" (2016), music video available online courtesy of Fader: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4Yb8AWXgLI>

Thursday 7/18

- Akhtar, Ayad. *Disgraced* (2013).

Week Five – Imperial Ghosts, Terrifying Legacies

Tuesday 7/23

- Towne, Christopher. *Manufacturing Terrorists: The FBI's Entrap & Demonize Strategy* (2014), pdf available online courtesy of Defending Rights & Dissent: <https://rightsanddissent.org/news/dissent-repression-comic-series-book-1-manufacturing-terrorists/>
- Scahill, Jeremy. "The Drone Legacy" (2016), in *The Assassination Complex*, pp. 1-12.

Thursday 7/25

- McClintock, Anne. "Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy: Revenants from Hiroshima and Indian Country in the War on Terror" (2014)
- Blassim, Hassan. "The Corpse Exhibition" (2014), in *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*, pp. 3-10.
- Saunders, George. "Adams" (2004) in *The New Yorker*.