

Capitalism & Colonialism in Theatre and Film

Instructor

Peter M. Rule

Phone

719-337-3158

Email

Prule@andrew.cmu.edu

Class Time

1:25 – 2:45 PM

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Film Screenings

TBD

Office Hours

TBD

Learning outcomes

Students should leave class with a basic understanding of Marxist and Postcolonial literary theory, with practical experience applying those theories from a dramaturgical standpoint. Students should also be ready to apply those theories to works where Capitalist and Colonialist themes are less evident, using groundwork laid by this class to approach future productions they are involved with.

Course Texts

- *Literary Criticism* by Charles Bressler (Instructor Provided)
- *Mud* by Maria Irene Fornès (Instructor Provided)
- *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka
- *Serious Money* by Caryl Churchill
- *Marigolds in August* by Athol Fugard (Instructor Provided)
- *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage
- *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage
- *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
- *Hadestown* by Anaïs Mitchell
- *Alien (1979)* by Ridley Scott
- *The Shape of Water (2017)* by Guillermo Del Toro
- *Parasite (2019)* by Bong Joon-Ho
- *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* by Hayao Miyazaki
- *Sorry to Bother You (2018)* by Boots Riley

Course Schedule

Date	Class Topic	Homework and Readings for Class
Tues. Jan 18	Syllabus and Introductions	None
Thurs Jan 20	Marxist and Postcolonial Theory Primer, Mini Response Paper Sign-Up	Charles Bressler <i>Literary Theory</i> P. 165 – 180, 197 – 209, Discussion Questions
Tues Jan 25	<i>Marigolds in August</i>	Athol Fugard's <i>Marigolds in August</i> , Discussion Questions
Thurs Jan 27	<i>Mud</i>	Maria Irene Fornès' <i>Mud</i> Discussion Questions
Tues Feb 1	<i>Nausicaa</i>	Miyazaki's <i>Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind</i> , Discussion Questions
Thurs Feb 3	<i>Nausicaa</i> Ctd.	Miyazaki's <i>Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind</i>
Tues Feb 8	<i>Serious Money</i>	Caryl Churchill's <i>Serious Money</i> , Discussion Questions
Thurs Feb 10	<i>Serious Money</i>	Caryl Churchill's <i>Serious Money</i>
Tues Feb 15	<i>The Shape of Water</i>	Guillermo Del Toro's <i>The Shape of Water</i> , Discussion Questions
Thurs Feb 17	<i>Ruined</i>	Lynn Nottage's <i>Ruined</i> , Discussion Questions
Tues Feb 22	<i>Ruined</i> Ctd.	Lynn Nottage's <i>Ruined</i> ,
Thurs Feb 24	<i>Sweat</i>	Lynn Nottage's <i>Sweat</i> , Discussion Questions
Tues Mar 1	<i>Sweat</i> Ctd., Final Essay Groundwork	Lynn Nottage's <i>Sweat</i>
Thurs Mar 3	<i>Buffer Day</i>	
Tues Mar 8	Spring Break – No Class	
Thurs Mar 10	Spring Break – No Class	
Tues Mar 15	<i>The Tempest</i>	Shakespeare's <i>The Tempest</i> , Discussion Questions, Final Essay Thesis Statements Due
Thurs Mar 17	<i>The Tempest</i> Ctd.	Shakespeare's <i>The Tempest</i>

Date	Class Topic	Homework and Readings for Class
Tues Mar 22	<i>Hadestown</i>	Anaïs Mitchell's <i>Hadestown</i> , Discussion Questions
Thurs Mar 24	<i>Hadestown</i> Ctd.	Anaïs Mitchell's <i>Hadestown</i>
Tues Mar 29	<i>The Thanksgiving Play</i>	Larissa FastHorse's <i>The Thanksgiving Play</i> , Discussion Questions, Final Essay Outlines & Bibliographies Due
Thurs Mar 31	<i>The Thanksgiving Play</i> Ctd.	Larissa FastHorse's <i>The Thanksgiving Play</i>
Tues Apr 5	<i>Sorry to Bother You</i>	Boots Riley's <i>Sorry to Bother You</i> , Discussion Questions
Thurs Apr 7	No Classes	
Tues Apr 12	<i>Parasite</i>	Bong Joon Ho's <i>Parasite</i> , Discussion Questions, Final Essay Mid-Process Drafts Due
Thurs Apr 14	<i>Parasite</i> Ctd.	Bong Joon Ho's <i>Parasite</i>
Tues Apr 19	<i>Alien</i>	Ridley Scott's <i>Alien</i> , Discussion Questions
Thurs Apr 21	<i>Alien</i> Ctd.	
Tues Apr 26	Buffer Day	
Thurs Apr 28	Last Day of Class – Essay Conferences	
Thurs May 5	Final Essays Due	Turn in Final Essays by Midnight

Content Warnings

Colonialism and Capitalism are societal phenomena that are fundamentally structured around oppressor and oppressed. The oppressed in these social structures are dehumanized and always subjected to violence and degradation, and I recognize that depictions of this violence and degradation may be triggering or upsetting to you. I will endeavor to provide general content warnings for each play and film in a timely manner, but please keep in mind that I cannot entirely predict what may need a warning, due to each of our unique perspectives. If you have a specific concern, I encourage you to reach out to me so we can best accommodate your needs while allowing you to participate fully in class.

Homework Policy

All homework must be submitted by the start of class on the day it is due. Late work will be accepted, at a penalty of one letter grade for each day it is late after that date. For instance, an assignment graded at 85% but turned in one day late will be assigned a grade of 75%. That said, I know that our school is rigorous, and I am open to granting reasonable extensions if you need them. If you're falling behind, reach out to me; I want you to succeed in this class.

Attendance

This class relies heavily on group discussion, and repeated absences deprive you of that experience, and deprives the class of your fundamentally unique and important viewpoint on the material. Attendance to class meetings is mandatory, and repeated absences will have an impact on your final grade. That said, I also recognize that students may need to miss class for a variety of reasons (religious observance, job interview, university-sanctioned event, or illness). For that reason, all students are permitted two class absences without any impact on the final grade. When you must miss class, please notify me (at least 24 hours in advance except for illness/emergency), so that we can discuss alternative arrangements for catching up on class and associated work. If you encounter extenuating circumstances and must miss more than two classes, please come and discuss the issue with me; we can work together to find a way to support you.

Film Screenings & Text Availability

I recognize that a class of this nature represents a significant investment in textbooks. To help lessen this burden, I will provide PDFs of some of the texts, (listed on the text list as instructor provided.) Additionally, *The Tempest* is in the public domain, although you may find that an annotated copy is beneficial. I also want to discuss the possibility of holding film screenings outside of class time, to avoid all of you having to pay rental fees for each film. *Nausicaa* is especially difficult to find, so I will be screening at least that one. If you are still having difficulty affording the texts for this class, please reach out to me.

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

Class Participation – 30%

Class time will be focused on discussion of the assigned readings. Therefore, class participation is of the utmost importance, and carries a significant weight on your final score in the class. Successful participation will be judged on constructive contribution to the collective understanding of the play, asking questions that foster compelling discussion, and response to questions your classmates ask. Keep in mind, however, that more is not always better. Be considerate of your classmates, and if you feel like you're contributing too much to the discussion, consider stepping back and allowing other voices in. Furthermore, I expect you to have read or viewed the assigned materials in their entirety, so that class discussion can be a full mutual exploration.

Discussion Questions –9 Points Each, 162 Points Overall, 30%

On the first day of discussion for each text, you will submit three discussion-provoking questions to canvas. The purpose of this is twofold. First, these will help me gauge if you completed the reading or viewing, and second, they will help us jump-start our conversations in class time, so be sure to have them available for your reference during class. These should be one or two sentences each and will be graded out of three points based on the following rubric (Amounting to 9 available points for each class.) For films, timestamps of scenes should also be included if necessary.

One Point	Two Points	Three Points
<p>Question shows little to no understanding of the text, is a yes or no question, has a definite answer, and/or makes no attempt to connect theory to the text.</p> <p><i>Ex: "Is Mama Nadi reluctant to fall in love with Christian?"</i></p>	<p>Question shows a basic understanding of the text, has the potential to connect the text to theory through discussion, and/or is open to one or two interpretations to spur class discussion.</p> <p><i>Ex: "What societal factors contribute to the corporation's disregard for the crew of the Nostromo's safety?"</i></p>	<p>Question shows a deep understanding of the text and its connection to theory, connects multiple texts encountered throughout the semester, offers a fresh perspective for discussion, or examines the intersection of capitalism and colonialism in the text.</p> <p><i>Ex: "Considering Prospero's imposition of language on Caliban, as well as the 'rap scene' in Sorry to Bother You," what part does "acceptable" or "expected" behavior play in a colonizer's control of a colonized group?"</i></p>

Mini Response Papers- 10 Points Each, 20 Points Overall, 20%

Once you've digested the text, the mini-response paper is your opportunity to dig deeper and develop your thoughts on how capitalism and colonialism are present in the play. These can also be an excellent starting place from which to build your final essay. I expect these to be no more than two pages double spaced, written in response to your experience with the Text. I'm not looking for polished work here, just a continuation of your thoughts. More than a stream of consciousness, but not a polished academic paper. Cite your sources if you have them, write clearly, but explore your thoughts freely. You will sign up for slots to turn these in on a rolling basis, so that only a handful of you will turn one in each week, but each of you will turn in two throughout the semester. The students that turn in a paper for the play or film under consideration on a given day will be responsible for

guiding the discussion of that work. These will be graded based on how effectively you connect the text to Postcolonial and Marxist theory.

Final Essay- 20 Points, 20%

6-8 Pages, Double spaced. This essay is fairly open-ended but should reflect the culmination of your work with Postcolonial and Marxist literary criticism. This can look like a deeper consideration of a question that you raised in class discussion, or an expansion of one of your mini-response papers. You can also approach a play or film that we did not read in class and explore a Postcolonial, Marxist, (or both) interpretation of it. If you'd rather explore the practical side of this dramaturgical work, you may also do that by laying out how you would apply an understanding of Colonialist and Capitalist themes to a production of one of the plays we read in class, or another play that you are familiar with. You can take a broad look at the overall concept of your proposed production, or drill down into your own area of focus and explain what aspects of the script make it right for a Postcolonial or Marxist treatment, and what choices you will make to underscore those themes. The essay will be graded on the following rubric:

Criteria	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
Application of Theory	Student makes little to no attempt to connect the text to the theory discussed throughout the semester.	Student makes a limited effort to connect the text to the theory discussed throughout the semester and relies heavily on ideas from class discussion.	Student makes some effort to connect the text to the theory discussed throughout the semester, sometimes relying on ideas from class discussion.	Student makes a consistent effort to connect the text to the theory discussed throughout the semester, primarily developing their own ideas.	Student thoroughly and expertly applies the theory to the text, exclusively developing their own ideas and argument about the material.
Strength and Defense of Argument	Student's argument is entirely unsupported by the text or theory, and is pure conjecture with no basis.	Student's argument is somewhat supported by the text and theory, with some undefended generalization.	Student's argument is fairly well supported by the text and theory, with some effort being made to defend their claims.	Student's argument is consistently rooted in textual analysis, and most or all of their arguments are upheld by theory.	Student develops a fresh and exciting interpretation of the text, with great care put towards applying theory to defend their arguments.
Use of Sources	Primary source text is exclusively paraphrased, and secondary sources are irrelevant or absent.	Primary source text is quoted sparsely, and few relevant secondary sources are used.	Primary source text is quoted mostly consistently, alongside several relevant secondary sources.	Primary source text is consistently used throughout, and secondary sources are used frequently to support arguments about the text.	Primary source text is thoughtfully quoted in support of the student's argument, and an effort is made to apply secondary sources beyond justification.
Syntax, Structure, & Readability	Frequent and consistent errors in grammar and structure damage the student's argument and make the essay difficult to read.	Some errors in structure and grammar are present, but they seldom hinder the reader's understanding of the essay.	Few errors in structure and grammar are present; the essay is clear and mostly easy to follow.	Little to no errors in structure and grammar. The essay is very clear and the structure clearly brings together the student's argument.	Exemplary writing. Easy to follow and fun to read. No errors in structure or grammar.

We will scaffold this paper into existence over a few due-dates, which are as follows:

March 15th: Topic and Thesis Statement – submit a paragraph outlining the topic you’d like to explore, as well as your thesis statement. I will return written feedback on these quickly, so you can begin working on the next step.

March 29th: Outline and Bibliography – submit a rough outline of your final paper, along with a bibliography of the sources you will use.

April 12th: Mid-Process Draft – this will be a continuation of your outline; allowing me to get a sense of how your essay is coming together. I will return written feedback on these as well, and will be available for 1-1 conferences should you need them.

May 5th: Final Draft – by midnight, turn in a finalized draft of your essay.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

It is my intention to create a safe, welcoming classroom for everyone, regardless of race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion. Inclusion is a group effort, and I will hold you all to a high standard of accountability, one to which I hope you will all hold me as well. Of course, harm can be caused regardless of intent, and I encourage you to be advocates for one another and for yourselves. I encourage anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity, in this class or elsewhere, to speak out for justice and support within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

- **Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion:** csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150
- **Report-It online anonymous reporting platform:** reportit.net username: *tartans* password: *plaid*

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Use of Technology in Class

Due to the intensive, discussion-based nature of this class, your full attention is necessary during class time. You may use personal devices to access course texts or your notes on them where applicable, but please don’t allow your attention to wander from what you and your classmates are discussing.