

Syllabus

Pacific Literary and Cultural Studies

English 388 / American Culture 325

Prof. S. Najita

Winter 2011

Lecture: Tuesday, Thursday 1:00-2:30 pm

Location: 2347 Mason

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DESCRIPTION

This is a course for students who want to develop their abilities in critical and creative reading, thinking, and analysis. It is an interdisciplinary course that navigates film, fiction, poetry, novels and histories in order to engage with some of the critical processes at work in the modern world. From sunlit beaches, swaying palm trees, and happy tourists to tropical rainforest and menacing natives, the islands of the Pacific have been relentlessly depicted. Perhaps more than any other region of the globe, the Pacific has been “experienced” beforehand through the image-making of Hollywood, television, and advertisement. The success of films such as *Whale Rider*, *The Piano*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Once Were Warriors* builds upon the early images of the region in films such as *Blue Hawaii*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and *South Pacific*. This course puts such texts into dialogue with the extensive body of historical and literary representations. What connections and contradictions emerge when we read popular culture in relation to fictional representations by authors such as Hermann Melville and James Michener, and indigenous authors such as Patricia Grace, Albert Wendt, Keri Hulme, and Dan McMullin? What other histories and experiences are obscured or misrepresented in these popular representations, including the emergence of indigenous self-determination movements, nuclear testing and U.S. military supremacy, and the multi-ethnic societies which emerged as a result of colonization? To answer these questions, we will read texts from a range of perspectives: EuroAmerican authors (Cook, Melville, and Michener), indigenous Pacific Islanders (Hulme, Wendt, Grace, Ihimaera, and Hau’ofa), as well as non-natives (Murayama). Requirements include journals, quizzes, 5-page paper, final exam, and presentation.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Herman Melville, *Typee* (Penguin Classics edition)

Patricia Grace, *Potiki*

Milton Murayama, *All I Asking for Is My Body*

James Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific*

Epeli Hau'ofa, *Tales of the Tikong*

Witi Ihimaera, *Whale Rider*

Course Pak available at Dollar Bill.

COURSEWORK

Journals	15%
Quizzes	10%
Midterm Paper (5 pages)	15%
Final Exam	25%
Non-written piece/Presentation	20%
Participation & Discussion	15%

Journals/responses

At times I will indicate the topic or set of questions I would like the journals to address. At other times, I will indicate a more open set of concerns for the journals. Journal responses are compact writing assignments intended to help focus your reading and understanding of the course material, to prepare you for lectures and discussions, and provide opportunities for you to practice and hone your close reading and critical thinking skills. No late journal responses accepted.

Paper

This paper will be due at the midterm and will be guided by specific questions we will pose and attempt to answer during the course. It will engage in close readings across disciplinary (historical, cultural, and literary) and generic boundaries (historical texts, explorer's journals, novels, poems, songs, and films) from material in the first half of the course. This paper is yet another opportunity to extend the analytical skills we are developing in the journal responses to a longer, more detailed and rigorous argument.

Final Exam

The final exam will be in essay form and presents you with an opportunity to synthesize your understanding of the course material over the term, to extend, elaborate upon, and refine your thinking on the midterm paper to other texts in the second half of the term. This is a writing assignment that allows you to build and improve upon previous writing done in the course.

Attendance & Participation

Your attendance and participation in discussions are highly valued contributions. Students should read the assigned material prior to the scheduled class period, bring the printed material with you to class, and be prepared to be active discussants. Because class participation and regular attendance are central requirements of this course, 5 unexcused absences constitute a failing grade for the course. Since discussion and class participation are one of the ways learning takes place in this course, the instructor may call on you. (This is no cause for alarm – just careful thought and contribution.)

Non-written piece

This is a collaborative piece which should fall into one of the following categories:

- Performance: music, speech, dance
- Film or other electronic media
- Creative writing
- Art

Intellectual standards will be the same as for papers, and students will be expected to show their ability to *critically* engage with class materials. One of our goals in this course is to encourage students to develop their skills at working with one another, learning from and complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses. Through this collaborative project, students will practice and develop analytical skills in media that are not traditionally recognized as obviously analytical in the disciplines of history and literature.

Note: If you wish to mount a website for your non-written piece and would like to receive instruction, please let your instructor know early in the term so we can arrange for student groups to attend training early on at the Knowledge and Navigation lab.

SCHEDULE OF READING

1/6 R **Introduction**

ENCOUNTERS: Indigenous Peoples & Europeans

1/11 T **Background lecture**
Translation and the Colonial Encounter: *First Contact* (55 min)

1/13 R Cook Journals

1/18 T **Consuming Islands: *Typee*, Cannibalism, and Touristic Desire**
Chapters 1-5

1/20 R *Typee* continued, Chapters 6-19

1/25 T *Typee* continued, Chapters 23-27, 33-34, Appendix

SETTLER COLONIALISM & NATIVE DISPOSSESSION

1/27 R **U.S. Empire in Hawai'i**
Act of War (film viewing)
Begin reading *Waimea Summer* (course pack)

2/1 T *Waimea Summer*
Ka'uanui, "'For Get' Hawaiian Entitlement: Configurations of Land, 'Blood' and Americanization in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920."

2/3 R *Waimea Summer* continued

2/8 T **Ancestors, Oral Tradition, and Resistance: *Grace's Potiki***

2/10 R *Potiki* continued

2/15 T **Pakeha Nationalism and the Legacy of Settler Colonialism**
in *The Piano*

2/17 R *The Piano* continued
Najita, "Making Pakeha History: Familial Resemblances in Jane Campion's *The Piano*"

PLANTATION COLONIALISM & MILITARIZATION

2/22 T **Plantation Colonialism :** Milton Murayama's *All I Asking for Is My Body*
Murayama, "Problems of Writing in Dialect and Mixed Languages"

2/24 R Murayama continued

SPRING BREAK 2/28 to 3/6

3/8 T **Forgetting the Cold War: Nuclear Memories and Indigeneity in**
Whale Rider (novel and film)

MIDTERM PAPER due

3/10 R Ihimaera, *Whale Rider*

3/15T *Whale Rider*

3/17 R *Whale Rider* continued

3/22 T **Cold War Orientalism: The Pacific Theater & U.S. empire in**
South Pacific
Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific* (selections only)

3/24 R *South Pacific* continued
Christina Klein, "Family Ties as Political Obligation..."

3/29 T **Naturalizing Tourism: The New Plantation in *Blue Hawaii***
Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
Houston Wood, "Safe Savagery: Hollywood's Hawaii" (ctools)

3/31 R *Blue Hawaii* continued

GLOBALIZATION IN THE PACIFIC

4/5 T **Globalization and the Traditional: Hau'ofa's *Tales of the Tikong***
Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands"

4/7 R *Tales of the Tikong* continued

4/12 T **TBA**

4/14 R PRESENTATIONS

4/19 T PRESENTATIONS

Final Exam due Friday, 22nd at noon, in instructor's mailbox, 3161 Angell Hall.