

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
THE FACULTY SENATE

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE APPROVAL FORM
(Courses Numbered 001-599)

15 Copies Required for Courses Numbered 001-499
20 Copies Required for Courses Numbered 500-599

1. DEPARTMENT, COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE: English 307, Modernism and Its Others_____
2. SCHOOL OR COLLEGE: CHFA_____
3. Proposer's Name, Telephone and Email: Tanya Fernando, 773-758-7727, tjfernan@english.umass.edu_____
4. Proposed Instructor: Same_____
5. Course Credits: 3_____
6. Are there Prerequisites? No_____ If yes, please specify Even though it is a 300 level course, there are no prerequisites because it is a General Education course._____
7. What is the intended clientele? Lower Division _____ Upper Division General Education – open to all _____
 Department majors only _____ Departmental/related majors _____ Non-Majors _____
 If course is intended for majors, what role will it play in the curriculum? Required _____ Elective _____
8. Complete Course Catalog Description (30 Words):
 Through literature, art, dance, music, ethnography, and cultural criticism, this interdisciplinary course seeks to explore how and why the concept of the primitive is foundational to modernist texts and works of art
9. Please attach the following materials:
 _____ x _____ Week-by-week outline of topics covered in course (or syllabus)
 _____ x _____ List of Required readings
 _____ x _____ Description of required assignments (papers, exams, projects, reports, presentations, etc.)
 _____ x _____ Summary of course grade criteria
 _____ x _____ Selected bibliography of works used by instructor in developing course, especially recent works (as appropriate)
 _____ x _____ If the course number is above 200 and there are no prerequisites, please explain
10. If course has been offered as an experimental or special topics course, please comment (on an attached page) on its evolution.

Upon approval of the course by the department head, one copy of this form shall be sent from the departmental office to the Faculty Senate Office to allow for the course to be published on the University's Web Site for comment.

For courses numbered 500-599, the "Guidelines for Course Approval Form" from the Graduate Council must accompany the new course proposal.

Primitivism and Modernism

In 1984, the Museum of Modern Art in New York organized a show, “‘Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern,” that caused enormous controversy. Critics charged the curators with promoting an idea of western cultural superiority and racial insensitivity towards non-western societies. Foremost among the criticism was the assertion that the exhibition did not explore the vexed relationship between the “modern” and the “primitive.” The curators had attached assumed, antithetical values onto these categories that were both facile and unreflective. This course examines these two categories and the complex ways in which they are related.

Through literature, art, dance, music, ethnography, and cultural criticism, this interdisciplinary course seeks to explore *how* and *why* “primitivism,” as an aesthetics and an ideology, is an integral part of modernist texts and works of art. Some questions we ask are: How and why is the primitive a marker of the modern? Why did modernist artists and thinkers turn to the primitive? What kinds of social and political statements were these artists making? What value were they placing upon the primitive? How and why was the primitive equated with certain non-western cultures? How did non-western art, especially African art, influence modernism? Why is it that we can neither celebrate primitivism as innovative and revolutionary (as some avant-garde theorists contend) nor simply dismiss it as imperialist? In the end, through careful analysis of twentieth-century works, we hope to achieve a better understanding of both the primitive and the modern and the ways in which they are inextricably tied.

Organization of Course:

This course is designed with two main goals: First, it is to provide students with a general introduction to primitivist modernism across the arts: literature, dance, music, the visual arts, and film. Second, it seeks to elaborate larger theoretical issues in the humanities and social sciences about representations of race, the construction of otherness, and the understanding of self vis-à-vis the category of the primitive.

In *Tristes Tropiques*, Claude Lévi-Strauss repeatedly quotes from Rousseau that the primitive state “no longer exists, has perhaps never existed, and probably will never exist,” yet, “it is nevertheless essential to form a correct notion of it in order to rightly judge our present state.” Essentially what these thinkers are arguing is that the study of the primitive says more about the western self than it does of the people and societies it purports to illuminate. Weeks 2-6 of the course begin by examining the question of the primitive in this light, including anthropological and theoretical readings by Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss, Johannes Fabian and V.Y. Mudimbe. The anthropological readings lay the groundwork for our consideration of representations of the primitive and aesthetic “borrowings” from the “primitive” in the different aesthetic genres of European modernism. It will also allow us into a discussion of the often-made comparisons of the primitive with women and neurotics. As we will see, primitivist artworks endlessly replay these comparisons.

Weeks 7-11 will look at primitivism in literature, music, dance, and the visual arts with specific discussions around women and imperialism. Week 12 will examine the debates around the now infamous MoMA exhibition.

The last section of the course (weeks 13-14) considers both contemporary and contemporaneous responses to primitivism in modernism. This section looks at the work of artists of color (especially African, African-American, and Black British artists) and their reactions to being the “object” of art, though the rewriting and reappropriating of representations of race and radical otherness with direct references to iconic modernist works.

Throughout the quarter, there will be slide presentations of visual works, as well as in-class screenings of films, performance pieces, and specific dances. The class begins with a screening of Stravinsky and Nijinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* (1913) and ends with a screening of a reinterpretation of this piece, *Rites* (1997), by Stephen Page, an Australian aboriginal choreographer.

The weekly readings do not have more than one hundred pages, unless a novel is assigned.

Week 1: Introduction

Screening: *The Rite of Spring* (Stravinsky/Nijinsky, 1913)

The Discourse on Modernism and the Primitive: Some Origins and Approaches

Week 2:

Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (S)

Modernism excerpt (S)

Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress*, (preface and Introduction) (S)

Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive* (Chapter One) (S)

Week 3:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" (1750) (S)

Hayden White, "Noble Savage as Fetish" (S)

V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (1988) (selections) (S)

Stanley Diamond, "In Search of the "Primitive" in *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization*. pp xi-xiii and 116-175 (S)

Week 4:

Ethnography

Representations of the Primitive

George Stocking, Jr., "The Dark-Skinned Savage: The Image of Primitive Man in Evolutionary Anthropology," in *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, pp.110-132. (S)

Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Men* (1911) (selections) (S)

Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (selections) (S)

Screening: Jean Rouch, *The Mad Masters*

Week 5: Totemism and Fetishism

Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Life of Savages and Neurotics* (1913) (selections) (S)

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (1963) (selections) (S)

WJT Mitchell, "Totemism, Fetishism, Idolatry" (S)

William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish" (S)

WJT Mitchell, "Found Objects"

Suggested Readings:

Karl Marx, "On the Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof," in *Capital* (S)

Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism" (S)

Emile Durkheim (S)

Week 6: The Gift

Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (selections) (S)

Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (pp.7-34) (S)

Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" (S)

Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 (selections on potlatch) (S)

Screening:

Ilisa Barbash, Lucien Taylor, Chris Steiner: *In and Out of Africa* (1992)

Primitivism, Imperialism, and Women

Week 7:

Chinua Achebe, *Hope and Impediments* (selections) (S)

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Week 8:

Sander Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature" (S)

Roger Fry, *Vision and Difference* (1920) (selections) and "Preface to the First Post-Impressionist Exhibit" (1911) (S)

Fredric Jameson, "Modernism and Imperialism" (S)

D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (start reading)

Week 9

D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (1916)

The Modern and the Primitive

Week 10: Jazz and Josephine Baker

F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Jazz Age" (S)

Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (selections) (S)

Ingrid Monson, "Art Blakey's African Diaspora" in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective* (S)

Kofi Agawu, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (selections) (S)

Nancy Nenno, "Femininity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker" (S)

Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse" (S)

Screening: Josephine Baker's *Princesse Tam Tam* ("la danse sauvage")

Week 11: The Avant-Garde

Documents (selections)

Petrine Archer-Shaw, "The Darker Side of Surrealism," in *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*, 2000, pp.135-157. (S)

Simon Gikandi, "Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference" (S)

Evan Maurer, "Dada and Surrealism," in *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin. (S)

Week 12: The MoMA Controversy

James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern" in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, pp.189-214 (S)

Thomas McEvelley, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief: "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art' at the Museum of Modern Art" in *ArtForum*, Nov 1984, pp.54-61. (S)

Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art" in *October* 34, 1985, pp.69-102. (S)

Screening: Manthia Diawara, *Rough in Reverse* (1995)

Responses and Reappropriations

Week 13:

Langston Hughes, "Rejuvenation through Joy" (1933) (S)

Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of Return to the Native Land* (1939)

Week 14:

Kobena Mercer, "Skin Head, Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary" in *How Do I Look?: Queer Film and Video*, pp.169-222. (S)

Chika Okeke, "Modern African Art" (S)

Okwui Enwezor, selections on African art (S)

Screening: Issac Julien, *Looking for Langston* (1989)

Week 15:

Screenings:

Rites (1997, Stravinsky/Stephen Page - Bangarra Dance Theatre and the Australian National Ballet)

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, *The Couple in the Cage* (1992)

Readings:

There will be a wide variety of texts coming from anthropology, theory, and the arts. Most of the readings will be available on-line: on the syllabus, S is Spark. All readings must be printed out and brought to class.

A few texts should be bought.

Joseph Conrad: *The Heart of Darkness* (Norton)

D.H. Lawrence: *Women in Love* (Penguin/Cambridge)

Aimé Césaire: *The Collected Poetry of Aimé Césaire*

Requirements:

There are six short papers: five response papers (at least 2 pages) that will answer specific discussion questions, and one paper (3-4 pages) that covers the issues of your presentation. You must turn in a paper once every two weeks. The weeks are grouped as follows: (Weeks 2-3); (4-5); (6-7); (8-9); (10-11); (12-13). Your presentation paper should not overlap with the response papers.

The papers must be written properly, with complete thoughts, sentences, and paragraphs. Attention should be paid to grammar, punctuation, and spelling. They should be double spaced, in 12-point Times or Times New Roman, with regular margins. Please cite all sources using MLA format.

The five short papers will not be graded, except for a check or a check minus. A check will be understood as an A, a check minus a C. For each missing paper, one full grade will be taken off the final grade for short papers: an A will become a B, etc.

The presentation should be about 7-10 minutes. It should briefly speak about the author (less than 1 min) and then address the readings. The presentation should spark class discussion, so please do not summarize the articles. Rather start to ask questions from the texts. Also, please do not read from the paper you are handing in. The presentation paper will be graded. It should be between 750-1000 words. We will go over in class what I expect from both the presentation and the paper.

There will be a take-home final paper. You will need to choose three essay questions. Each essay should be 3-4 pages in length, for a total of 10-12 pages.

Participation and Attendance:

This class is comprised of both a lecture and discussion section. It is important that you attend both. Twenty percent of your grade will be based on class discussion. This means that you should try to make at least one intervention every class meeting.

Evaluation:

Class participation – 20%

5 short papers – 20%

Presentation and paper – 20%

Final paper – 40%

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a grave academic offense, and will result in an automatic “F” for the course.

If you are ever in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism you should consult *The MLA Handbook for Writers* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*, as well as the University’s policy on plagiarism. To be safe always cite your sources.

If you have any questions about this, you may also always ask me. You should also familiarize yourself with the University’s policies on academic honesty: <http://www.umass.edu/umhome/policies/honesty.html>

Disabilities Resources:

The University is committed to excellence in teaching and learning. Included within this is their commitment to students with disabilities. If you have any questions about this please speak to both me and the Disability Support Service in the Whitmore Administration Building.

Bibliography

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- . "The Return of Totemism in Childhood." In *Totem and Taboo : Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* [Totem und Tabu.], 125-200. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1950.
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