Colonial Fictions: Novels of Adventures, Exoticisms, and East and West

The Age of Empire has bequeathed us a wealth of literary texts, among them adventures tales, such as Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, as well as more serious novels about colonial encounters and life in the colonies, such as E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*. At the same time, colonialism introduced the novel as a new literary genre to many literatures in Asia. This course will examine what Empire was in the case of British India and the Dutch East Indies (today’s Indonesia) by reading English and Dutch novels together with the work of Asian writers. This will help us develop an idea of how literature was both collusive with and critical of colonialism, how different cultures wrote about their contact with each other, and how the writing of that era has shaped our modern world.

**Required Books** (Available for purchase in the Gleacher Center Bookstore)

To ensure that during our class discussions we will all be on the same page, literally, please make sure you have **precisely these** and not other editions:

- E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*.
  ISBN: 9780141441160
  Publisher: Penguin Books
  Publication Date: 2005

  Translated by Alexander Teixeira De Mattos, Edited by E. M. Beekman.
  ISBN: 9780870237157
  Publisher: Univ of Massachusetts Pr
  Publication Date: 1990

- Abdoel Moeis, *Never the twain*.
  Translated by Robin Susanto.
  ISBN: 9789798083549
  Publisher: Lontar
  Publication Date: 2011
None of the novels is very long, but depending on how quickly you read, you should get started on reading them as soon as possible. For Couperus’ *Hidden Force*, starting directly with the novel without reading Beekman’s introduction first will make for a more rewarding reading experience (i.e. I recommend reading the introduction only after you have read the novel). All other Required Readings will be made available for download on the course’s CHALK website (http://chalk.uchicago.edu).

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1:**

Introduction

Readings:

Boehmer (Introduction and Chapter 1 from *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*),

Said (Introduction from *Orientalism*),

Loomba (Chapter 1 “Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies” from *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*)

[all on CHALK]

**Week 2:**

Forster, *A Passage to India*.

**Week 3:**

Forster, *A Passage to India*.

Additional Reading: t.b.a.

**Week 4:**

Rajam Aiyar, *The Fatal Rumour*.

(The entire text of the novel in translation can be found on the course CHALK page)

Additional Reading: Ebeling (Introduction from *Colonizing the Realm of Words*).

**Week 5:**
Rajam Aiyar, *The Fatal Rumour*.

**Week 6:**

**Final Paper DRAFTS due**

Couperus, *The Hidden Force*.

Additional Reading: t.b.a.

**Week 7:**

Couperus, *The Hidden Force*.

Additional Reading: t.b.a.

**Week 8:**

Moeis, *Never the Twain*.

Additional Reading: t.b.a.

**Week 9:**

Moeis, *Never the Twain*.

Additional Reading: t.b.a.

**Week 10:**

**Final Papers due**

Final Discussion

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

In the case of the four novels we will read, it will be essential that you have read each novel in its entirety by the time it is first discussed in class, i.e. Forster by week 2, Rajam Aiyar by week 4, Couperus by week 6 and Moeis by week 8. Furthermore, you are expected to also have read the additional readings listed under each class date for that session. Attendance at every class, careful preparation of the readings,
and active participation are expected of all students and will count for 40% of the grade.

An 8 to 10-page final paper will count for 60% of the course grade (see due dates for draft and final paper above). The paper will be written in response to one of the essay prompts announced at the beginning of the course. Instead of a final paper, students may also complete some other form of response to the readings and themes of the course, such as a piece of creative writing (e.g. short story or short play), a video, musical composition or other type of art project. For this alternative response students should spend at least 6 hours of dedicated work, and the precise nature of the project has to be approved by the instructor.

Additionally, depending on the size of the class, every student will give at least one oral class presentation. The topics for these will be assigned during one of our first meetings.