**POSTCOLONIAL EUROPE**  
**MINOR POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES**  
**DVT/IMR**

**Studiepunten:** 7,5 ECTS  
**Code:** 200500346  
**Niveau:** 3  
**Blok:** 1; 2008-2009  
**Soort:** Core Seminar  
**Time:** VR 13:15-16.00 (or 17.00 when needed)  
**Place:** Achter de Dom, 22-24 room 0.03

**Coordinators:** Prof. Dr. Paulo de Medeiros and Eva Midden, PhD Candidate

**Visiting Guest Speaker:**  
John McLeod  
Reader in Postcolonial and Diaspora Literatures  
School of English  
University of Leeds, UK

There is a website for the course. Please check:  
[http://www2.let.uu.nl/solis/PSC/PostcolonialEurope/POSTCOLONIALEUROPE.htm](http://www2.let.uu.nl/solis/PSC/PostcolonialEurope/POSTCOLONIALEUROPE.htm)

**Course Material:**  


These books were ordered and will be available at Broese/Wristers, Minrebroederstraat13, Utrecht, tel. 030-233-6500. Syllabus and assigned readings will be distributed electronically or available on a special shelf in the Arts Library at Drift 27. The shelf is named "Collegeplank Postcolonial Europe". You will have to make your own photocopies of the necessary extracts and chapters required for each week of the course.

**Other Suggested Reading:**  


Useful websites for this course:
- [www.postcolonialeurope.net](http://www.postcolonialeurope.net)
- [www.english.memory.edu/Bahri](http://www.english.memory.edu/Bahri)
- [www.postcolonialweb.org](http://www.postcolonialweb.org)

**Requirements:**
- **Attendance:** More than one non-excused absence will negatively affect the final grade.
- **Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively in the discussion.
- **Oral Presentation:** Students will give short individual presentations in which they discuss one of the texts.
- **Written assignments:** 1 short essay on *Zadie Smith, On Beauty* (2-3 pages); 1 Final Research Paper (10 pages)

**Grading:**
- Attendance and Participation: 15% of final grade
- Oral Presentation: 15% of final grade
- Short essay, **deadline October 3:** 20% of final grade
- Final Research Paper, **deadline October 31:** 50% of final grade

**General Rules:**
This is an advanced seminar that requires active participation from all. Reading materials are to be read in advance of seminar meetings and critically discussed at the meetings. The short essay is meant to allow students to focus on the analysis of the novel by Zadie Smith and to connect to other issues related to the course. This should be based on their reading up to that point and to demonstrate their capacity for critical analysis. At the same time this essay will serve for students to evaluate their own strengths and shortcomings well in advance of the research paper. The oral presentation is meant to allow students to demonstrate their capability to expose their ideas as well as to apply their learning on postcolonial Europe to current affairs or other related issues. This could be also the first step toward the preparation of the final research paper. The presentation should be based on the compulsory readings assigned for that session and contain a clear argument about this text (possibly in relation to a current affair). Each presentation should take about 5 minutes. Additional questions should be added at the end of the presentation for general discussion with the class.

The Final Research Paper must be delivered by the due date. Late papers may be accepted up to one week after the due date and will receive a grade penalty (for example, a paper that would receive a 7 if delivered on time will actually receive a 6 if late). Papers which are delivered more than a week after the due date will automatically receive a grade of 5.0. Final
research papers should be carefully prepared and presented. They should demonstrate both knowledge of the texts being analyzed, as well as of relevant critical materials. The normal length for the final papers is 10 A4 pages double-spaced, excluding bibliography which must be added. The bibliography should follow MLA norms or another recognized system and be consistent. Final papers should be sent electronically and delivered in printed form. The topic for the final paper should be discussed – and approved – previously.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: 12 September
Prof. Dr. Paulo de Medeiros

Introduction to Postcolonial theory: is Europe Postcolonial?
The first part of the meeting will provide students with a basic schematic run-down on the development of postcolonial theory, its major issues and proponents, leading up to the question of a post-imperial and post-colonial Europe. In the second part of the meeting we will discuss the relevance and connection of postcolonial theories to the European specificity and explore new parameters of analysis linked to historical, linguistic and cultural locations. In particular we will discuss the current condition of mass migrations to Europe, the situation of refugees and asylum seekers, and the role of multicultural policies in the different European nation-states.

Required reading:
- John McLeod, Beginning Postcolonialism. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000 (chapter 1, 2, 8).
- Étienne Balibar, “Europe, and ‘Imagined’ Frontier of Democracy.” In Diacritics 33.3/4, 2003, pp. 36-44. To download from website http://www.postcolonialeurope.net Click on What is postcolonial Europe/compulsory reading

Week 2: 19 September
Dr. John McLeod

Postcolonial London. Rewriting the Metropolis
Postcolonial London explores the imaginative transformation of London by African, Asian, Caribbean and South Pacific writers since the 1950s. Engaging with a range of writers from Sam Selvon and Doris Lessing to Hanif Kureishi and Fred D’Aguiar, John McLeod examines a cultural history of resistance to the prejudice and racism that have at least in part characterised the postcolonial city. This resistance, he argues, bears witness to the
determination, imagination and creativity of London's migrants and their descendants. McLeod's superb study is essential reading for those interested in British or postcolonial literature, or in theorisations of the city and metropolitan culture.

**Required Reading:**

**Week 3: 26 September**  
[Note: today class is from 2-5 o’clock]  
Prof. Dr. Rosemarie Buikema

**The literary critic and the literary politics of home**  
What does it mean to read literature from a postcolonial perspective? In this session literary criticism and postcolonial theory will be applied on a colonial and a post-colonial text.

**Required Reading**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 4: 3 October**  
*Dr. Christa Stevens*

**Deadline Short Essay**

**Blanc, beur, black – postcolonial identities in/of France**  
Despite its post-colonial reality, France’s concept of Frenchness is still nation-centred, closely tied to the geography of the Hexagon and implicitly linked to a universalist ideal. The role played by colonial expansion, migration and multiculturalism in the formation of national and Republican identity is today still hardly acknowledged. The concept “francophonie”, often used in the literary field, is one of the contested notions which reflect
this predicament. We will discuss this notion and its relation to postcolonial theory – a theory which has hardly made its inroad in France – and consider several cases of migrant artist from the (former) colonies who develop new notions of Frenchness such as beur-identity, black-identity, créolité, etc.

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading

Week 5: 10 October
Bolette Blaagaard, PhD Candidate

Postcolonial Whiteness
This lecture presents an overview of the place ‘whiteness’ assumes in postcolonial studies. The first part of the lecture will focus on two strands of ‘whiteness’ constructions. Firstly whiteness will be viewed through a discussion of the role of ‘white’ women in the colonial power dynamics. The lecture is informed by feminist scholars’ work on postcoloniality and on the colonial construction of ‘whiteness’ and the critique of ‘white’ feminism by Mohanty and Spivak, which illuminates this ongoing discussion. The second strand is the construction of colonial ‘white man’s burden’ of civilizing the other. This notion covers both the Christian call to converting the local populations in the colonies and the construction of ‘family of man’. The latter was sustained through biological and medical discourses. However, the overview sketched out above presents a visible ‘whiteness’ set up against a perceived ‘blackness’ – a visible otherness. ‘Whiteness’ is more than a (lack of) colour, which is evident in the overview but which becomes even more clear when the postcolonial site is the Nordic region and the coloniser and the colonised are visibly the same. The second part of the lecture will ask the question of the role of ‘whiteness’ in Nordic colonial history. In this narrative of colonial past Denmark as the main coloniser of the region colonised countries like Iceland and Norway as well as Greenland. How does this change the relation between the categories of coloniser and colonised – if at all?

Required Reading
• Ware, Vron, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, Questions for Feminism Series, 1992 (introduction)
• As a way of challenging and urging a debate the students will be presented with the online representation of the project *rethinking Nordic colonialism*: [www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org](http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org). It is requested that the students familiarise themselves with the website before class.

**Week 6: 17 October**  
*Eva Midden, PhD Candidate*

**Multiculturalism and Feminism**  
Is there a tension between women’s rights and multiculturalism? Are the goals of achieving gender equality and cultural tolerance in the same society contradictory? What is the background of discourses on multiculturalism and feminism in our current society? According to the political scientist Susan Moller Okin there are fundamental conflicts between our commitment to gender equality and the desire to respect the customs of minority cultures or religions. If we agree that women should not be disadvantaged because of their sex, she argues, we should not accept group rights that permit oppressive practices. Okin’s claims led to a complex and highly important debate. Three main criticisms were raised against her thesis. First, Okin’s viewpoint is one-sided, as she only evaluated minority cultures but not Western liberal societies. Secondly, Okin fails to recognise differences within groups except for gender differences and finally, she seems to have an ahistoric and static vision of cultures. In this lecture we will discuss different discourses on multiculturalism and feminism and explore alternative ways of thinking about these concepts.

**Required reading:**

**Week 7: 24 October**  
*Prof. Dr. Paulo de Medeiros*

**On Beauty**  
Zadie Smith’s novel focuses on two families and explores a series of conflicts and clashes that force continual reassessment of accepted notions about race, class and gender, while also focusing on aesthetic and political issues. Widely acclaimed by critics in general, the novel thematizes connections as well as fissures between Europe and North America and illustrates the imperative to rethink Europe from a postcolonial perspective. Discussion of
the novel will serve to focus on its complex representations using the perspectives introduced throughout the seminar.

**Required reading:**

**Week 8: October 31**

**Deadline Final Research Paper**