

Portuguese 597.01

Issues of the Contemporary World:

Coloniality and Postcoloniality in the Literatures of Portugal and Portuguese-speaking Africa

How this course meets the general principles of the GEC Model Curriculum and the specific goals of the category(ies) for which it is being proposed

2. Issues of the Contemporary World (required of both B.A. and B.S. students)

On pages 18 and 19 of the Model Curriculum, the “Issues of the Contemporary World” requirement is described as follows:

During the senior year each student will select one course that considers one or more contemporary issues of broad and worldwide significance. While issues addressed may arise out of the interests of the sponsoring units, they must also be issues that have worldwide significance and illustrate global interdependence. Topics from which such contemporary issues might be drawn include: energy, urbanizations, food production, race and gender, war and peace, technology and the arts, literacy, cross-cultural communication, the role of religion, governmental regulation, environment, disease and hunger, industrial and technological development, social responsibility, and the social impact on the arts or literature.

→ In this course students will learn how literary representations produced in colonial as well as postcolonial contexts contribute to shaping contemporary socialities and cultures. We will study these phenomena through examples of Portugal and its former African colonies. Often overlooked, the Portuguese colonial experience in Africa spanned for five centuries and preceded that of the other European colonial powers (Spanish, Dutch, French, English, etc). Some of the first written accounts of inter-cultural contact in Africa were written in Portuguese. Students will get acquainted with these important sources, and they will assess them in light of texts produced in contemporary postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa, but also in view of contemporary critical and theoretical debates surrounding the issue of colonialism and its legacy in the contemporary, global world. Students will compare how issues of inter-cultural contact were perceived then and now, and they will also develop an understanding of how such contact was decisive for the formation of both national cultures and the present-day global world. Issues of religion, race and gender, as well as politics will be determining for this understanding.

Each course should bring together students from diverse majors, thereby creating an integrative learning environment in which, through interaction, the students themselves demonstrate the relationships or connections between information derived from different departments. The thematic approach of the course should ultimately permit students to appreciate the application of knowledge from diverse disciplines to contemporary issues.

What features of the course will promote the interaction among students from different academic backgrounds.

→ We expect that this course will attract students from a variety of disciplines, such as African American and African Studies, International Studies, Portuguese, Spanish, Film Studies, History, English and Film Studies. The instructor will encourage students, during in-class discussion, small group work, group presentations, and written assignments, to interact and bring to bear their personal experiences—including their disciplinary training—on the topic of the course.

Is the course based within a single discipline or is it interdisciplinary in design?

→ This course is based within a single discipline (Portuguese/literature), but draws on secondary sources from several disciplines, such as history, anthropology, sociology, literary theory, etc.

What prerequisites will be specified for this course? Note: generally speaking, the committee prefers minimal prerequisites; in most cases prerequisites should consist of lower-level courses approved for the other GEC categories.

→ Prerequisite will be English 110.

What writing or research component will be required as part of the course? Note: as this is intended to be a senior-level course, one should assume that all students will have completed the first and second writing and related skills courses and that some may have completed the third writing course.

→ Students will be required to write analytically and synthesize writing from diverse disciplines each week, and will be required to write substantial essays (each 8-10 pages double-spaced).

Will class size be limited to a maximum of 40 students? If larger, are the accompanying discussion sessions limited to 25 students?

→ Class size will be limited to 40 students.