Literature of Empire and Globalization: A Description

As part of a faculty learning community (FLC) on Engaging the Global Community (EGC), this course will explore the shift from an age of empire—what is sometimes called “proto-globalization”—to our current age of globalization. We will focus on the particular experience of India, first as an imperial possession of Great Britain and then as a nation independent from Britain. Although we will be examining the Indian experience through the lens of imaginative literature, we will also juxtapose the novels we will be reading with historical documents of the period during which these novels were set in order to integrate the study of both history and literature. The relation between this course and the other courses in the FLC will be described below (see Issue[s] of global impact’ under “Basic information”).

Basic information

- Instructors: Drs. Dwight Hahn, Maria Marsilli, John McBratney, and Gloria Vaquera. At any point in the life of this FLC, only three instructors will officially constitute the group; when the fourth instructor rotates in, one of the instructors in the official group will rotate out, thus preserving the number in the FLC at three at any time.
- Initial offering: Sp 2016 (see the attached Excel spreadsheet for the rotation over the next several semester)
- Audience: open to all students who have taken EN 125 or EN 120 & 121
- Disciplines integrated: English, History, Political Science, and Sociology
- Issue(s) of global impact: Although each of the courses represented by this global FLC will approach the issue of globalization differently, all of them will concern, more or less, the rise of the global state and/or global culture. Depending on the course, this rise will be seen historically (EN 299 and HS 2xx), developmentally (PO 256), or sociologically (SC 353). Also depending on the course, the culmination of this rise—the spread of a global society—will be seen through the lens of the nation-state (EN 299, PO 256), the lens of the region (EN 299, HS 2xx, PO 256), and/or the prism of transnationality (EN 299, SC 353). In this way, these courses will critique the concept of the nation-state under globalization from different perspectives. While two of the courses will focus on Latin America (broadly construed), the others will concentrate on other parts of the world: Europe or North America (PO 256) and South Asia (EN 299), thus providing a wide range of regional and cross-regional foci. Taken together, these courses will examine the rise of globalization from the standpoint of a rich array of overlapping thematic interests: economic (mercantilist, capitalist, and Marxist), political (including pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial), sociological (especially concerning issues of class, ethnic, and gender identity), religious (Christian and non-Christian), ethical (in the form of...
cosmopolitanism or human rights law), and technological (regarding the pre-cyber and cyber eras).

Learning Outcomes (relevant to the EGC)

1. To demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural worlds.
2. To communicate ideas effectively in multiple forms of expression (in writing and in oral presentations).
3. To act competently in a global and diverse world.

Rationale

Globalization refers to the contemporary phenomenon of rapid and world-wide movement of people, goods, information, and power (economic, political, and cultural) across national borders. Through these transnational movements, we are connected, for better or for worse, with persons often very different from us. The historical context out of which these interconnections arose is the product largely of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European imperialism, of which British imperialism was the most pervasive and dominant variety. The novel provides one of the best means by which we can trace the emergence of globalization from imperialism. Because this particular literary form places individual characters against the backdrop of larger historical forces, it is particularly sensitive to the range of positions, from the local to the global, individual characters can occupy. It is, therefore, acutely aware of the varieties of human experience convulsed by the shift from empire to globalization. Although it is imperative that we coexist peacefully with persons beyond our borders in an age of globalization, the legacy of imperialism—particularly, its enshrining of invidious differences between human beings—makes such coexistence a continual challenge to negotiate.

Readings

- Manfred B. Steger’s *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*
- Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*
- Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*
- E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*
- Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*
- Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*
- Various historical documents keyed to the novels.

Assignments

- One 5-6 page essay examining a novel and a historical document together to analyze a significant problem or issue within the experience of empire and/or globalization.
- As part of a signature project assignment, one 6-8 page research essay about empire and/or globalization a version of which will be delivered as an oral presentation.