

Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies
EN 122 MODES OF READING – Second Assessed Essay – 2016-2017

Write an essay of approximately 3,500 words (3,000 for exchange students staying less than the full academic year) on one of the following topics. Essays MUST be submitted electronically via TABULA by **12.00 noon on Tuesday 2nd May 2017 (week 2, term 3)**. The deadline for students on exchange for less than the full academic year is **12:00 noon on Tuesday 14th March 2017 (week 10, term 2)**. Note that this is a departmental, centrally-set deadline and extensions will be granted only for very serious reasons. Any request for extension must be made in advance directly to the Director of Undergraduate Studies and should normally be accompanied by a medical certificate. Please make sure that you are aware of the departmental guidelines for the presentation of essays and of the regulations on plagiarism (see 'Useful Links' box on the Modes of Reading website).

1. In the extract "Crisis in Orientalism" from *Orientalism*, Edward Said discusses the power of representation to create and shape lived realities and social interactions. Write an essay exploring how Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* addresses the issue of representation in relation to the meanings attached to "East" as both a real and imaginary place.
2. "Yeah, sometimes we were French, Jammie and I, and other times we went black American. The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it." (Ch. 4). With reference to Judith Butler's theorisation of identity as performative, write an essay on the ways in which Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* helps us explore the limits and possibilities of racialised or gendered identity.
3. Discuss how Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* constructs different maps of Englishness. How does the novel challenge dominant notions of Englishness by linking them to race, gender and national belonging? Discuss this in light of Zizek's theorization of ideology as a conjoining of the real conditions of existence and fantasmatic projections of it OR in light of Stuart Hall's conceptualization of "new ethnicities".
4. Gayatri Spivak has theorized the problems that elite critics have with understanding subaltern consciousness. Write an essay on how Mahasweta Devi's story "Draupadi" can be read as an attempt to tackle the problem of representing the subaltern woman.
5. "The education system and I had split up. It would break his immigrant heart, too. But the spirit of the age among the people I knew manifested itself as general drift and idleness. We didn't want money. What for? We could get by, living off parents, friends or the State." (Chapter 7) The protagonist of Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* is here expressing a deep disenchantment with formal education, viewed by rebellious youth as supporting the status quo. Explore the different ways in which some of the characters in Kureishi's novel educate themselves and discuss it in light of the ways in which Gayatri Spivak in her interviews considers the classroom as a politically charged space.
6. Toni Morrison's novel *A Mercy* explores the issues of forming a nation, specifically the country that would become the United States of America, and its deep divisions along race, gender and class. Please write an essay addressing the concept of community as variously articulated in the novel.
7. Toni Morrison opens her novel thus: "'Don't be afraid. My telling can't hurt you in spite of what I have done and I promise to lie quietly in the dark ...'". One could say that *A Mercy* is foremost a narrative of an endless and unbearable cruelty. Write an essay that analyzes Morrison's narrative taking into account its articulation of possible forms of community and the forces that continuously reject human kindness.
8. Judith Butler starts her argument from this perspective: "precariousness as a generalized condition relies on a conception of the body as fundamentally dependent on, and conditioned by, a sustained and sustainable world; responsiveness-and thus, ultimately, responsibility-is located in the affective responses to a sustaining and impinging world" (34). Please write an essay in which you confront this premise and develop your sense of what Butler means, either by focusing on Butler's essay or in reference to Toni Morrison's novel *A Mercy*.
9. Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism* writes: "More important than the past itself, therefore, is its bearing upon cultural attitudes in the present. For reasons that are partly embedded in the

imperial experience; the old divisions between colonizer and colonized have re-emerged in what is often referred to as the North-South relationship, which has entailed defensiveness, various kinds of rhetorical and ideological combat, and a simmering hostility—that is quite likely to trigger devastating wars -- in some cases it already has. Please write an essay on the importance of understanding how the imperial past might still condition the present.

10. In “in the name of the revolution, the double barricade (impure ‘impure impure history of ghosts’)” Jacques Derrida writes: “Capitalist societies can always heave a sigh of relief and say to themselves: communism is finished since the collapse of the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century and not only is it finished, but it did not take place, it was only a ghost. They do no more than disavow the undeniable itself: a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back.” Please write an essay in which you address this statement in terms of how it might apply to *A Mercy* in terms of the ghosts it is haunted by; and also in relation to the need to address those ghosts for an understanding of the persistence of racism in our present societies.