

ENG 222/262 Spring 2019

Gendering Empire Representations, Tropes and Discourses of Gender in British Colonial Literature, 1860-1914

Course instructor: Randi Koppen

Course description

This course will explore connections between British colonialism and gender as seen through a selection of texts written between the 1860s and the First World War.

Written for various purposes, by colonial administrators and their wives, travellers, politicians and writers of literature, the selected texts represent different genres – diaries, public speeches, manuals, diaries, letters, poetry and fiction – as well as a wide range of responses to empire. While the majority of these texts may be described as colonialist, others begin to register growing doubts and critique attaching to the politics and ideology of empire. One group of texts, the poems written by Rabindranath Tagore (the first Asian writer to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature), offer a different avenue of approach, from the perspective of the colonised.

As we read and discuss these texts we will ask how sex and gender figure in colonialism as a political and textual enterprise as well as a lived reality. In what ways does gender enter into the texts of empire and their representations of colonised lands and peoples? How do men and women serve empire? Do parallels exist between different forms of oppression, for instance gender and race? Can we speak of colonialism as a gendered and heteronormative discourse? These and other related questions will centre our discussions.

Required reading

Please note that item number four on the list below will be supplied in class. All other items will be available in the university book store at the Student Centre by the beginning of term

1.

Elleke Boehmer, ed. *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1918*. Oxford World Classics. Selections:

George Otto Trevelyan, "An Indian Railway"; "The Gulf Between Us" (1864), 12 pp.

John Beames, "Civilian Memoirs" (1873), 6 pp

Isabella Bird, "Letter from Sungei Ujong, Malay Peninsula" (1883), 6 pp.

H. Rider Haggard, from *The Legend of Solomon's Mines* (1885), 10 pp.

Flora Annie Steel, "The Duties of the Mistress" (1889), 7 pp.

Joseph Chamberlain, "The True Conception of Empire" (1897), 4 pp.

Joseph Conrad, "An Outpost of Progress" (1898), 23 pp.

Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" (1899), 2 pp.

Rabindranath Tagore, Poems from *Gitanjali* (1912), with an introduction by W.B. Yeats 10 pp.

2.

E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*.

Leonard Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle*

George Orwell, *Burmese Days*

3.

Robert Dale Parker, *How To Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*. Selections:

Chapter 6: Feminism

Chapter 7: Queer Studies

Chapter 10: Postcolonial/Race Studies

Rivkin and Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Selections:

Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Subordination"

4. **David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Selections:**

Chapter 11: Eroticization: The harems of the West