

AREA EXAMINATION
POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES
NOVEMBER 2008

INSTRUCTIONS

This examination consists of two parts:

Part A: Postcolonial literatures and theory/criticism

Part B: The candidate's choice of one thematic category

You will answer **two questions from Part A** and **one question from Part B**. All questions are of equal value.

In the examination as a whole, do not extensively discuss the same writer more than once.

The examination is four hours long.

Part A

Answer two of the following questions.

1. What are the advantages and the dangers of approaching postcolonial literary texts as expressions of “minority discourse”? In your answer discuss works by at least three authors from two different geographical regions, and also refer to particular critics/theorists who take up this question.
2. How and to what ends do at least three authors from at least two different geographical regions write works of literature that formally (i.e. through particular textual or linguistic strategies) engage with the English language? In your answer you should also address the various debates in the criticism about English as a postcolonial language.
3. "Settler-invader society" is the common term for European migrant populations that moved to areas of the world already inhabited by indigenous peoples and that often permanently displaced those peoples. The various literatures produced in such locations (e.g. Australia, South Africa, etc.) have been the subject of some debate in Postcolonial literary studies. What is that debate? Which critics and/or writers have taken which positions on it?—discuss at least three. And what is your own position with respect to the debate?
4. How useful to postcolonial writers and critics is Benedict Anderson’s proposition that a nation is an “imagined community”? In your answer discuss works by at least three authors from two different geographical regions, and also refer to relevant scholarship that takes up the idea of “nation” in postcolonial discourse.

Part B

Answer one of the following questions using works from your Thematic Categories list.

1. How and why have at least three authors from this list engaged with the issue of memory in their work?
2. How have the debates about essentialized identities played out in postcolonial literary studies, especially in relation to works chosen from this thematic category? In your answer refer to works by at least three authors.
3. Do men and women experience migration and diaspora differently? Answer with reference to works by at least three authors.

4. Avtar Brah argues that "a combination of the local and the global is always an important aspect of diasporic identities." Analyze the dynamic between the local and the global in at least three texts from your B list.