

Field Examination
Postcolonial Literatures

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

Please answer two of the following questions using texts from the “A” list. In each answer you must refer to texts from at least two different geographical regions. You should take recent criticism and relevant theory into account in framing your answers.

1. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that, during colonization, “the bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation.” Can language be a weapon for both subjugation and resistance? Analyze the importance of language in three postcolonial texts.
2. Why has hybridity become such a key feature of postcolonial criticism and literature? Discuss the subject of hybridity in three postcolonial texts.
3. Explore the dynamic between gender and postcolonialism in three texts.
4. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that “one of the strongest foci for resistance to imperial control in colonial societies has been the idea of ‘nation’.” Do you agree? Discuss the role of nationalism and national resistance in three texts.

Part B

[for a B list focusing on Thematic category III, Aboriginal Literatures]

Please answer one of the following questions.

1. Writing by indigenous peoples in settler/invasor colonies frequently exhibits a focus on land and the connection between identity and “place.” Discuss the ways that three indigenous writers (Australian Aboriginal, Maori, and/or North American Native) address the subject of land and “place” in their texts.
2. There is a debate within postcolonial studies about the benefits or risks of assertions of “essential” Aboriginal identity and “authentic” culture. Explore the arguments about essential identities and authenticity with reference to texts by three Aboriginal writers (Australian Aboriginal, Maori, and/or North American Native).
3. Discuss the dynamic between orality and the written in three texts from the Aboriginal literatures list.
4. If “History” is written by the dominant culture, then indigenous peoples have, until recently, been represented in historical narrative without representing themselves. Discuss how three writers (Australian Aboriginal, Maori, or North American Native) address the subject of history and its revisions.