

UBC Department of English Language & Literatures

Dina Al-Kassim Graduate Seminar 2022/23
Department of English Literatures and Language
UBC

ENGL 546B From “Alienation to Liberty”: Anti/Post/Decolonial Studies in Subjectivity

A recently translated volume of Frantz Fanon’s writings introduces the Anglophone audience to Fanon as playwright, psychiatrist and decolonial ‘alienist.’ In our contemporary context of racial reckoning for histories of coloniality, the link between “thought disorder” (Wang) and social in/justice remains a critical connection for politically-engaged literature. Africa is central to the rise of modern psychiatry and the invention of “big pharma” in psychiatric treatment globally. Alongside the colonial production of medical knowledge, anti-racist and anti-colonial theories of subjectivity have likewise been central to the political project of decolonization. Despite the long tradition of anti-colonial writing that explores liminal mental states, “mad studies,” an offshoot of medical humanities, only glancingly references Fanon while taking its place as a new form of anti-psychiatry. This course remedies this deficit by introducing students to Fanon’s thought, writing and his practice of “institutional psychotherapy”, which re-imagines treatment as a passage from alienation to liberty. We will read a selection of anti-racist fiction/poetry from Africa, Canada, the UK and the US that takes psychiatric stigma as key to the social construction of race. Along the way, we will read a range of works in medical humanities, postcolonial studies, literary studies and critical theory.

Readings will vary and are likely to include:

Theoretical Non-fiction Narrative

Esme Weijun Wang, *The Collected Schizophrenias*

Lana Lin, *Freud’s Jaw and Other Lost Objects: Fractured Subjectivity in the Face of Cancer*

Audre Lorde, “Intro”, “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action”, *The Cancer Journals*

Anne Boyer, “The Hoax”, “In the Temple of Giuletta Masina’s Tears”, *The Undying: Pain, vulnerability, mortality, medicine, art, time, dreams, data, exhaustion, cancer, and care*

Georges Bataille, “Labyrinth”, *Inner Experience*

Psychological Fiction and Poetry

Lillian Allen, *Psychic Unrest* (Black Can)

Ahmed Bouanani, *The Hospital* (African)

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (Zimbabwe)

This Mournable Body (Zimbabwe)

Bhanu Kapil, *Schizophrene* (UK BAME)

Ibrahim Nazrallah, *Prairies of Fever* (Palestinian)

Olumide Popoola, *When We Speak of Nothing* (African/trans/UK)

Leone Ross, *Orange Laughter* (UK BAME)

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Adania Shibli, *Minor Detail* (Palestinian)
Yvonne Vera, *The Stone Virgins* (Zimbabwe)
Dambudzo Marechera, *House of Hunger* (Zimbabwe)

Theory: Subjectivity, Race, Madness

Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power and History of Madness*, selections
Karima Lazali, *Colonial Trauma*
David Marriott, *Wither Fanon*
Achille Mbembe, "The Clinic of the Subject" and "Epilogue" in *Critique of Black Reason*,
"God's Phallus" in *On the Postcolony*
Stefania Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul: Madness, Psychoanalysis, Islam*
Psychiatry Disrupted: Theorizing Resistance and Crafting the (R)Evolution, eds. Bonnie Burstow,
Brenda A. LeFrançois and Shaindl Diamond, selections

Colonialism and Psychiatry

Helen Tilley, *Africa as Living Laboratory*, selections
Didier Fassin, "Ethnopsychiatry and the Postcolonial Encounter: A French Psychopolitics of
Otherness" in *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma and Global
Sovereignities*, eds. Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson and Richard C. Keller
Christiane Hartnack, "Colonial Dominions with the Psychoanalytic Couch: Synergies of Freudian
Theory with Bengali Hindu Thought and Practices in British India", in *Unconscious
Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma and Global Sovereignities*, eds. Warwick
Anderson, Deborah Jenson and Richard C. Keller
Nancy E. Gallagher, "Introduction", "Indigenous medicine against plague, 1780-1830", "Cholera
in an age of European Economic Expansion, 1830-58", "Colonization and collapse of
Arab medical institutions", in *Medicine and Power in Tunisia 1780-1900*

Africa and Anti-colonial Psychology

Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture", "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" in *Wretched of the
Earth*

A Dying Colonialism

"Ethnopsychiatric considerations", "Conducts of confession in North Africa (1), (2)",
"The Phenomenon of agitation in the psychiatric milieu: General considerations,
psychopathological meaning", "The meeting between society and psychiatry",
"Indications of electroconvulsive therapy within institutional therapies" in *Alienation
and Freedom*

Nigel C. Gibson and Roberto Beneduce, *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*

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Race, Psyche and Psychiatry

Selections from:

Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia*, 2006.

“From subjugated knowledge to conjugated subjects: science and globalisation, or postcolonial studies of science?” *Postcolonial Studies*. 2009; 12: 389–400.

Patricia Gherovici, *The Puerto Rican Complaint*

Psychiatry and Empire, eds. Sloan Mahone and Megan Vaughn

Postcolonial Disorders: Reflections on Subjectivity in the Contemporary World eds. Byron J. Good, Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Sandra Teresa Hyde and Sarah Pinto