Teaching Colonial Discourse: 
Africa through European Eyes

Context:
Discourse refers to the combined and various modes of expression we use to explain our world to ourselves. Colonial discourse refers to the texts (fiction and non), documents, maps, studies, theories, assumptions, terms, stereotypes, and ways of talking about or understanding the “colonized” world. To borrow Edward Said’s terms, it is a lens through which “the West” sees the rest of the world, and that lens distorts reality in various ways. Understanding the impacts of colonial discourse helps us better understand both the past and the present, and opens up conversations about how politics and power play into our everyday ways of thinking, talking, and knowing.

This handout provides a sampling of colonial texts, quotations, timelines, terms, and images that can help us address these impacts in our classrooms. When used to introduce the concept of colonialism and its psychological impacts, these materials are a useful historical context.
“In the peoples of Germany, there has been given to the world a race untainted by intermarriage with other races, a peculiar people and pure, like no one but themselves”
- Tacitus (ca. 56-117, Roman orator), Germania quoted in Horsman (12)

"I contend that we (the British) are the finest race in the world; and that the more of th world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race".
- Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902; in his 1877 "Confession of Faith")

The world is nearly all parcelled out, and what there is left of it is being divided up, conquered and colonised. To think of these stars that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could; I often think of that. It makes me sad to see them so clear and yet so far.
- Cecil Rhodes, Last Will and Testament (1902)
“The product of a mindless state, its feelings are coarse, its passions rough, its instincts brutish, and, in addition, it is proud and vain. The black man’s principal occupation, and that to which he dedicates the greatest part of his existence, consists of stretching out on a mat in the warm rays of the sun, like a crocodile on the sand…The black man has no idea of time, and questioned on that subject by a European, he generally responds with something stupid”

Excerpt from Captain Léon Rom’s *Le Nègre du Congo* (1899)

"The tragedy of Africa is that African man has not sufficiently become part of history.

The African peasant, who has lived for thousands of years according to the seasons, whose ideal of life is to be in harmony with nature, only is familiar with the eternal return of rhythmic time by the repetition without end of the same gestures and the same words. In this imaginary world where everything always begins again, there is neither a place for the human adventure nor for the idea of progress...

The problem of Africa is that it lives too much in the present in the nostalgia of the lost paradise of childhood..."

French President Nicolas Sarkozy
26 July 2007
University of Dakar, Senegal

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1. In Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost* 148

Teaching *Things Fall Apart* in Wisconsin
A Resource Guide by Heather DuBois Bourenane
“The Sun Never Sets on the British Empire”
Extent of the British Empire (1921)

**Africa**
- Basutoland (now Lesotho)
- Bechuanaland (now Botswana)
- British Togoland (now pt Ghana)
- Gambia
- Gold Coast (now Ghana)
- Egypt
- Kenya
- Mauritius
- Nigeria
- Northern Cameroons (now part of Nigeria)
- Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia)
- Nyasaland (now Malawi)
- Sierra Leone
- Somaliland
- South Africa
- Southern Cameroons (now part of Cameroon)
- Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)
- South West Africa (now Namibia)
- Swaziland
- Sudan
- Tanganyika and Zanzibar (now Tanzania)
- Uganda

**The Americas and Atlantic**
- Ascension Island
- British Guiana (now Guyana)
- British Honduras (now Belize)
- Canada
- Falkland Islands
- Newfoundland (now province of Canada)
- West Indies
- Anguilla
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Bermuda
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Jamaica
- Montserrat
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- St Helena
- Tristan da Cunha
- South Georgia (also claimed by Argentina)

**Antarctica**
- British Antarctic Territory (overlaps Argentine and Chilean claim)

**Asia**
- Aden Colony (now pt Yemen)
- Aden Protectorate (now pt Yemen)
- Bahrain
- Bhutan
- British India (now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh)
- British Mandate of Palestine (now Israel (excluding the Golan Heights), the Gaza Strip and the West Bank
- Brunei (British protectorate)
- Burma (now Myanmar)
- Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)
- Hong Kong (now a Region of China)
- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Malaya (now Peninsular Malaysia, part of Malaysia)
- Maldives
- North Borneo (now Sabah, part of Malaysia)
- Muscat and Oman (now Oman)
- Qatar
- Sarawak (now part of Malaysia)
- Sikkim (now part of India)
- Straits Settlements (Singapore, Malacca, Penang, and Labuan in Southeast Asia and Cocos Islands and Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean; now divided among Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia)
- Transjordan (now Jordan)
- Trucial States (now the United Arab Emirates)
- Wei-Hai-Wei (now the city of Weihai in Shandong, China)
- also several extraterritorial territories in China called treaty ports, the most famous being the British concession in Shanghai

**Europe**
- Channel Islands (crown dependencies)
- Guernsey
- Jersey
- Cyprus
- Gibraltar
- Malta
- Isle of Man
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

**Pacific**
- Australia
- British New Guinea (southern part of what is now Papua New Guinea)
- Ellice Islands (now Tuvalu)
- Fiji
- Gilbert Islands (now part of Kiribati)
- Nauru
- New Hebrides (condominium shared with the French Empire) (now Vanuatu)
- New Zealand
- Pitcairn
- Solomon Islands
- Tonga (as a state under British protectorate)
Model of British Crown Colony Government

- the outline of the model was almost always the same, but the model was infinitely flexible.

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+------------------------------------------+
| White Settlers                          |
| (a) Responsible Government (i.e., white settler control) |
| Southern Rhodesia after 1922             |
| (b) No Responsible Government (white settlers had loss of influence but no political control of the colonial government) |
| Kenya and Northern Rhodesia              |
+------------------------------------------+
| No White Settlers                       |
| (a) States and Kingdoms (kings, chiefs and even administrative hierarchies) |
| Uganda, northern Nigeria (especially with treaties) and Gold Coast (without treaty) |
| (b) Stateless or limited political systems (lacked or had only weak authorities) |
| Kenya, south-eastern Nigeria             |
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**Extent of Colonialism (1939)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Germany (1914)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area (Sq Miles)</td>
<td>94,000</td>
<td>212,600</td>
<td>11,800</td>
<td>13,200</td>
<td>210,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>45,500,100</td>
<td>42,000,000</td>
<td>8,300,000</td>
<td>8,500,000</td>
<td>67,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Colonies</td>
<td>13,100,000</td>
<td>4,300,000</td>
<td>940,000</td>
<td>790,000</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop. of Colonies</td>
<td>470,000,000</td>
<td>65,000,000</td>
<td>13,000,000</td>
<td>66,000,000</td>
<td>13,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms and Definitions:
- Colonialism
- Pacification
- Paternalism
- Francophone/Anglophone
- Assimilation (cultural) – merging of cultural traits; absorb into your own culture. French sense: to become French.
- Appropriation (psychological reconciliation) – take w/o permission, make one’s own

Abridged Timeline *See timeline in course pack*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1441-mid1800s</td>
<td>Slave trade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1652</td>
<td>Dutch settle in South Africa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1739</td>
<td>1st known missionaries (Moravian Brethren, South Africa)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>mid 1800s</td>
<td>Europeans explore Africa (Mungo Park, Livingstone, Stanley, Richard Burton)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1790s-1800s</td>
<td>large scale missionary activity (1792 Baptist Missionary Society est)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1884/5</td>
<td>Berlin Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880s-WWI</td>
<td>Period of colonial conquest of Africa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>Harlem Renaissance (US)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Negritude movement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1950s-1960s</td>
<td>Independence era; start of modern literary mov’t in Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Literary timeline
- 1850s-1880s – early publications in African and European languages by African writers educated in Europe
- 1883 – Olive Schreiner (white S. African writer), novel *The Story of an African Farm* (explores race & gender relations; pioneering text)
- 1930s – Negritude mov’t
- 1950s – *Drum* (literary magazine) mov’t in South Africa – Peter Abrahams, et al
- 1957 – Ghana’s independence (1st country to received indep.; Ethiopia & Liberia excluded)
- 1958 – Guinea’s independence from France under Sékou Touré
- 1954-1962 – Algerian war of independence
- 1963 – Kenya’s independence
- 1964-1989 – Nelson Mandela imprisoned
- 1960s-70s – Critiques of Negritude (most famously Soyinka’s in *Myth, Literature & the African World*) as essentialist reverse replications of European racism: begin phase of DISILLUSIONMENT and CRITIQUE (postcolonial era)
- 1965 – Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* published in English (1961)

Resistance to Colonialism
- Material/Military
- Intellectual/literary
- Appropriation
- Massai – dodging taxes
- Cotton cultivation – refusal to work
- Emigration/Exile
This painting (circa 1872) by John Gast called *American Progress* is an *allegorical* representation of Manifest Destiny. In the scene, an angelic woman (sometimes identified as *Columbia*, a 19th century personification of the United States) carries the light of "civilization" westward with American settlers, stringing *telegraph* wire as she travels. *American Indians* and wild animals flee into the darkness before them.

American westward expansion is idealized in Emanuel Leutze's famous painting *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (1861). The title of the painting, from a 1726 poem by Bishop Berkeley, was a phrase often quoted in the era of Manifest Destiny, expressing a widely held belief that civilization had steadily moved westward throughout history.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma
“The White Man’s Burden” – Images in Print

Pre-1923 article cartoon during the Philippine American War
The first step towards lightening

The White Man’s Burden

is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness.

Pears’ Soap

is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilization advances, while amongst the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place—it is the ideal toilet soap.

1890s print advertisement using Rudyard Kipling’s poem to sell soap.