

SAMPLE #3

University Major Proposal
Postcolonial Studies
History & Literature

Wesleyan offers no single major that includes the intellectual exploration of the racial, political and economic disparities of postcolonial societies. Because of the globalized nature of colonialism, I need to explore all such aspects of postcolonial studies. Although Wesleyan does offer a substantial number of courses about the various phenomena of postcolonialism and their relation to each other in places around the world - in Asia, Africa, and the Americas - these courses are spread through different departments and programs.

While it may be possible to pursue studies in the postcolonial era through several majors, to do so from one perspective would render an incomplete picture of this not-so-recently-past era. It is certainly an historical field, though in the production of a coherent historical narrative, some voices are more clearly pronounced than others. In order to integrate these perspectives into the larger record, literature functions as history's foil. The conversation between these two results in a holistic approach to the act of remembering our past.

The classes I have included in my course list allow me to explore the intellectual legacy of this field and also to approach both the role of literature in history and the ways in which literature affects history. Some of the most influential authors whose works I have encountered in my time here include Aimé Césaire, V.S. Naipaul, Paulo Freire and Homi Bhabha. Future courses will continue to enrich this experience, most pointedly through reading the works of other crucial intellectuals in this field.

I hope to apply a syncretic approach to my thesis, drawing on both history and literature to create a grounded, historical narrative set in the Caribbean that will employ both intellectual histories as well as vernacular and literary pasts. I would like to make my senior thesis a creative

project, writing a collection of short stories. I will set them in postcolonial Guyana, beginning with Guyana's independence in 1966 and tapering off around the turn of the millennium. My model for this project is Trinidadian author V.S. Naipaul's Miguel Street. While Naipaul's collection explores one particular street, my collection will be set in a classroom in the nation's capital, Georgetown, with each chapter or vignette exploring a different character and a different aspect of Guyanese culture. Just as Naipaul integrates history with fiction, I would like to pinpoint particular events in Guyanese and Caribbean history. Examples include the death of Guyana's fourth president, Cheddi Jagan, and the controversy surrounding the election of his wife, Janet, an American woman who would become Guyana's sixth president and first female president. One particular aspect I would like to target is the relationship between the Indo-Guyanese and the Afro-Guyanese, as this quickly becomes a central part of the postcolonial Guyanese identity. For example, after independence, there emerged racial tensions between the aforementioned Jagan, who was Indo-Guyanese, and Guyana's second president, Forbes Burnham, who was Afro-Guyanese. The folding of history with literature will be apparent as the children live through some of these events and as some of their parents recall their own experiences as well. This collection will allow me to incorporate what I've learned by analyzing history, interpreting literature, and applying theories in a work that will be a serious comment on Guyanese history.

My proposed major also has long-term elements, because I am considering pursuing postcolonial studies at a graduate level. My thesis will be an exploration of my own experiences with the field through courses as well as research. Beyond this, my creation of this university major and my interest in this field of study are inextricably tied to an attempt to understand not just the world as a whole but also the cultural manifestations of the colonial experience.

Course List

Courses (Complete or will be completed by the end of the Spring 2010 semester)

History Department	English Department
HIST 245: Latin American History (Spring 2010)	ENGL 221: African American Anticolonial Literature (Fall 2010)
HIST 332: Atlantic Africa (Spring 2010)	ENGL 334: Naipaul, Rushdie, Cesaire (Spring 2010)

Possible Courses for Fall 2010

History Department	English Department
HIST 389: Models of Imperialism and Globalization (Fall 2010)	ENGL 273: South Asian Writing in Diaspora (Fall 2010)
HIST 383: History of Human Rights in Africa and the African Diaspora (Fall 2010)	ENGL 356: The Globe and the World: Representations and Theorizations of New Transnational Formations (Fall 2010)
HIST299: African History and Art (Fall 2010)	ENGL 230: Introduction to Asian American Literature (Fall 2010)
HIST 268: The Origins of Global Capitalism: Economic History, 1400-1800	ANTH 336: Ethnicity, Nationality, Identity (Fall 2010)

Possible Courses for Spring 2011

History Department	Other Departments
HIST294: Political Fiction (Spring 2011)	ANTH 330: Bureaucratic Rationalities (Spring 2011)
HIST 268: The Origins of Global Capitalism : Economic History, 1400-1800 (Spring 2011)	AMST 314: The United States in the Pacific Islands (Spring 2011)
HIST 217: African History Before 1870 (Spring 2011)	
HIST 280: The Industrial Revolution in Global Context: Economic History Since 1800 (Spring 2011)	

Courses Offered 2008-2009

HIST 317: Ireland: Colonialism and Decolonialization
 ENGL 279: Introduction to Latino Literatures and Cultures
 HIST 217: African History Before 1870
 HIST 251: World History: A Psychohistory of the Modern World
 ENGL 275: Postcolonial Literature
 ENGL 272: Postcolonial Theory

Courses Offered 2009-2010

HIST 293: Muslim Africa
 HIST 296: Colonial Latin America
 AMST 320: Nationalism and the Politics of Gender and Sexuality
 HIST 212: African History Since 1870
 LAST 318: Who Owns Culture? A History of Cultural & Intellectual Property in the United States & Latin America
 HIST 391: The Spanish Empire: Identity and Diversity in the Early Global Age
 HIST 320: History of Southern Africa