**The Curse of the Mountain: Postcolonial Adventure Literature (BA)**

PD Dr. Pavan Malreddy

SS 2025

**Thursdays 10-12 hours, Room: 1.09.01.14**

“Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success.”

Such was the sublime spirit of Ernest Shackleton’s ill-fated voyage into the mouth of the Antarctic. Since Shackleton ran the above advert in the *London Times* in 1913, many European explorers have set out to conquer the world in the name of glory. From the adventures of the Victorian and Edwardian eras (1837-1910) to the ‘mountain madness’ of the interwar years, the colonial world became an object of conquest and exploration, one that formed the basis for European theories of the sublime and the beautiful. Today, Nepal, Tibet, and Pakistan continue to serve as the sublime objects of exploration (and exploitation) in the name of mountain tourism and pro-poor tourism. This seminar discusses the implications of mountaineering and adventure tourism to postcolonial societies through select novels and films.

# Literature:

Felice Benuzzi, *No Picnic on Mount Kenya,* 1953.

# John Quellen, *Tempting the Throne Room: Surviving Pakistan’s Deadliest Climbing Season*, 2013

Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster*, 1997.

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| Session 1  10.04. | **Session**  [Touching the Void](https://watchdocumentaries.com/touching-the-void/) by Joe Simpson (watch the documentary **beforehand**) |
| Session 2  17.04. | 2. Shits Happens by Catherine Palmer  3. Postcolonial Romanticisms: The Sublime and Negative Capability… by Philip Dickinson |
| Session 3  24.04. | 4. Mountains and Mountain Dwellers of the Global South and the Globalisation of Tourism: Imaginaries and Practices by Isabelle Sacareau  5. Modern Mountains. From Enlightenment to the Anthropocene by Thomas Simpson |
| Session 4  08.05. | John Quellen, *Tempting the Throne Room: Surviving Pakistan’s Deadliest Climbing Season* (story, plot, form) |
| Session 5  15.05. | John Quellen, *Tempting the Throne Room: Surviving Pakistan’s Deadliest Climbing Season* (sublime, adventure, conquest) |
| Session 6  22.05. | 6. Professional adventure tourists: Producing and selling stories of ‘authentic’ identity Maurice J Kane  7. Colonial geography and masculinity in Eric Dutton’s Kenya Mountain by GA Myers |
| Session 7& 8  05.06. | Felice Benuzzi, *No Picnic on Mount Kenya* (story, plot, form)  Felice Benuzzi, *No Picnic on Mount Kenya,* 1953 (sublime, adventure, conquest) |
| Session 8a  19.06. | Mid-term exam, **in class** (write one paragraph each on something you’ve learnt new: one theortical/secondary text from the reader, a scene from one of the novels; a comment from in-class discussions) |
| Session 9  26.06. | 8. Climbing Mount Everest: Postcolonialism in the Cultures of Ascent by Stephen Sleeman  9. Confetti of Empire: The Conquest of Everest in Nepal… by Peter H Hansen |
| Session 10  03.07. | Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster*  (story, plot, form) |
| Session 11  10.07. | Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* (sublime, adventure, conquest) |
| Session 12  17.07. | Concluding Remarks |

**Requirements:**

In order to pass this seminar, students will be expected to hand in a mandatory midterm assignment. Details will be announced in the first session.

3 ECTS: 1500 words (should be presented as a written summary of **session leading**) + midterm assignment

6 ECTS: 6000 words (and a summary of **session leading**) + midterm assignment

**Session leading**: all students are required to **lead a session** (in groups of three maximum) with the following tasks: present the central argument of the reading/s assigned for that session with a critical and reflective perspective. At least one of the session leads is expected to bridge the session, i.e. summarize the discussion from the previous session and present it (5 minutes maximum) at the opening of the class. *Each student prepares and sends 1500 words of summary of their part in session leading to me by email one day before their session.*