

English 226: Non-Western World Literature (Honors)

Dr. Ryan Claycomb
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Class meets Tu/Thr 1:00pm-2:15pm

126D Honors Hall/ 305 Colson
304-293-2100 (office)
Office Hours: T/Thr after class (Colson)
or by appointment (Honors)

Course Description

One question is: Why might we bother reading (or teaching) the literature of other cultures?

Too often, reading literature of cultures different from ours becomes about us: How can learning about other cultures help me in my future classes/job/ life? (i.e. How is this about me?) What is universal about that story? (i.e. How is this about me?) What do the differences that we see in other cultures tell us about our own (i.e. How is this about me?) How might I find characters in completely different contexts “relatable”? (i.e. How is this about me?)

When we read this way—read anything different, be it through history, geography, or identity—we seek to craft the world around ourselves at the center. “Relatable”: blah.

Another question is: How is it that stories become a way of negotiating across culture?

The performer Anna Deavere Smith describes acting as “the travel from the self to the other,” in her terms, the ultimate ethical act, being in someone else’s shoes, seeing through their eyes. I see the same potential in reading, though I also hold dramatic literature and performance in high regard in this way.

A one-semester course in the literature of non-Western cultures cannot teach us to see through the eyes of a woman from Kerala, or a boy from Ghana, or a man from Trinidad. What it can do is teach us to look at our own reading eyes, to begin to see the ways that our culture limits our ability to see ethically across borders, to understand other parts of the world on their own terms.

Stories—told, written, performed—become our means for this transformation, to begin to see the ways that our culture has taught us to read cultural others, and to learn to read them as they ask us to.

So: Non-Western World Literature is a course that will cover many cultures that do not conform to Euro-American cultural values, though they may have been influenced by them. We will read works from several cultures (Asian, African, Middle Eastern, Caribbean) from many genres (with a special focus on drama as a genre that exceeds but does not escape the page), and from many perspectives. We will also read some postcolonial literary theory that examines Western ways of reading cultural others, the politics of writing through western modes (languages, influential stories, historical narrative arcs), and tactics by which we might imagine the world as arranged with ourselves somewhere other than the center.

The specific learning objectives for this course are as follows. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Identify a range of cultural and literary reading strategies that have tended to dominate Euro-American approaches to other cultures.
- Analyze literary texts for their use of and/or critique of those strategies.

- Employ a critical language surrounding several central concepts—“Orientalism,” “The Rhetoric of Empire,” “The Subaltern,” “Southernization,” and others—and synthesize them with your own habits of literary analysis and your own approach to global literature.
- Articulate what we can and cannot learn about other cultures through stories (both their forms and their content), and why stories are powerful modes for both educating and mis-educating across cultures
- Generate both academic analyses and practical documents that employ the lessons learned from the critical study of the literature of Americans abroad.

The goals of this course grow out of and connect to the broader goals of the English major:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
 - a. Identify genre conventions and analyze their effects
 - b. Identify and analyze effects of complexity or ambiguity
 - c. Locate texts in social, economic, political, and literary history
 - d. Connect a text to other literary or cultural texts
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

This course also fulfills GEC 5 and GEC 9.

Texts:

These texts are available at both the University Book Store and the Book Exchange. Please obtain them immediately, and try when possible to locate the assigned edition. Other texts may be added to our eCampus site as PDFs or via weblinks. These will be announced in in the syllabus with *** or in class as necessary.

- Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (you may also use *The Complete Persepolis*)
- Rushdie, Salman. *The Enchantress of Florence*
- Helen Gilbert, ed. *Postcolonial Plays: An Anthology*

Course Requirements:

You are expected to meet the following requirements to achieve a passing grade.

1. Complete all reading by the date it is listed in the syllabus. There is plenty of reading in this course, so be sure to budget your time accordingly. Some reading will be tested by unannounced quizzes.
2. Complete all work by the date listed in the syllabus
 - Grades on all assignments will drop one letter grade for every weekday they are late.
 - Work handed in more than one week past the due date will automatically be graded F (50%).
 - Work handed in more than two weeks past the due date will earn a zero.
 - A paper is not considered turned until I have a hard copy in my hand, unless I give explicit permission *beforehand*.
 - No work will be accepted after final grades have been submitted, except in cases of extreme duress, and then only when discussed with me in advance.
3. Participate in class activities in such a way that enhances learning for both yourself and your classmates.

Assignments:

- 20 pts. x 5 Participation: At three-week intervals (five total) students will earn participation grades based on attendance, preparation, meaningful contribution to classroom discussion and in-class activities, and absence of disruptive behavior. NOTE: a *lively* discussion is more important to me than one without missteps or mistakes. Please consider that taking intellectual risks in discussion is an implicit goal of an education in critical thinking. More prepared students are expected to contribute *generously*, actively helping out less experienced classmates, who are in turn expected to contribute *bravely*, on the understanding that we all learn from our own and each other's mistakes.
- 150 pts. Presentation: Individually or in groups of 3, students will read, research and present on one of the plays in *Postcolonial Plays* written in a non-Western context and not studied for class. Students will read the play, perform background research on the playwright, the play, the cultural context, and ALSO relevant performance histories and traditions that might help us understand the literary and performance contexts. While full performance is not necessary, students/groups should plan to stage at least a reading-on-its feet of a representative section.
- 100 pts. Paper #1: Students will construct a written argument of 1000+ words that applies an element of postcolonial theory discussed in class to an assigned short work of fiction, or to a readily available film. Guidelines forthcoming.
- 150 pts. Midterm: Students will analyze passages of literature that have been discussed in class based on specific prompts, and will answer questions on the critical texts under discussion.
- 250 pts. Paper #2: Students will write a 1650+ word paper (5+ pages) or respond to an equally rigorous alternative assignment with the objective of synthesizing the critical concepts of the course with specific literary documents and/or other cultural productions.
- 250 pts. Final Exam: The final exam will be cumulative of all material over the semester, and will be administered as a take-home exam with essay and possibly short-answer questions.

Format for Papers:

All out-of-class assignments must adhere to the following criteria: Typed, Times 12-point (or equivalent) font, double-spaced (unless guided otherwise), 1-inch to 1.25 inch margins, page numbered and stapled or paper clipped. Since paper assignments are based on word counts, a good rule of thumb is that each page is approximately 330 words. Please head your papers with your name, the date, the course, my name, and the word count, followed by a (creative) title that is centered above your essay. **Please note: messing with the physical appearance of the paper to achieve the illusion of length assumes that I cannot tell the difference between quantity and quality. A paper that is shorter than the assigned length but presented in an honest way will earn far more respect.**

Space Filler:

In order to get the next long section onto its own page, I had some space to fill...Let me tell you a story, then. Once, when I was about twenty-two, I was living just outside of Washington D.C. and working at (you'll never believe this) a collections agency...worst job I ever had. But the great thing about this place were the people, folks from literally all over the world and...oops, out of space...

Grading Written Work

Grades on written work will follow the guidelines laid out below, guidelines used by the University's writing program:

A (90-100% of available points): This is an outstanding essay that reflects a perceptive and thoughtful response to the assignment. It is well organized with excellent development of its ideas. It reflects the writer's command of appropriate rhetorical strategies. The prose is vigorous and fresh, and the writer is clearly in control of the standard conventions of American prose.

B (80-89.99% of available points): This is a very good essay that fulfills the assignment and shows evidence of clear thought and good planning. It is well organized with good supporting details. The writing is fluent, and there are only minor errors in the mechanics of writing that do not interfere with reading the essay.

C (70-79.99% of available points): This is a standard, satisfactory essay that fulfills the assignment and is adequately developed. This is the basic grade from which all others are derived. Higher grades than this *exceed* the expectations for the assignment, and grades lower than this fail to meet some major component of the assignment. The writing is clear and coherent with relatively few errors in usage and mechanics, but the writer fails to demonstrate any particular strength that would distinguish an above-average essay.

D (60-69.99% of available points): This is a below-average essay that fulfills many components of the assignment but exhibits major problems in writing. It may have difficulty with the presentation of ideas (e.g., lack of a clear thesis, weak organization, poor development of ideas, or inappropriate diction, poor spelling) or be marred by enough errors in the mechanics of writing to seriously distract the reader.

F (less than 60% of available points): This is an essay that relates to the topic but is so poorly presented that it fails to fulfill the assignment. It fails to present its basic ideas, either because of poor organization and lack of clarity or because the writing reflects a lack of control over the basic conventions of standard American usage. Such an essay may have sentence boundary problems, poor use of idiom, inappropriate diction (words used incorrectly), agreement errors, or verb tense problems.

0: This is an essay that is either completely unrelated to the assignment, or that represents dishonest work by the student, principally the use of ideas or writing which are clearly not one's own work. Refer to the West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog for the University policy on Academic Dishonesty.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance for this class is required. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to gather notes or make up any material. If you accumulate more than 4 absences (two full weeks of class) for any reason, you **will forfeit your entire class participation grade**. If a circumstance arises that drastically impacts your attendance, perhaps in all of your classes (serious illness, family tragedy, etc.), I'd strongly encourage you to contact Kim Mosby, Sr. Associate Dean of Student Life, at 293-5611 or Kim.Mosby@mail.wvu.edu.

Tardiness:

Excessive tardiness (or habitual early departure) is a problem and will negatively impact your class participation grade. When you are not in the class, you miss important class announcements, handouts, and the framework for the day's in-class work, or preparation for the next class.

Assignments turned in late because of tardiness will be considered late, and it is your responsibility to request and gather missed material. **Arriving in class more than 15 minutes late (or leaving more than 15 minutes early) will count as an absence.**

Office Hours:

Studies show that students who take advantage of opportunities to meet with faculty members outside of class are, in general, more successful in their courses. My office hours are times when I am committed to being available to consult with students, though I am frequently there at other times as well, and therefore am quite willing to make appointments at other times. Please note that I am often willing to review drafts or brainstorm with students in office hours before due dates, as well as to discuss any other concerns you may have about the class, its content, and its procedures. Or to—you know—hang out, talk about the recent season of *Sherlock* or fantasy football, recipes for hamburgers, whatever.

Inclusivity:

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Academic Dishonesty:

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code:

http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Class Schedule/ Syllabus

Dates and assignment parameters subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and/or via email

Wk	Day	Date	Class Schedule, Readings, Assignments
1	T	8/19	Non-Western World Literature: Beyond “Relatable”
	TH	8/21	Marjane Satrapi: <i>Persepolis</i> 1-71
2	T	8/26	<i>Persepolis</i> , 72-153.
	TH	8/28	PostColonial Theory: Orientalism Read excerpts from Edward Said (pronounced Siy-eed) and John McLeod***
3	T	9/2	PostColonial Theory: The Rhetoric of Empire Read excerpts from/ handout about David Spurr*** Ruth Praver Jabhvala, “An Experience of India”***
	TH	9/4	Selected Short Fiction Read “Anansi Brings Stories to the World” http://myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends/textonly11717-anansi-brings-stories-to-the-world.html Introduction, from <i>1001 Nights</i> , http://www.bartleby.com/16/1002.html Poke around the <i>1001 Nights</i> and read another tale or two. Jorge Luis Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote,” “Garden of Forking Paths” ***
4	T	9/9	PostColonial Theory: Gender/Sex/Sexuality Read Excerpts from Spivak, Mohanty, Minh-ha, Suleri***
	TH	9/11	Selected Short Stories Read Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl”***, Shani MooToo, “Out on Main Street,”*** Patricia Grace, “The Hills”***; Bring along <i>Persepolis</i> Listen to Edwidge Danticat read stories by Jamaica Kincaid: http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/fiction-podcast-edwidge-danticat-reads-jamaica-kincaid
5	T	9/16	Whose Language? Read excerpts from Ngugi wa Thiong’o, poetry by Derek Walcott, Agha Shaheed Ali, others.***
	TH	9/18	Paper 1: Draft Workshop Due in class: complete draft of paper #1 Students who come unprepared will earn at least a half-grade penalty for an incomplete draft, and a full letter grade for no draft, an outline, or less than one page.

6	T	9/23	Salman Rushdie, <i>The Enchantress of Florence</i> 1-140 Due: Paper #1
	TH	9/25	Salman Rushdie, <i>The Enchantress of Florence</i> 140-206
7	T	9/30	Salman Rushdie, <i>The Ench antress of Florence</i> , 207-304 Read Lynda Shaffer, "Southernization" http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/journals/jwh/jwh051p001.pdf
	TH	10/2	Salman Rushdie, <i>The Enchantress of Florence</i> , 305-349
8	T	10/7	Midterm Exam
	TH	10/9	Performing Culture: Ama Ata Aidoo Read Anowa (PP 97-127)
9	T	10/14	NO CLASS: FALL BREAK
	TH	10/16	<i>Anowa</i> , cont. Read excerpts on postcolonial performance***
10	T	10/21	The Empire Writes Back: Derek Walcott Read Pantomime (PP 128-152)
	TH	10/23	<i>Pantomime</i> , cont. Read Excerpts on "Writing Back" ***
11	T	10/28	Futures: Manjula Padmanabhan Read Harvest (PP214-249)
	TH	10/30	<i>Harvest</i> , cont. Read: Eric D. Smith, Introduction to <i>Globalization, Utopia, and Postcolonial Science Fiction</i> e-book available for free via Mountainlynx
12	T	11/4	NO CLASS: ELECTION DAY
	TH	11/6	CLASS CANCELED: Prepare group Presentations
13	T	11/11	Group Presentations 1
	TH	11/13	Group Presentations 2
14	T	11/18	Group Presentations 3
	TH	11/20	CLASS CANCELED: Give thanks!

!!! THANKSGIVING BREAK

15 T 12/2 Draft Workshop
Due in class: complete draft of paper #2
Students who come unprepared will earn at least a half-grade penalty for an incomplete draft, and a full letter grade for no draft, an outline, or less than one page.

TH 12/4 Western Eyes: *Persepolis* Part II (read as much as you're able).
Due: Paper #2

16 T 12/9 Course Evaluations, Take-Home Exam distributed, Class Reflections

Final T 12/16 **DUE: Take-Home Exam**, in my Honors Hall office, by 11 a.m.

Class Contacts:

In small groups, introduce yourselves and write down each other's email contacts for peer-to-peer questions

1.

2.

3.