

ENGLISH 208-01: TOPICS IN GLOBAL LITERATURE (3 CR.)

Instructor: Associate Professor Christian Moraru
Spring 2007

Bryan 128: MW 3:30 - 4:45 PM

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is a Topics in Global Literature course that deals specifically with the rise of what critics have identified as “global consciousness.” Thus, our course has a global focus twice. First, it has a worldly, cross-cultural and transnational scope, covering as it does a range of literary and cultural traditions, both Western and non-Western, which are here represented by relevant narratives (novels, memoirs, travel literature). Second, these works are very recent and speak to a growing feeling worldwide that we have entered a new age, the age of “space-time compression,” “network society,” and the “global village,” in which peoples, cultures, and communities around the world are more interconnected, more mobile, but also perhaps more vulnerable than ever before. We will read works by Italian-American, Iranian-American, Korean-American, Indian-American, Afghan-American, and French authors. All texts are in English or in English translation.

FORMAT, EXPECTATIONS, AND LEARNING GOALS: This is a thematic survey of contemporary fiction and non-fiction where the materials explored are lodged at the crossroads of the postcolonial, the transnational, and the postmodern. The approach will be cross-cultural and comparative in that we will see how these texts talk to each other across national, linguistic, geographic, and cultural divides and how, in doing so, they foreground the very notion of boundary. The course combines introductory lectures, class discussion, and group work.

At the completion of this course, the students will be able to identify and understand varied characteristics of literature in the “global age,” its main forms and topics. They will be able to apply techniques of literary analysis to the texts; use literary study to develop skills in careful reading and clear writing; demonstrate understanding of the diverse social and historical contexts in which literary texts have been written and interpreted. Also, the course is broad and foundational in nature; it does not assume extensive familiarity with the materials.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Examinations:** There will be a midterm and a final examination (both in-class). We will prepare both carefully—the entire class is required to participate in the midterm and final overviews of the course, selection of topics, and rehearsals. We will talk about exam format and grading in larger detail before the midterm. See the exam schedule in the syllabus below.

2. Attendance and Participation: Both are expected and will be reflected in the final grade (see below). I expect you to come to class with the assignments for the day completed and ready to participate orally, individually or in your group.

3. Group Activities: You will be assigned to groups of 4-5 members, which will complete various brief assignments. Usually, groups discuss a specific material or problem and then designate a member to report their conclusions back to the rest of the class. Reports will be oral and rather informal, about 10 minutes long, and their main role is to help us speed up debates. Group work will be graded, too. Students in one group will get the same grade regardless of who gives the presentation.

CONFERENCES: Please meet with me during my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your work or any aspect of the course. I plan to have at least one round of “formal” conferences during the semester. I urge you to make a first appointment early on to talk about the course and what you hope to accomplish in it.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of others’ materials both in form (wording) and substance (ideas). Any paper bearing your name signifies that you are the author, namely, that the words and the ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by quotations marks and paraphrases. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an “F” for the whole course, and/or a report filed with the dean. Also, consult the UNCG policies on plagiarism.

2. Absences: You are allowed no more than 3 absences during the semester (which you must document afterwards), for illnesses, religious holidays, and emergencies preventing you from attending. Any unjustified absences will seriously affect your grade; 3 undocumented absences may result in your being asked to drop the course. If you are the victim of an emergency or serious illness, please stay in touch with me by e-mail or phone. Do not hesitate to call me at my home number. In addition, because tardiness disrupts class, too, be aware that coming in late 3 times will count as an absence.

GRADING: No incompletes. To pass the course, you must take the exams, come to class regularly, and participate in group work and discussion. The final grade breakdown is as follows:

Participation (includes presentations, group work, quizzes and in-class responses)	20%
Midterm	40%
Final	40%

Please note the high percentage rewarding consistent and articulated class participation. Also, this is the instructor’s view of the final grade; on the first class, I would like to discuss these percentages with you and possibly make some adjustments depending on your input.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*. Mariner Books: 2004. ISBN 0618485228
2. Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*. Riverhead: 2004. ISBN 1594480001
3. Don DeLillo. *Cosmopolis*. New York: Scribner, 2004. ISBN 0743244257
4. Chang-rae Lee. *Native Speaker*. New York: Riverhead, 1996. ISBN 1573225312
5. Azar Nafisi. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. New York: Random House, 2004. ISBN 081297106X
6. Michel Houellebecq, *The Elementary Particles*. New York: Vintage, 2001. ISBN 0375727019
7. Pico Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu*. Vintage: 1989. ISBN 0679722165
8. Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul*. Vintage: 2001. ISBN 0679776117

COURSE SYLLABUS:

Week 1

M 01/8 Introduction to the course: goals, requirements, policies, and evaluation of student work. Our class: the survey and the thematic focus. What is a “global topic”? Presenting the syllabus.

W 01/10 Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu*

Week 2

M 01/15 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. No class

W 01/17 Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu*

Week 3

M 01/22 Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu*

W 01/24 Iyer, *The Global Soul*

Week 4

M 01/29 Iyer, *The Global Soul*

W 01/31 Iyer, *The Global Soul*

Week 5

M 02/05 DeLillo, *Cosmopolis*

W 02/07 DeLillo, *Cosmopolis*

Week 6

M 02/12 DeLillo, *Cosmopolis*

W 02/14 Houellebecq, *The Elementary Particles*

Week 7

M 02/19 Houellebecq, *The Elementary Particles*

W 02/21 Houellebecq, *The Elementary Particles*
Preparing the midterm examination (I)

Week 8

M 02/26 Preparing the midterm examination (II)

W 02/28 **Midterm examination (in-class)**

Week 9

M 03/05 Spring Break: no class

W 03/07 Spring Break: no class

Week 10

M 03/12 Discussing the midterm
Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

W 03/14 Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

Week 11

M 03/19 Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

W 03/21 Hosseini, *Kite Runner*

Week 12

M 03/26 Hosseini, *Kite Runner*

W 03/28 Hosseini, *Kite Runner*

Week 13

M 04/02 Lahiri, *The Namesake*

W 04/04 Lahiri, *The Namesake*

Week 14

M 04/09 Lahiri, *The Namesake*

W 04/11 Lee, *Native Speaker*

Week 15

M 04/16 Lee, *Native Speaker*

W 04/18 Lee, *Native Speaker*

Week 16

M 04/23 Preparing the final examination (I)

W 04/25 Preparing the final examination (II)
Course overview
Final evaluations

Week 17

M 04/30 Last meeting
Final examination (in-class)

Note: I would like to think of this syllabus as final. However, I welcome your input, and we might be able to make some changes as we go on.