

**ENGLISH 208-01: TOPICS IN GLOBAL LITERATURE –
IMAGINING MOBILITY
(3 CR.; GE; GLT; GL)**

Instructor: Professor Christian Moraru
Spring 2013

MW 3:30 – 4:45 PM

Graham Bldg., 302

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COURSE DESCRIPTION - FOCUS, FORMAT, SPECIFIC GOALS: A required English course in the major also open to all undergraduates in sophomore standing, this “Topics in Global Literature” class examines how contemporary international fiction comes to terms with the increasing transnational mobility—chosen or imposed—of people, values, and cultural symbols, as well as with the bearings of this process on human identity. Specifically, this section deals with representations of geographic and cultural displacement, migration, and exile during and following certain traumatic events of the post-World War II era, when people become more and more aware of the broader, world-shaping—rooting, uprooting, and rerouting—developments impacting individual lives.

Our course has a global focus twice. First, it has a cross-cultural, transnational, and, indeed, planetary scope, covering as it does a wide range of literary and cultural traditions, Western and non-Western, and spanning several continents. Second, the works discussed here are recent and speak to a growing feeling worldwide that we have entered the new age of “time-space compression,” “network society,” and the “global village,” in which peoples, cultures, and communities around the world are more interconnected and more fluid but perhaps also more vulnerable than ever before. Our authors are Indian (Bengali) American (Bharati Mukherjee), Chinese American (Gish Jen), Korean American (Chang-rae Lee), Russian-French (Antoine Volodine), Turkish (Orhan Pamuk), Turkish-Irish (Joseph O’Neill), and English (Ian McEwan). All readings—novels and short stories—are either in English or English translation.

This is a thematic survey of contemporary fiction, in which the material is lodged at the intersection of the postcolonial, the transnational, and the postmodern, categories and movements that will also be addressed in our class. The approach is cross-cultural and comparative in that we will seek to see how these texts talk to each other over national, linguistic, geographic, and cultural divides and how, in doing so, they foreground the notion of territorial and cultural boundaries as well as these boundaries’ increased porousness and transgressions especially after the end of the Cold War. The course is broad and foundational in nature; it does not assume extensive familiarity with the texts at hand. It combines introductory lectures, class discussion, and group work. Check our Blackboard web site regularly for handouts and other posted course material. You will need to print out these items ahead of time and bring them to class.

GLT STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO): Students who have successfully completed this course will be able to

- 1) Demonstrate the reading skill required for the study of literary texts (UNCG General Education Learning Goal 3);
- 2) Identify and/or describe some of the varied characteristics of literary texts (LG3);
- 3) Demonstrate orally, in writing, or by some other means, a fundamental ability to use some of the techniques and/or methods of literary analysis (LG 1 and 3);
- 4) Identify and/or describe some of the various social, historical, cultural, and/or theoretical contexts in which literary texts have been written and interpreted (LG3).

TEACHING METHODS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR ACHIEVING LEARNING OUTCOMES (all are keyed to student learning objectives 1-4):

1. Examinations and papers: There will be a midterm exam (75 min. long, in-class: see syllabus for the date), which will cover our first three novels, and a final paper. The latter will carry a bit more weight. The exam will feature short questions and will require brief essays in response. The essays will have to identify and analyze the central issues and formal characteristics of the material. We will prepare both the exam and the paper 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.

We will do the same for the paper later in the semester. For now, note that this will be a short, 4-5-p., double-spaced, thesis-based essay for which research will be optional. If you do incorporate research into your argument, 2-3 secondary sources (articles) should suffice. The format of your essay should be MLA. Make sure you reference your sources, if any, put your name on your paper, number its pages, and staple them together. The paper is due on April, 22.

2. Attendance and Participation: Both are required 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 class group. See the attendance policy below.

3. Group Activities: You will be assigned to groups of 6-7 members, which will complete various brief in-class 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 5 minutes long. 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). These are only 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. In addition, because tardiness disrupts class too, be aware that coming in late 3 times will count as an absence.

GRADING: As a general rule, I am quite reluctant to grant 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 group work, and any possible pop quizzes)	20%
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Paper	45%

Please note the high percentage rewarding consistent and articulated class participation.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Bharati Mukherjee. *Miss New India*. New York: Mariner Books, 2012 or latest pbk.

Gish Jen. *World and Town*. New York: Knopf, 2010 or latest pbk.

Ian McEwan. *Saturday*. New York: Random House, 2005 or latest pbk.

Joseph O'Neill. *Netherland*. New York: Vintage, 2009 or latest pbk.

Chang-rae Lee. *The Surrendered*. New York: Riverhead, 2011 or latest pbk.

Orhan Pamuk. *Snow*. Translated from the Turkish by Maureen Freely. New York: Vintage, 2005 or latest pbk.

Antoine Volodine. *Minor Angels*. Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2008 or latest pbk.

Weekly Syllabus

Week 1

M 01/14 Introduction: Presentation of the course: goals, requirements, topics, and policies. Evaluation of student work; reading groups. Course syllabus and discussion.

W 01/16 *Netherland* (I)

Week 2

M 01/21 **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. No class**

W 01/23 *Netherland* (II)

Week 3

M 01/28 *Netherland* (III)

W 01/30 *Miss New India* (I)

Week 4

M 02/04 *Miss New India* (II)

W 02/06 **I will attend a conference in Texas
Research workshop run by Jenny Dale (Graham 302, during class time)**

Week 5

M 02/11 *Miss New India* (III)

W 02/13 *World and Town* (I)

Week 6

M 02/18 *World and Town* (II)

W 02/20 *World and Town* (III)

Week 7

M 02/25 *Saturday* (I)

W 02/27 Preparing the midterm examination (I)

Week 8

M 03/04 Preparing the midterm examination (II)

W 03/06 **Midterm examination (in-class)**

Week 9M 03/11 **Spring Break: no class**W 03/13 **Spring Break: no class****Week 10**M 03/18 *Saturday* (II)
Discussing the midtermW 03/20 *Saturday* (III)**Week 11**M 03/25 *The Surrendered* (I)W 03/27 *The Surrendered* (II)**Week 12**M 04/01 *The Surrendered* (III)W 04/03 *Snow* (I)**Week 13**

M 04/08 Preparing the final paper

W 04/10 *Snow* (II)**Week 14**M 04/15 *Snow* (III)W 04/17 *Minor Angels* (I)**Week 15**M 04/22 *Minor Angels* (II)
Final paper dueW 04/24 Final meeting
Course overview
Final evaluations**Week 16**

M 04/29 No class: I will be lecturing in Europe

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.