Course Description

“Literature in a Globalizing Age” is an introductory-level literature course focusing on contemporary literary texts and the socio-historical context of globalization. The course introduces you to different techniques for understanding literature, prepares you to pursue additional study in literature and the humanities and social sciences in general and fosters the development of your critical thinking skills. By the end of the course you will be able to perform close readings and comparative readings of literary texts, identify pertinent issues of globalization as they emerge in literary texts, use the library to do interdisciplinary research on these issues, and present your research both orally and in written form.

The course will focus on three issues: relations of identity and difference, representations of lived globality, and the emergence of a new global aesthetic.

1) Relations of Identity and Difference: While the definitions of self and other have been a perennial source of debate, we will examine how these terms are reconfigured in an age in which such diverse factors as transnational migration, transnational corporatism and internet technology, to name only a few, are shaping contemporary lives. We will ask whether and how older terms such as “imperialism,” “colonialism,” “postcolonialism,” etc. are useful in the context of globalization. Taking into account critiques of globalization as a totalizing discourse, we will discuss the poetics of negotiating totalizing discourses and singular experience as demonstrated in these literary texts.

2) Representations of Lived Globality: While the phenomena of consumerism, virtual communications, terrorism and damage to the environment are not exclusive to globalization, we will observe how our literary texts foreground these phenomena and ask whether, how and why they may be transformed by processes of globalization.

3) The Emergence of a Global Aesthetic: Keeping in mind the aforementioned tension between totalization and singularity, we will inquire whether these texts thematically and formally call for a planet-encompassing awareness in the reception of literature and other arts, which could be termed a “global aesthetic,” and/or whether the texts critique such a possibility.

Required Texts
Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*
Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*
Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*
Ian McEwan, *Saturday*
Don DeLillo, *White Noise*
Course Packet (readings from Course Packet indicated by “P”)

Course Websites
Course Website: [http://mycourses.brown.edu](http://mycourses.brown.edu) (login with userid and password)

Course Requirements
Attendance and Participation (10%)
Five Journal Entries on Current Events (webct postings) (10%)
One 15 min. Presentation (20%)
Four 2pp. Response Papers (20%)
One Final Research Paper (40%)

Note on Attendance
More than two (2) unexcused absences will result in lowering the final grade by one letter.

**Week 1: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Globalization**

**Monday, June 23**
Introduction
Lahiri, “Interpreter of Maladies” (handout)

**Wednesday, June 25**
Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*

**Week 2: Nationalism, Imperialism and Literary Production**

**Monday, June 30**
Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*
* Response Paper 1 Due

**Wednesday, July 2**
Anderson, from *Imagined Communities* (P)
Said, from *Culture and Imperialism* (P)
Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (P)
* Presentation 1: The Olympic Games

**Week 3: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism**

**Monday, July 7**
Smith, *White Teeth*
* Response Paper 2 Due

**Wednesday, July 9**
Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” (P)
Bhabha, from *The Location of Culture* (P)
* Presentation 2: Babel

**Week 4: Terror**

**Monday, July 14**
McEwan, *Saturday*
* Response Paper 3 Due

**Wednesday, July 16**
Habermas and Derrida, from *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (P)
* Presentation 3: *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak*

**Week 5: Consumerism and The Environment**

**Monday, July 21**
DeLillo, *White Noise*
* Response Paper 4 Due
* Final Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due

**Wednesday, July 23**
Held, “Catastrophe in the Making” (P)
French, from *Vanishing Borders* (P)
*Presentation 4: *An Inconvenient Truth*

**Week 6: Virtuality**

**Monday, July 28**
selected blogs (TBA)

**Wednesday, July 30**
* Mini-Colloquium on Final Papers
Conclusion

* Final Papers Due Wednesday, August 6 at 12pm