Literature in a Globalizing Age

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 two issues: relations of sameness and difference, and the possible emergence of a new global aesthetic. 1) Relations of Sameness 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, multinational 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) 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
Tsitsi Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions
Zadie Smith, White Teeth
Laila Lalami, Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits
Rabih Alameddine, Koolaids
Ian McEwan, Saturday
Alberto Fuguet, The Movies of My Life
Course Packet (readings from Course Packet indicated by “P”)
* All texts are also on reserve at the Rock.

Course Requirements
Class Participation 10%
Group Presentation 20%
3-4pp. Close Reading 10%
4-5pp. Comparative Reading 20%
8-10pp. Final Paper 40%
Note on Attendance
More than two (2) unexcused absences will result in lowering the final grade by one letter.

Note on Presentations and Papers
Each student will collaborate with a group on one of four oral presentations, designed to educate the class about aspects of our texts that would not otherwise be covered in class discussion. Each group should meet with the instructor as part of preparing the presentation. Guidelines for presentations and papers will be provided.

Week 1: What’s in a Name?: “Globalization”
Monday, June 18
Introduction
Lahiri, “Interpreter of Maladies” (handout)

Wednesday, June 20
Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” and Barber, “Jihad vs. McWorld” in Globalization and the Challenges of a New Century (P)
Held et al., eds. from The Global Transformations Reader (P)
Li, “An Ethics of the Name: Rethinking Globalization” (P)

Week 2: What’s in a Name?: “Literature”
Monday, June 25
Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions
* 2-3pp. Response Paper Due (required but not graded)

Wednesday, June 27
Smith, White Teeth, 1-217
Culler, from Literary Theory, A Brief Introduction (P)
Williams, “Literature,” from Marxism and Literature (P)
Expository Writing Workshop
* Presentation 1

Week 3: Theorizing Collectives, Narrating Migrations
Monday, July 2
Smith, White Teeth, 219-448
Anderson, from Imagined Communities (P)
* Close Reading Due

no class Wednesday, July 4, Independence Day
Week 4: Political Conflicts in a Global Context

Monday, July 9
Alameddine, *Koolaid*
* Presentation 2

Wednesday, July 11
McEwan, *Saturday*
* Presentation 3

Week 5: A New Global Aesthetic:?

Monday, July 16
Fuguet, *The Movies of My Life*
* Final Paper Proposal Due (1 paragraph + working bibliography)

Wednesday, July 18
Jameson, “Postmodernism” (P)
Jameson, from *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (P)
* Presentation 4
* Comparative Reading Due

Week 6: Networking and Correspondence: Literary Genres in a Globalizing Age

Monday, July 23
Weblog reading (to be assigned)
Mattelart, from *Networking the World* (P)
Landow, from *Hypertext 3.0* (P)

Wednesday, July 25
* Mini-Colloquium on Final Papers
Conclusion

* Final Papers Due Monday, July 30 at 12pm