

COML 1191/English 1179/CLST 1602
World Literature
Spring 2023

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Course description:

The waning of American empire and the rise of Asia—signaled by such events as the U.S.’s botched invasion and occupation of Iraq and China’s stunningly successful orchestration of the Beijing Olympics in 2008—have led to the emergence, over the last ten or fifteen years, of a new kind of perception of the world, most intensively from the perspective of the US. The old certainties—that history will end with the unprecedentedly unchallenged, hegemonic American empire founded on the all-unifying logic of democratic alliance and the de-territorializing logic of the financial capital—have started to disappear. This course will provide an introduction to some of the most critical debates on how to historicize the world, and consider those basic but unsolved questions, such as the post-9/11 question “why do they hate us?” This course allows us to explore how inherited cultural myths and collective fantasies overdetermine our feelings for and understandings of a rapidly globalizing present. If the world is indeed rushing to so evolved a form of systematic manipulation that it becomes incomprehensible for the general public, then in this course, we will try to deal with the task of describing the world from an intellectual height, interrogating not only our own positions and prehistories, but also the storyline of a collective struggle to master oneself and gain some agency, and perhaps, a modicum of dignity. Assigned texts will include novels, films, and think-tank research by Virginia Woolf, Kazuo Ishiguro, Mohsin Hamid, J.D. Vance, Jake Sullivan, Stephen Daldry, Stephen Gaghan, Errol Morris, Aaron Sorkin, Mark Romanek, Michael Haneke, Ramin Bahrani.

Course requirements

1) **Attendance** is mandatory. Please inform me through Course Action Notice if you can’t make it to the class. There is unfortunately no way to make up for missed instruction and discussion time. Four missing will result in decreasing of the level of grade, such as from A+ to A, or from A to A-. The gist of mandatory attendance is less of a disciplinary ritual than a way to withdraw yourself a little bit from those pre-received impressions of the texts and engage more experimentally in the discussion in the classroom setting.

2) In this **course reading, thinking, and looking** carefully are of the essence. Students are expected to have viewed the assigned film and read the assigned readings before our meeting times. All films are available for viewing in Van Pelt Library at the Rosengarten Reserve desk. Several are available for online viewing through the library website. Many are available at very reasonable prices second-hand from amazon.com, some are on You Tube. I would recommend that you consider purchasing them, since that would enable you to watch the special features, e.g., director’s commentaries and special bonus features, at your leisure.

3) **Class participation** is considered essential. Students will be asked to do an in-class presentation or choose clips for discussion. A good way to prepare is to write some striking quotes from the readings and bring to class.

4) **Oral presentations:** One mid-term presentation on a selected text from the syllabus and one presentation on final-paper ideas followed by a Q& A session are included to provide students with an experimental space to test ideas and hypotheses. The two presentations aim to help students to better plan their timelines, organize their thinking, and try out different ways of argumentation.

4) **Written work:** One well-crafted paper final paper of about 8 to 10 pp., involving both analysis and research, will be due around May 9th. Detailed stylistic instructions and topics will be provided. You may also work on a topic of your own choosing, as long as you discuss the idea with me in advance. All students are encouraged to consult the recommended books that deal with how to write good academic prose and construct good papers. These books also provide useful tips on quotation styles and incorporating research in a graceful and professional manner. These technical things can be important to know, especially when it comes to avoiding even the semblance of plagiarism.

- Class Participation 35%
- Mid-term oral presentation 25%
- Final-project presentation 5%
- Final paper (8-10 pages) or creative project, 35%

Course content, stressors, and student wellness:

Cinema and literature draw on the vast world for its material, and the texts in this course contain the full range of that world. We are sensitive to the possibility that certain types of images and descriptions may be upsetting to people, but as this is different for each person, we encourage anyone in the class who is aware of being triggered by specific things to communicate with the instructors so that we can try to make a plan together. Please also know that in this, as well as in other stressful situations, Penn has a wide range of support systems to help you navigate the challenges of student life. Many of them are listed here:

<http://www.pennparents.upenn.edu/wellness-mental-health-resources> (Links to an external site).

While the instructors of this course are not trained mental health professionals, we are happy to help you work out how to find the best help for yourself. For academic-related stress, we STRONGLY encourage you to come to office hours early in the semester and as often as you need.

Academic Integrity:

Students participating in this course agree to abide by Penn's Code of Academic Integrity:

http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html (Links to an external site).

Please read this document carefully. Students violating this code will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Plagiarism most often happens when students are struggling in a course. If you are struggling, please come to office hours early and often so that we can help you.

Students are encouraged to access each and any of the following resources as often as they need:

- a. Weingarten Learning Resource Center [w ww.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc)
- b. Writing Center <http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/help/>
- c. Penn Libraries <http://www.library.upenn.edu/>
- d. Weigle Information Commons <http://wic.library.upenn.edu>

Email: I will respond to email within 48 hours of receiving it. Please check the syllabus or assignment sheets before you send questions regarding class assignments. From time to time, I will make announcements about the course outside of class time. Please be sure to read any emails in a timely manner.

Electronic Devices: students may use laptops, e-readers, or tablets in class only to consult digital copies of readings and to take notes. Any other use of electronic devices (including Googling) and all cell phone use is strictly prohibited. Please silence your phones before entering the classroom.

Films and TV series:

Stephen Daldry, *The Hours* (2002)
Errol Morris, *The Fog of War* (2003)
Stephen Gaghan, *Syriana* (2005)
Michael Haneke, *Cache* (2005)
Mark Romanek, *Never Let Me Go* (2010)
Aaron Sorkin, *Newsroom* (2012)
Ramin Bahrani, *The White Tiger* (2021)

Required texts (available at Penn Book Center, 34th & Sansom; you must have these particular editions, regardless of where you buy them):

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, ISBN 9781784870867
Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, ISBN 9781400078776
Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, ISBN 9780156034029
Mohsin Hamid, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, ISBN 9781594487293
J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy*, ISBN 9780062300553

Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction (Jan 11)

Discussion of syllabus, principles of close reading
Introductory discussion of post-9/11 global geopolitics and the formal shift in literature and film

Week 2

January 16: No class: MLK, Jr. Day!

January 18: Stephen Daldry, *The Hours* (2002)

Suggested films: Roger Michell, *Notting Hill* (1999); Stephen Frears, *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002); Richard Curtis, *Love Actually* (2003);

Week 3

January 23: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)

January 24 Course selection period ends

January 25: *Mrs. Dalloway* (continued)

Week 4

January 30: *Mrs. Dalloway* (continued)

February 1: Mark Romanek, *Never Let Me Go* (2010)

Week 5

February 6: Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

February 8: *Never Let Me Go* (continued)

Week 6

February 13: Errol Morris, *The Fog of War* (2003)

February 15: Stephen Gaghan, *Syriana* (2005)

Week 7

February 20: *Syriana* (continued) and Michael Haneke, *Cache* (2005)

Suggested readings: Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996);

February 20 Course drop period ends

February 22: *Cache* (continued)

Week 8

February 27: Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

March 1: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (continued)

FALL BREAK (March 4-12)

Week 9:

March 13: Ramin Bahrani, *The White Tiger* (2021)

March 15: *The White Tiger* (continued)

Workshop on midterm oral presentation: how to make other know that your project matters

March 17 Grade Type Change Deadline

Week 10

March 20: Midterm oral presentation

March 22: Midterm oral presentation (continued) and Mohsin Hamid *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013)

Week 11

March 27: *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (continued)

March 27 Last day to withdraw from a course

March 29: Aaron Sorkin, *The Newsroom* (2012) Episode One

Week 12

April 3: J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy* (2016)

April 5: *Hillbilly Elegy* (continued)

Week 13

April 10: Jake Sullivan, “Making U.S. Foreign Policy Work Better for The Middle Class” (2019)

April 12: Workshop on final paper crafting: how to highlight your points

Week 14

April 17: final project presentation and Q&A session

April 19: final project presentation (continued) and course wrap-up

Week 15 (Zoom: individual consultation)

FINAL PAPERS DUE ON MAY 9