

World Literature

(COML 1191 | Fall 2024)

Course Details:

Instructor: Apurva A Prasad

Email: apurvap@sas.upenn.edu

Timings/ Days: 3:30 pm-5:00 pm (Tuesday & Thursday)

Room: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Course Description:

This course will comparatively study the similarities, differences, and connections between texts across various global contexts from the 6th century BCE to the present. The readings will span America, Europe, Latin America, South Asia, and the Middle East. The course would consider questions like: What processes define “World Literature”? How are specific “genres” of writing instrumentalized in two different temporal and spatial locations? How does genre and form play a critical role in shaping literature and literary politics? How do these mobilize micro-tensions around race, class, caste, language, and gender to illuminate larger “global” structures of colonial encounter, nationalism, kingship, and cosmopolitanism? These are the larger debates that the course is situated within. For each week, the readings are paired in dialogue with one another through their deployment of literary “genre” in different temporal regions.

No prior knowledge of any of these course topics is required.

Course Assessment:

Canvas Responses (20%)

Students will post *one question* for discussion on the discussion board on Canvas, *one key quote* from the text with an explanation about why you selected that quote, and *one quandary* or lingering question or idea that the readings have inspired. These can draw on either the primary or secondary readings. Students need to post weekly with the allowance for one “Pass Week,” i.e., no need to post that week.

Class Participation (20%)

Come prepared to class for an engaging discussion on the readings for the week.

Mid-Term Paper (20%)

A range of essay questions will be collated from the readings covered at that point in the course. Students will be expected to pick one question and write an essay. This paper should be 5-7 pages long (Times New Roman, double-spaced). What is critical for this project is a close reading of the text and careful argumentation wedded to this close reading. Citations should be in MLA style.

Presentation (15%)

In the last week/day of class, students will present their projects for 8-10 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of instructor and peer feedback. Then, students will use this feedback to structure their final project for the course.

Final Project (25%)

The final project of the course will involve students looking critically at a specific socio-historic “text” as it unfolds in two different locations. Students can study various literary genres and forms, including short stories, novels, poems, plays, and oral traditions. Students are also permitted to work with policy documents, legal case files, and newspaper articles if they are inclined because they very much fall under the broad purview of “text.” Beyond that, the student’s interests and disciplinary orientation can inform the project's scope. The scale of comparison can be as large as two different nations, i.e., national policies, or as micro as two texts, i.e., how two different authors articulate motherhood. What is crucial is that the “genre” of expression must be the same, and the comparison must be defensible. All projects must be discussed with the instructor before execution. This paper must be 12-15 pages long (Times New Roman, double-spaced). Citations should be in MLA style.

Overall:

- Canvas Posts: 20%
- Participation: 20%
- Mid-Term Paper: 20%
- Presentation: 15%
- Final Project: 25%

Grading Scale:

65-69: B-

70-74: B

75-84: B+

85-94: A-

95+: A

(The scale is subject to change. Please refer to the most recent prospectus. An A+ will be given at the discretion of the instructor for exemplary performance in class)

Accommodations:

The University of Pennsylvania provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and been approved by the Office of [Student Disabilities Services](#) (SDS). Please make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations and needs. If you have not yet contacted SDS and would like to request accommodations or have questions, you can make an appointment by calling SDS at 215.573.9235. The office is in the [Weingarten Learning Resources Center](#) at Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300. All services are confidential.

Plagiarism Policy:

The rules around plagiarism and citation for the course will be in accordance with Penn's plagiarism guide. I encourage you to check it here for more details on the specifics.

Further Support:

It is critical that, as a student, you all have the resources you need to focus on learning. This includes both your academic and daily needs. Students needing help affording the course materials should contact the Penn First Plus office (pennfirstplus@upenn.edu). Students struggling to afford food and/or need a safe and suitable living space should contact Student Intervention Services (vpul-sisteam@pobox.upenn.edu). Students may also wish to contact their Financial Aid Counselor or Academic Advisor about these concerns. If there are any particularly pressing or debilitating concerns, please get in touch with me, too. We can trace a path for you to address your needs/concerns best.

Syllabus

Week 1:

(Introductions, syllabus and grading overview, situating global debates in “World Literature”)

- “Theory, Area Studies, Cultural Studies: Issues of Pedagogy in Multiculturalism” by Rey Chow (1993)
- “A Conversation with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o.” Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Venkat Rao (1999)
- *What is World Literature?* by David Damrosch (2003) -Excerpts-

Week 2 & 3:

(Epics)

- *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa (4th Century CE)
- *The Odyssey* by Homer (6th Century CE) -Excerpts-

Week 4 & 5:

(Travel Writing)

- *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift (1726) -Excerpts-
- *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* by Olaudah Equiano (1789) -Excerpts-

Week 6 & 7:

(Folklore)

- *Hir Ranjha* (17-18th Century BCE)
- German mythology collected by the Grimm Brothers (18th-19th Century BCE)

Week 8 & 9:

(Periodical/Magazine)

- *Sultana's Dream* by Rokeya Hossain (1905)
- *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gillman (1915) -excerpts-
- *The Book of Martha* by Octavia Butler (2003)

Week 10 & 11:

(Short Story: Fantasy/Magic Realism)

- *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1972)
- *Paper Menagerie* by Ken Liu (2011)

Week 12 & 13:

(Autobiography)

- *Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines: Let Me Speak!* by Domitila Barrios (1978) -*excerpts*-
- *Coming Out as Dalit* by Yaschica Dutt (2019/ republished for USA in 2024) -*excerpts*-

Week 14:

(Poetry)

- *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear* by Mosa Abu Toa (2022) -*selections*-
- *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* by Ocean Vuong (2016) -*selections*-

Week 15:

- Presentations/Feedback

(Please note that while this is the overall syllabus layout, some readings may change. However, the structure will remain the same. For more questions or any clarifications, feel free to contact me. My email is listed above.)