

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
Fall/Winter 2016-2017

CLC 1050E
Sections 001, 002

World Cultures, Literatures and the Arts Across the Ages



Instructor

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Office Hours: TBA

Class Time & Location: Section 001 (Mon. 2:30-3:30, Wed. 2:30-4:30, AHB 2B04); Section 002 (Tues. 12:30-1:30, Thurs. 12:30-2:30, P&AB 150)

Course Content

In today's global context you need to be able to think outside the box of your geographical and cultural environment. You need to learn how to go global and think big. This seminar course helps you become a citizen of the world by taking you on a journey of discovery across continents and civilizations. Along the way you will explore a selection of writers, artists, and works that have shaped, challenged, and connected cultures from antiquity to the present.

How do stories, themes, and artworks in general travel from one nation to another, crossing political borders and linguistic boundaries? Is it true that literature and the arts build intercultural bridges in time and space, thus uniting different historical periods and faraway peoples? Isn't it equally true that they can also cause moral and religious misconceptions, if not conflicts, between cultures? What is it about literature and the arts that has made them, throughout history, the preferred vehicles to grapple with the meaning of universal human concerns such as love, friendship, justice, happiness, and death?

We will tackle these and other questions with the help of a number of foundational literary works from various epochs and cultures, including *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Homer's *The Odyssey*, *The Arabian Nights*, Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and many more. To complete our journey, we will consider how visual arts and music from around the world have historically aligned themselves with literature in probing and illuminating the human condition.

Course Format

This is a seminar course with limited enrolment. As such it provides the ideal environment for you to engage in close interaction with the instructor and the other students. The seminar format is designed to help you in developing transferable and durable skills like independent critical thinking, autonomous research attitude, strong writing and oral proficiency. These are the most important and useful of all skills; they are transferable, as they are required in any field of study and profession, and durable because they will stay with you for life, if kept alive and duly cultivated.



Required Texts (available at the Western Bookstore)

Damrosch, David, *Gateways to World Literature* (vols. 1 & 2).

Roy T. Matthews, F. De Witt Platt, and Thomas F.X. Noble, *Experience Humanities*

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you are expected to be able to:

- Identify cross-cultural patterns of similarity and difference as evidenced in the circulation of themes and the exchange of stories across time and space
- Recognize the roots of today's globalizing world in a number of literary and artistic works, as well as in major movements and styles from various cultures and historical periods
- Understand how literature and the arts, from around the world, have historically contributed to generate, disseminate, and transgress cultural assumptions and values.
- discuss the role that literature and the arts have played, and continue to play, in exploring how the meaning of universal human concerns – such as love, friendship, happiness, and death – evolves in time.
- show evidence of appropriate skills in academic writing and oral presentations
- demonstrate basic critical skills in discussing topics and in analyzing works
- research topics autonomously

Course Evaluation

1) Four Reading Commentaries (2 pages each) 20%

2) Two Small Group Presentations	20%
3) Class Participation	15%
4) Writing Project Project Outline (100 words; 5%) + Mini-Paper (4 pages; 10%)	15%
5) Final Exam	30%

Evaluation Breakdown

Reading Commentaries

You will write four short commentaries (two per term) in response to questions that will be posted on Owl. Based on assigned readings and class discussions, the questions will address specific aspects of works and topics covered throughout the year. Each commentary is worth 5% of the total grade.

Small Group Presentations

There will be two group presentations (10% each), one per term. Each group will be assigned a different topic to present to the rest of the class. Topics and groups will be communicated to students in advance so as to give each group sufficient time to meet and prepare. Every group will be allotted approximately 15 minutes. You will be evaluated for your individual performance (i.e., for your capacity to develop and illustrate a particular aspect of the topic assigned to your group) and for your contribution to the performance of the group (i.e., how your individual performance fits in and adds to the group's performance).

Participation

In a seminar course such as this, participation is very important. You are expected to complete all required readings before coming to class and to maintain regular attendance. Participation is assessed on the basis of day-to-day preparation and contribution to in-class activities, discussions, and group work. If you have a legitimate reason to be absent from class (sickness, family crisis, religious holiday), contact me beforehand so that we can arrange how to make up any missed material.

Writing Project

The purpose of this project is for you to build research skills while developing, in combination with the short reading commentaries, proper familiarity with academic writing. It will consist of two components, the project outline (5%) and the mini-paper (10%). You will choose one of the themes encountered in our readings throughout the year (i.e. love, friendship, justice, happiness, death, etc.) and you will reflect on how some of the works we have covered tackle the chosen theme, discussing common features and dissimilarities. The works should belong to different literary traditions and cultures. You are expected to consult with me when choosing both the theme and the works. Also, you are required to submit your project outline at least two weeks before the deadline for the mini-paper.

Final Exam

The final exam (3 hours) will consist of questions to be answered in short paragraph and short essay form. It is cumulative, i.e., it covers the entire year. Please note that all final examinations are timetabled by the Office of the Registrar without any input from the Department. Since your exam may be scheduled for any date during the April examination period, and since students must write at a scheduled time, you should not make any plans which might run into conflict with the examination timetable.

Prerequisite:
Antirequisite:

Other Academic Matters: [UWO Academic Calendar \(Academic Policies/Regulations\)](#).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see [Scholastic Offense Policy](#) in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's verbatim or paraphrased text in one's own written work without immediate reference. Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against a possible charge of plagiarism. This also applies to work facilitated or written for students by third parties. The University of Western Ontario uses a plagiarism-checking site called Turnitin.com.

Absenteeism:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

- [Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness](#)
- [Downloadable Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#)

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

University policy regarding missed classes and admission to exams: Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of Registration.

UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading.

The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures Policies which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Modern Languages and Literatures courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures website at <http://www.uwo.ca/modlang/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.