

Department: Modern and Classical Languages (CAMS section)

Course No: CLCS 102

Credits: 3

Title: Classics of World Literature, II

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Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

Diversity: CA4-Diversity and Multiculturalism- International

Catalog Copy: Classics of World Literature II Either semester. Three credits.

Introduction to classics of world literature from 1600 to the present. Comparative approach to canonical works from Eastern and Western Europe, Canada, Central and Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, The Indian Ocean, India, Australia, and Asia. A critical and theoretical appreciation of literature across cultural boundaries and historical periods.

Course Information: this course introduces students to the literatures and cultures of the World from the Renaissance to the Present, through close readings of texts (Novels, Poetry, Plays, Philosophy) selected from Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Canada, the Caribbean, Africa, the Near East, the Middle East, and Asia. Students examine the development of modern forms of writing and their relation to historical processes in diverse cultural systems. Students are given a comparative, interdisciplinary approach to literature and culture leading them to appreciate distinctions between different aesthetic traditions and different forms of thought, and helping them to understand the interaction between material conditions, socio-political ideology, religious belief and artistic expression.

b. Course requirements:

Students read selected texts each week and are expected to participate actively in class and in discussion groups, for it is reflected in 25% of their grade. They are encouraged to enter imaginatively into situations based on historical material provided on the cultures being studied, and to reflect upon their own cultural legacy. (For example, to compare notions of Empire during the European expansion to more modern nationalisms; to contrast the conception of the Self in African oral literature with that of the Romantic subject in the poetry of France, Germany or England; to compare ideals of Liberty and Equality in the works of thinkers of the European Enlightenment and those of the Arab world; to compare the conception of the function of theatre evident in the Noh tradition and that of modern Europeans such as Grotowski or Robert Wilson; to compare the conventions of the postcolonial, neo-baroque novel of Latin American and the Caribbean with that of Europe's New Novel, etc.

These exercises oblige the students to displace themselves from their familiar points of reference. There are four quizzes (short essays) and a final paper as well as a mid-term and a final exam.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: 1. Become articulate: Despite the large numbers of students, this course engages students regularly in interactive discussion. It extends to quizzes and exams:

there are no ?multiple choice?

questions and students are called

upon regularly in the lectures. Their self-expression is coached both orally and in their writing.

2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility: The entire course is predicated on the importance of exposing students to traditions and ideas that are distant from their own. Of course, they discover that once they learn to suspend their own preconceptions, that many elements of what they assume to be Western have their sources in the East. It also demands that they reassess criteria measuring civilization.

3. Acquire critical judgment: All of the material in this course is presented as material for debate from different points of view. Even basic interpretation of the texts is discussed in detail, because many of the texts are remote in both time and cultural tradition for our students. Students therefore are obliged to question their own categories and responses to the literary language and this is reflected in their writing where they must make a case for their point of view.

4. Acquire moral sensitivity: Exposing students to unfamiliar beliefs, values and language-use sometimes provokes disdain as compensation for the experience of disorientation, which is nonetheless an imperative stage in the journey towards self-knowledge and compassion. Moral sensitivity is central to this course's goals, for the very reason that so much moral violence issues from either fear of the unfamiliar or simple ignorance. Encouraging students to perceive analogies as well as to look at the relations between history and human ideals helps students to understand why people believe or behave the way they do rather than to move quickly to judgment. Students learn that stereotypes must be understood as part of the libidinal economy of a culture, and that they function to preserve certain relations of power.

5. Acquire awareness of their era and society: The course teaches students to become conscious of how literary forms of expression evolve under certain conditions, and how they reflect developments in other realms of culture, using a comparative approach. Students are constantly required to reflect upon analogous phenomena from their own experience or in U.S. and European culture. In addition, they are made aware of the evolution of cultural traditions over time, through a range of historical mutations. Students learn that the values they believed to be absolute or universal are in fact the product of concrete, material processes.

Finally, students are encouraged frequently to look at their own lives and imagine being observed by someone from a very different tradition. This is done by imaginative oral and written exercises (Example: In relation to the Conquest of Mexico, students might be asked to take the position of those who first encountered Cortès; they might place themselves in the position of one of Macchiavelli's contemporaries; they might take the Ottomans' position in the rivalry for Egypt and the Holy cities; they might write as critics of Zola's condemnation of the treatment of miners in *Germinal* or write a rebuttal to Breton's first Manifesto; they might support or condemn Marcus Garvey's project to return freed slaves to Africa; they might take the Fascist position in the Spanish Revolution; they might read and comment upon a personal account of the Holocaust and compare it to official versions of the founding of Israel; they might read and express dissent about a South African novelist concerning Apartheid, etc.) These types of assignments, both oral and written, are based on no secondary sources other than material supplied in lectures, and therefore cannot be downloaded from any website, and develops both empathy and logic.

6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human experience: It should be clear that this course has such awareness as a primary objective. The course is designed to put into relation the writings of extremely diverse traditions precisely because, in this era of instant globalization, it is

too easy for our students to assume that the American Way is both superior because dominant, and that there is no reason to pay any attention to others. (We have all heard this, incredibly.) So this course attempts to show that in our system there is some space between the realities and the ideals inscribed in our founding documents, and that our superiority owes a great debt to cultures we have learned (in school!) to disdain.

7. Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge:

The students in this course are being coached to look at things from more than one point of view. I would even say that the exercises in imaginative and critical thinking in fact rival the content of the course in importance, and they (hopefully) are carried with them when they leave.

CA1 Criteria: This course examines literary expressions from a range of traditions as testimony of these cultures?

developmental itineraries. One of the first questions asked of the students is, Why study literature when we can look at official histories? The course argues that literary expression gives us a window on cultural processes that is often excluded from official history, which, as we know, is written by those in power. Furthermore, literature encourages us to imagine ourselves in the place of the people it describes; instead of being what Pascal and others have described as a dangerous fiction, literature emerges in this course as a key for discovering a wealth of information about remote (and some supposedly familiar) cultures that is accessible by no other means. So we might say that the course makes a case for the seriousness of literature as a mode of knowledge that the spirit of science since the Enlightenment has entreated us, at the very least, to underestimate.

CA4 Criteria: The texts and the cultures studied in this course necessitate a questioning of meta-discursive concepts, which, if taken to their logical conclusion, cannot but reveal the partially arbitrary nature of our research models themselves. So the course operates simultaneously on several levels; it provides historical information on a wide range of cultures which have been absent traditionally even from Ivy League curricula except as "ghettos" or tokens of multiculturalism; it claims a certain scientific value for literary expression as a means for understanding different ways of being in the world or knowing about it (epistemologies); and third, it employs a methodology for teaching which actively and concretely applies principles which enhance imaginative awareness of unfamiliar subjects, many of which our students know only in a trivialized, folkloric form as exotic commodities for consumption in the West.

Role of Grad Students: Graduate Assistants hold weekly discussion sections and grade the work of these students. Faculty meets regularly with assistants for planning discussions and oversees all grading.