Department of Comparative Literature Spring semester 2017
CMLT-C 110
Writing the World: Bad Company

Carries IUB GenEd Foundations in Writing: EC and CASE EC credits.

Are you hanging out with the wrong people? Did someone come uninvited to your party and you never want to see them again? Terrible role models, bad influences, unwanted guests, and misunderstood outsiders populate a wide range of stories from around the world and across centuries. We will examine how these characters impact the communities around them and how those communities react. Is there a way to avoid bad company, neutralize it, or transform it into something positive?

All sections will read Sophocles’ Oedipus the King and Philoctetes, Federico Lorca’s The House of Bernarda Alba, J.M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians, and Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray. Each section will read additional literature unique to that section. Individual sections may include television, art, music, and film.

Assignments: 3 analytical essays, short papers, 3 quizzes, and introduction to basic research skills.
For various reasons and in many places, the 20th century was downright revolutionary. This course will parse through the stories written about these transformative moments to ascertain whether there is any continuity in this unruly body of literature. Texts will include poetry, fiction and drama from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and the United States. Read together, we will try to make connections about the nature of power, resistance, and their efficacies. What gives rise to movements of revolt and what do revolutionaries hope to accomplish? What are the politics of those telling these stories and what are the limits of this form of representation? Finally, what does it mean to be a reader of these stories and what does that imply about the way we live?
Where is the line between East and West, between past and present, between you and me? **Are you at the center of the universe, or merely some random fringe?** We will look for ourselves in mythic traditions and in the mirrors of our own technological creations. We will wrestle with philosophical ideas from Plato’s Socrates and Chuang Tse, to Kierkegaard and Haraway. We will encounter poems by Eastern hermits and Western wanderers; short stories by Akutagawa, Borges, and Azimov; stage drama, Japanese anime, and recent sci-fi film. Novels by V.S. Naipaul or Shusaku Endō will help us confront the irony of being an individual in society. Active class discussions and short, weekly online responses will spur our collective thinking, and three short essays (5 pgs. ea.) will give you an opportunity to see your own ideas come to life.
“Memento Mori – Remember that you will die.” The realization that we will die is a shocking one, and one that has been the basis for art and popular culture for generations. What do we do when confronted with mortality, with our own deaths and the deaths of our loved ones? Across a range of texts including literature, film, television, and theater, this class will examine pieces of popular culture that draw on mortality, and the inevitability of death as inspiration. Do we accept this knowledge? Reject it? How does art help us cope? Possible texts for this course may include Stranger than Fiction, Diana Son’s Stop Kiss, and Sarah Manguso’s Two Kinds of Decay. Students can expect short papers, in-class writing assignments, a mid-term, and a final paper.

TR 9:30-10:45AM
Zach Scalzo

Carries GenEd A&H, CASE A&H, and CASE GCC credits.

“The book is better than the movie.” “Haven’t I seen this somewhere before?” Throughout this course, we will explore adaptations of works into film and drama and what we mean when we talk about “adaptation.” We will discuss how different media affect narratives and how we, as readers and as audience members, interface with these texts as compared to their “original” versions. We will also analyze how adaptations “work” in and across different global areas and cultures in an attempt to see how personal, artistic, social, and cultural pressures affect the creation of adapted works.

Students should expect critical and creative assignments, including two papers, a midterm exam, and intermittent reading quizzes as graded assessments.

What’s so funny? What are you laughing at?

This course examines literary and cultural forms of comedy, to determine what produces laughter and how. From antiquity to the present, Aristophanes to Amy Schumer, LOL to ROFL, across jokes, satire, farce, parody, caricature, sarcasm, irony, cabaret, stand up, and more, we shall interrogate and gain a critical perspective on what makes the “body genre” of comedy work. We’ll investigate how what’s funny and what isn’t gets determined, and what is acceptable to joke about and what is not; we will observe how humor changes over time, and seek to understand the power structures, politics, violences, and intersectionalities at play within acts and cultures of laughter.
Mistaken identity, stolen identities, identity crises: such scenarios are often the basis for detective and mystery narratives. This course will explore what makes identity such a central concern in these texts, as well as how this theme has functioned in, developed, and inspired works of literature and film. Is identity a stable concept? How do we talk about it and define its boundaries, and, more importantly, how and why do we protect it? Students should expect up to two papers, an oral presentation, and intermittent reading quizzes as graded assessments. Works may include the Coen brothers’ *The Big Lebowski*, Alfred Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest*, William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop*, Dennis Lehane’s *Shutter Island*, Jack Finney’s *The Body Snatchers*, and Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Strange Events in the Life of Schalken.”
C255 takes us into the creative mind of the modern painter, composer, author and poet as we analyze various works of art of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, to find out what is it exactly that motivates the artistic impulse. We will explore how different forms of art engage in a lively exchange of ideas: for example, how does a musician compose a landscape? How would an artist paint motion? How does a poet create musical and visual effects in verbal expression?

The syllabus travels through the centuries, touches upon the Romantic sublime and falls into the pits of 20th century existential despair.

Among the many figures we will study are Blake, Mary Shelley, Keats, Friedrich, Delacroix, Poe, Monet, Manet, Joyce, Kafka, Kandinsky, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Pollock, Beckett and Brecht.

One response paper, a 4 page essay and one 8-10 page comparative paper. 2 Exams and weekly quizzes.
“The whole is the untrue,” writes Theodor Adorno, on modern art’s compulsion toward disintegration. “The fragment is that part of the totality of the work that opposes totality.” In the era of the end of grand narratives, the fragment assumes a tell-tale weight, speaking for and against the whole. Across works of literature, literary analysis, and critical theory, this class will examine the fragmentary narratives of modernism and postmodernism, to consider the place of the literary and the critical text in a world with a center that cannot hold; a world defined instead by the fracture and the fault line, the border and the zone, parody and pastiche, the ironic allusion, the citation and the margin, the remix and the remake. Topics will include a multiplicity of critical, theoretical, and methodological approaches to literature and culture: intertextuality, psychoanalysis, feminist and queer theory, postcolonialism, intersectionality, the performative, the mock-heroic, surrealism.
For as long as humans have been telling stories, they have been telling stories of people telling stories. What is the point and appeal of telling stories with other stories embedded inside? What do literary artists achieve by wrapping tales inside larger tales? Do the narratives reinforce or undermine each other? Throughout the semester, we will investigate a wide range of time periods, cultures, and genres: ancient Greece and Rome, Renaissance Portugal, central Africa, the modern U.S., tragedy, epic, adventure novel, historical fiction, and philosophical dialogue. Our reading list includes Tennessee Williams’ Suddenly Last Summer, Plato’s Symposium, Apuleius’ The Golden Ass, Camões’ Lusiads, Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, and Mahfouz’s Akhenaten.

Workload: 4 analytical essays, 4 short papers, 1 draft revision. Prerequisite: fulfillment of IU General Education English composition or approved equivalent.
CMLT-C317 (29939)
Epic: Heroes, Gods, and Rebels

TR 11:15-12:30
Professor Sarah Van der Laan
Carries CASE A&H credit.

Why did the architects of the World Trade Center memorial choose a quotation from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, a two-thousand-year-old Latin poem, for its walls?

Epic has lain at the heart of the Western literary tradition for twenty-seven hundred years. Through stories of human heroism, epic explores human nature, promotes and questions political and social principles, examines heroic ideals, and finds meaning in human mortality. Epic endures because it offers its readers tools for living in the real world.

We will read four European epics that have shaped Western literature: Homer’s *Odyssey*, the story of the Greek hero Odysseus’s ten-year struggle to return home from the Trojan War; Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which retells the founding of the Roman Empire to celebrate and question imperial values; Dante’s *Inferno*, an allegorical journey through Hell that marries epic values to Christian ethics; and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, an epic retelling of the biblical story of the Fall that finds heroism in the human condition. Assignments will include papers and regular participation in seminar discussion.
Today celebrity profiles saturate the media, and biographies fill our bookstores. But the fascination with the lives of significant people goes back to the dawn of civilization 4,000 years ago, and life writing in various forms is central to our global literary heritage. In this course, we examine how pre-modern cultures from around the world have recorded and memorialized the lives of particular individuals, from kings and warriors to courtiers, poets, and mystics. As different as they are, all such works raise similar questions. How is the raw material of life shaped into a coherent portrait of an individual? Which lives are deemed worthy of remembrance and what values do they represent? How is an individual’s life shaped by its culture and society? Who creates these life writings, and what purposes can they serve, both in their own time and in ours? Our readings will encompass works from the ancient Near East, classical Greece and Rome, and medieval Europe, the Far East, and the Islamic world, including *Gilgamesh*, *Oedipus Rex*, the poetry of Du Fu, and *Egil’s Saga*. Requirements: three essays, two short quizzes.
This course gives students an opportunity to explore representations of the Self and Other in literature from six areas of Europe from the 6th through 15th centuries. Readings will come from several different literary genres: epic and romance narrative, lyric poetry, drama, and allegorical narrative. In each case, we will look at how the text defines Otherness or questions such definitions -- and explore what implications result for definitions of the Self within the text’s cultural context. People have debated how to define human identity for many centuries; but important elements involve a person’s relationships to other individuals or groups. Literature can provide a means for making characters seem familiar or desirable to an audience or different from an audience (and often seem dangerous or inferior); but literature can also serve as a forum for raising questions about the assumptions that lie behind people’s conceptions of themselves and others. While some medieval European literary works present a static view or closed perspective on how people should view themselves and others, many medieval literary works offer alternative perspectives on the “Other” and challenge assumptions about how race, gender, religion, and class relate to identity. No prior experience with medieval literature required.

READINGS: Our texts will include lyric poems from courtly and religious traditions, the Song of Roland, the Song of the Cid, Chrétien de Troyes's Yvain, Marie de France’s Lais, Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's Romance of the Rose, Dante's Divine Comedy, and The Second Shepherd's Play. All readings will be available in modern English translation.

REQUIREMENTS: Students will complete an hour test, final exam, and one analytical essay of six to eight pages.
Between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, writers, artists, philosophers, and rulers claimed to rediscover and revive the glories of classical Greece and Rome after a thousand years of darkness and decline. We will trace this cultural movement from its origins in fourteenth-century Italy, through France and northern Europe, to its final flowering in seventeenth-century England. As we progress, we will chart the development of new ideas about humanity’s place in the universe. Statesmen and philosophers defend the value of the active life, celebrate the material world, and invent new uses for history and a new science of politics. Poets and essayists create new ways of exploring the self and the drama of individual human experience. Artists celebrate the human body in new and newly realistic paintings and sculpture. Scholars and theologians apply these developments to religion to spark the Protestant Reformation. Explorers press outward into new seas, and their encounters with unfamiliar peoples and customs inspire a re-examination of European cultural norms. And philosophers turn experimenters to launch modern science.
The role of capitals in the development of literary and artistic culture. Capitals as sites of cultural encounter, both national and international, crucial places where foreign and local artists interact culturally with the larger populations and where the permeable nature of borders become clear. Special focus on literary and artistic developments, with an exploration of changes in the fields of poetry, music and the visual arts. Interdisciplinary connections, international exchange, and comparisons between cultural capital and political capital. For spring semester 2016, the loci are Paris, Florence, and New York. Our exploration of Paris in the early 20th century will cover Picasso, Stravinsky, Apollinaire, and related figures. Next, we will move to Florence, examining dissent under fascism in the early 1930s, and we will read the work of poets, writers and view Italian art and architecture of the period. Some exposure to Italian modernist music as well. We will finish with New York, the ultimate city of modernism and the Jazz Age, and our study will concern F. Scott Fitzgerald, Cole Porter, the Gershwins, Art Deco artists, Diego Rivera and other foreign visitors. Student will write two papers and do one revision. Short exams for each section.
This course is a chance to come to terms with (to be transformed by?) Marcel Proust’s masterpiece, *In Search of Lost Time*, which has emerged in popular and critical opinion alike as the most influential work of twentieth-century literature.

Variously lyrical, analytical, and satirical, the book defies traditional notions of narrative coherence. As it explores what it means to become a writer and the obstacles, internal and external, to succeeding, it offers both a profound study in individual psychology and the portrait of an entire society. It is no coincidence that the rise of Proust’s reputation has overlapped with the ascent of narrative theory; our reading will be accompanied by selections from some of the century’s most influential critics, from Benjamin and Blanchot to Barthes, Genette, Deleuze, and de Man. We shall also be guided by excerpts from more recent writers, who have focused on such topics as the genesis of the novel, fiction and autobiography, sexual identity, and Proust’s relation to his precursors and to the other arts. Students will have the option of reading in English or French. Written work: brief response papers and a twenty-page final essay.

(Undergraduates need permission of instructor in order to enroll.)