

American University of Beirut, Spring Term 2015/2016

ENGL 106 – Introduction to World Literature

Instructor: Dima Nasser
Class Time: TR 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM
Room: Fisk 339
Office: Fisk 204B or Fisk 349
Office Hours: M 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM & by appointment
Email: dimanasser4@gmail.com

Course Description

What is world literature? How do we read works of literature written in a time or culture far removed from our own? What happens to the voice of the original work when it is rendered in translation? What is lost and what is gained in the process of translation? And what constitutes literature to begin with? All these questions will be raised and discussed throughout this course with the help of some contemporary theoretical and critical references to nuance our reading of texts from different cultures and different genres in translation.

The purpose of this class is not only to find answers to larger theoretical questions in the text, but also to see how representations in the texts can challenge our predetermined understanding of different cultures and literatures from around the world to the extent where the questions we ask may need to be rethought and redefined according to the text's contributions.

Therefore, the themes we will be covering will center on whose voices are being represented in the text and whose are being silenced, how the language used can be a social and political choice the author makes, and how cultural identities are formed within a text. We will also be critically thinking about the assumptions of classical literary canons and how a work of fiction can inform readers of the social, historical, and political realities in the text's external correlative, especially when the work is written against as complex a backdrop as colonialism. Those themes will be compared and contrasted among the five literary works we read as we go along.

That being said, we should also remember that what constitutes "literature" does extend vertically and horizontally beyond the genres of the novel, graphic novel, and memoir to include oral, visual, poetic and many other forms that constantly challenge our conception of what literature is to begin with.

Course Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. **Have** a general understanding of the scope of world literature studies.
2. **Trace** comparisons and distinctions among texts written in different genres and originating from diverse cultural and temporal contexts.
3. **Engage** world literary texts with introductory theories on world literature in translation.

4. **Formulate** sound arguments in academic writing about what is at stake in circulating world literature.

Course Requirements and Grading

1. In-class participation is crucial, not only because it counts towards 10% of your final grade, but also because your contribution to class discussions is as beneficial to your knowledge bank as the reading you will do on your own. For this reason, please, do not miss any classes. And yes, attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class.

In case you cannot make it to class for a particular reason that is out of your control, please inform me of your circumstance in advance **by email**. Participation means that aside from doing all the weekly required readings, you must also bring the relevant material to class, and be ready for our fruitful discussions.

2. The midterm will be administered during class time around the 7th week of the course and will comprise 20% of your grade. It will draw on material covered during class and ask you thematic questions that will require some analysis and short written responses.
3. You will be asked to complete five short assignments throughout the course of the semester that will altogether make up 20% of your final grade. After each literary work is read and discussed, you will have to write a 500-word (one-page) response to the work according to prompts I will provide you with a week in advance.

Aside from these short response papers, I will occasionally ask you to form group discussions in class in which you will debate the assigned reading then present your findings briefly and informally to the rest of the class for extra credit.

4. We will be reading five literary works throughout the semester: an epic and a graphic narrative, both of which we will read at full length, and three novels, which we will only be reading in part. This means that there are five different opportunities to present a reading in class.

I will be distributing a time sheet in class on February 2nd with the available dates for which a maximum of **four** people can sign up. You will be responsible to (1) present a brief summary of the assigned reading for that session, (2) the work's historical context, (3) the significance of the genre in which it was written, and (4) pick out a sentence or paragraph from the reading which contributes thematically to our discussion. The whole group needs to work together to get the 10% the presentation is worth. You will be allotted 15 minutes' time at the beginning of class, followed by five minutes of Q&A.

5. In lieu of a final exam, you will be asked to write a research paper that discusses a theme of your choosing in one of the literary works we discuss for the final 40% of your grade. You can also choose two works and draw up a comparative analysis based on a theme. My main concern is that you construct a solid argument and back it up with substantial evidence from the text and support it with your own analysis. In other words, you will not have to resort to external sources beyond the text and the critical readings assigned.

The paper will have to be five to six pages long, not more. **You will need to start thinking about your research paper topics by April 19, 2016 (beginning of week 13) and have them approved by April 26, 2016 (beginning of week 14) at the latest.** You will have two weeks from the last day of our class to write your paper and submit a hard copy to my mailbox in Fisk 349 by **May 13, 2016.**

6. Plagiarism is an intellectual offense taken very seriously in all academic and learning institutions. It will result in a non-negotiable failing grade (40/100) and will be dealt with in accordance to the AUB “Student Code of Conduct” – see the [Student Handbook](#). Don’t do it.

Please make sure to hand in all required work on time as a hard copy by the due dates which are marked on the weekly schedule.

Final Grade Breakdown

1. Participation	10%
2. Reading presentations in class	10%
3. Midterm	20%
4. One-page assignments	20%
5. Research paper	40%

Helpful Resources

The Writing Center:

At any time during the semester you feel you need help with writing and revising drafts of your essays or papers, the Writing Center is available to you. Readers at the Writing Center offer free, one-hour consultations for AUB students at Ada Dodge Hall (2nd floor), West Hall (room 336), or Jafet Library (2nd floor reading room). Check the Writing Center webpage on the AUB website for more information about their facilities. Schedule an appointment either by walking in or by logging on to <https://aub.mywconline.com/>.

Library Information Services:

Reference librarians and information specialists at AUB’s libraries can support you individually with finding academic sources for your research for this and future courses. Jafet information librarians are located in the Jafet Library lobby and they can be contacted by email at libinfo@aub.edu.lb.

Counseling Center, Student Affairs:

The center offers counsel and help to students with a range of academic and non-academic problems. If anything happening in your life is causing you distress and is influencing your academic performance, and you feel you could benefit from professional help, please contact Dr. Antoine Khabbaz at ext. 3178, email ak28@aub.edu.lb, or Dr. Nay Khatcherian at ext. 3158, email nk63@aub.edu.lb, in West Hall 210.

Course Material

You will have to purchase the following books from the AUB Bookstore:

- *The Epic of Gilgamesh* – Author(s) unknown
- *Mrs. Dalloway* – Virginia Woolf
- *Things Fall Apart* – Chinua Achebe
- *Beirut, I Love You* – Zena el-Khalil
- *Metro: A Story of Cairo* – Magdy el-Shafee

All other required readings are available to you in a course pack entitled **ENGL 106 – Introduction to World Literature** that you'll have to purchase also at the AUB Bookstore. In case any modifications to the material happen as the semester goes along, you'll be informed beforehand. I'll distribute all assignments and possible alternative readings in class.

If, at any point during the semester, you have any questions, remarks, or concerns, my door is always open.

Welcome to English 106!