

HUMA 3200 – Questions of Humanity in World Literature

Professor May-yi SHAW

I. Course Description:

This course will, through the eyes of literature, explore and discuss the major topics and themes that encompass various aspects of our lives and the society and the world that we live in. The core questions – “What is humanity?” and “What are the facets of humanity?” – will be repeatedly raised and discussed through the philosophical and artistic contemplations of numerous thinkers and writers in the past century and in our current time.

To ensure a wide spectrum of human experiences and answers to these core questions may be explored, this course will introduce the representative works of literature from a variety of cultures and traditions. To help students find the relevance of the course materials to their own daily lives, the course will also provide various in-class activities and creative assignments that develop students’ inquisitive spirit and critical thinking skills on the important questions of humanity.

II. Course Theme & Readings:

Week 1	Introduction
Week 2	The Existential Question: “The Book of Ecclesiastes”, <i>The Bible</i> (all)
Week 3	Self and Community: <i>The Plague</i> , Albert Camus (excerpts)
Week 4	The Meaning of War: <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> , Erich Maria Remarque (excerpts)
Week 5	Humanity in Holocaust: <i>Diary of Ann Frank</i> , Ann Frank (excerpts)
Week 6	Power and the State: <i>1984</i> , George Orwell (excerpts)
Mid-term	Mid-term paper
Week 7	The Colonial Voice: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , Achebe Chinua (excerpts)
Week 8	Identity in the Changing Times: <i>Kokoro</i> , Natsume Soseki (excerpts)
Week 9	Caricatures of A People: <i>A Madman’s Diary</i> (all) & <i>The True Story of Ah Q</i> (excerpt), Lu Xun
Week 10	Writing History: <i>One Man’s Bible</i> , Gao Xingjian (excerpts)
Week 11	Future as Utopia? Dystopia? <i>The Fat Year</i> , Chan Koonchung (excerpts)
Week 12 & 13	Student Presentations on Their Final Project

III. Course Requirements:

- Lecture & Tutorial Attendance 10%
- In-Class Participation & Quizzes 20%
- Mid-term Paper 30%
- Group Final Project
 - Presentation 15%
 - Paper 25%

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

- 1 Describe the cultural differences in the conception of an idea.
- 2 Analyze the rhetorical devices, and evaluate the aesthetic effects of a literary form (e.g. haiku, lyric, fictional prose, essay, novel, and drama).
- 3 Articulate how an author's choice of literary form facilitates his/her formulation of an idea in a specific cultural context.