

**HUMA 4250**

***Masterpieces of Modern Literature:***

**Fall 2023**

***World Literature and Literary Theory***

Time: Monday 12:00 – 14:50  
Venue: 4502  
Instructor: Xiaolu Ma Rm.3377; [hmxlma@ust.hk](mailto:hmxlma@ust.hk)  
Office hours: By appointment

*Course Description*

“The age of world literature is at hand,” the 77-year-old Johann Wolfgang von Goethe proclaimed to his young disciple Eckermann in 1827. No national literature has ever grown up in isolation from the cultures around it, and this is especially true for modern literature. This course focuses on masterpieces of modern literature. Texts will be read in English. This course will also introduce you to the field of literary theory, a central component of modern world literature. As you progress through this course, you will gain knowledge of the various premises and methods available to you as a critical reader of literature. You will identify and engage with key questions including ideology, cultural value, the patriarchal and colonial biases, travel/diaspora, and literary reconfiguration.

*Intended Learning Outcomes:*

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to

- a. do an in-depth analysis of the ideas in each work;
- b. examine how the modernist techniques and post-modern writing help convey an author’s thoughts and feelings;
- c. compare how an author’s religious and cultural background has affected his/her intellectual perception and aesthetic treatment of a particular theme;
- d. use textual evidence to formulate and communicate their ideas in a critical and effective manner.
- e. identify, discuss, and define some of the key theories of major literary and cultural critics and theorists

## *Schedule*

Sept 4

Introduction

Unit 1 (Sept 11, 18)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Conversation with Eckermann on Weltliteratur,"  
Jorge Luis Borges "The Library of Babel"

Unit 2 (Sept 25)

Bei Dao's poems

Stephen Owen, "What is World Poetry?: The Anxiety of Global Influence" (*The New Republic*,  
November 19, 1990, pp. 28-32)

Unit 3 (Oct 9, 16)

Kingston, "No Name Woman" in *The Woman Warrior*.

"Exile as Romance and as Tragedy," in *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*.

Unit 4 (Oct 30)

Adichie, "Imitation"

Franz Fanon, "On National Culture," in *Postcolonial Criticism*.

Unit 5 (Nov 6)

Leung Ping-kwan, "Borders" in *Islands and Continents: Short Stories by Leung Ping-kwan*.

Shu-mei Shi, "After National Allegory" in *Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific*

Unit 6 (Nov 13, 20)

Kawabata Yasunari, "The Flowers of Spring" "The Convent Temple and the Lattice Door" in *The Old Capital*

Zhu Tianxin, "The Old Capital" in *The Old Capital*

Film: *Twin Sisters of Kyoto* (1963)

<https://ok.ru/video/1629896575598>

Nov 27

Presentation

### *Course Assessment*

Class Participation	30%
Final Presentation (Nov 27)	30%
Final Paper (Dec 16)	40%

### *Course Requirements*

#### **Class participation**

This is a seminar course. You are expected to attend all classes and stay for the entire class. You are allowed two absences without penalty. Each additional absence lowers your final grade by 2%. Any student with 5 absences or more will fail this course.

There will be close reading of selected passages and thorough analysis of critical issues related to the texts. Students should read the assigned materials before class. I measure class participation based on the following criteria: arriving to class on time, completing required reading, engaging in class discussion, and respectfully listening when your classmates speak.

### **Final presentation**

A presentation on a topic of your choice. It should address at least one of the readings we cover in this class. The presentation needs to be in English.

### **Final paper**

5 pp in length. Times New Roman size 12 font, double line spacing, 1-inch margins, and half-inch indentations at the beginning of each paragraph. If you are a native Chinese speaker and write in Chinese, please use single line spacing instead. Critical analysis of one or more of our readings. Please submit it by 8pm of the due date. Please submit it in Word format and make sure that the file is readable. Unreadable files will not be counted as successful submission. Late submission will be accepted as late as two days after the due date but will receive half credit unless permission from the instructor is obtained before the due date.

### **Academic Honesty**

Acts of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Please go to our university webpage on academic dishonesty policy (<http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/index.html>), and read definitions of plagiarism and acts of dishonesty. Acts of dishonesty will lead to a failing grade in this course.