

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE COURSES

Spring 2023

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

COLT
0510K

The 1001 Nights

E. Muhanna

MWF 10:00-10:50

Explores the origins, performance, reception, adaptation, and translation of the *1001 Nights*, one of the most beloved and influential story collections in world literature. We will spend the semester in the company of genies, princes, liars, slaves, mass murderers, orientalists, and Walt Disney, and will consider the *Nights* in the context of its various literary, artistic, and cinematic afterlives.

COLT
0610L

Murder Ink: Narratives of Crime, Discovery, and Identity

M. Lerulli

MWF 11:00-11:50

Examines the narrative of detection, beginning with the great dramatic whodunit (and mystery of identity) *Oedipus Rex*. Literary texts which follow a trail of knowledge, whether to establish a fact (who killed Laius?) or reveal an identity (who is Oedipus?) follow in Sophocles' footsteps. We read Sophocles' intellectual children. Readings include: *Hamlet*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Woman in White*, and other classic novels and plays. We also analyse seminal films of the genre, including *Laura* and *Vertigo*. Will include the twentieth-century detective story, with particular attention to women writers and the genre of the female private eye.

COLT
0710B

Very Short Poetry: From Tanka to Twitter

J. Neidermaier

MWF 1:00-1:50

Though implicit and explicit claims have been made for the novel as a universal form, the novel does not match the very short poem in terms of ubiquity across history and cultures. Reading a set of very short poems each week, we will move across ages and continents, from Greek and Latin epigrams to the Japanese

“haiku” and its precursors, from the early modern sonnet to experiments with poetic constraints in the computer age. Primary sources will be juxtaposed to touchstones of theory, neat ideas, and provocative essays. All readings available in translation as well as in the original.

**COLT
0710Q**

The Odyssey in Literature and Film

V. Calotychos
MWF 2:00-2:50

Examines reincarnations of the Homeric figure of Odysseus in contemporary literatures and film as modernist figure, postcolonial subject, and existentialist hero. How is the Odysseus myth altered from culture to culture (Greece, Rome, Ireland, the Caribbean)? How is it re-visioned in different historical periods and from different perspectives (feminist, marxist, postcolonial) and genres (epic, poetry, the novel, film, drama)? Major authors include Homer, Virgil, Tennyson, Joyce, Kazantzakis, Cavafy, Seferis, Atwood, Walcott; criticism by Bakhtin, Edith Hall, Adorno, Derrida. Films include works by Angelopoulos, the Coen brothers; Singer’s Usual Suspects, Mendes’ James Bond offering Skyfall, and Kubrick’s 2001: Space Odyssey.

**COLT
0711L**

The Quran and its Readers

E. Muhanna
TTh 10:30-11:50

Like the Bible, the Quran has had a monumental impact upon world literature. Its narratives and imagery permeate the textual, visual, and auditory landscapes of many societies in the Islamic world and beyond. In this course, we approach the Quran through the works of some of its most interesting readers, including Jami, Dante, Rumi, Hafez, Goethe, and Rushdie. All readings are in English.

**COLT
0810I**

Tales and Talemakers of the Non-Western World

E. Muhanna
TTh 2:30-3:50

Examines many forms of storytelling in Asia, from the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Arabian Nights Entertainments to works of history and fiction in China and Japan. The material is intended to follow the evolution of non-western narratives from mythological, historical and fictional sources in a variety of cultural contexts. Topics will include myth and ritual, the problem of epic, tales of love and the fantastic, etc.

**COLT
0811I**

Classical Mythology and the Western Tradition

M. Lerulli
MWF 9:00-9:50

Reads classical texts that expound the fundamental mythological stories and elements of the Western tradition, then will read selected texts from the Renaissance through the twentieth century that utilize these myths. Ancient texts

covered will include the Epic of Gilgamesh, Hesiod's Theogony and Works and Days, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Later texts will include Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis and Rape of Lucrece, Milton's "Lycidas," and lyric poetry by Keats, Shelley, Browning, Swinburne, Rilke, Auden, and Yeats. This course is suitable for anyone wishing to understand the classical background to Western literature.

**COLT
1310G**

Silk Road Fictions

T. Chin
Th 1:00-3:30

The course introduces students to cross-cultural comparative work, and to critical issues in East-West studies in particular. We will base our conversations on a set of texts related to the interconnected histories and hybrid cultures of the ancient Afro-Eurasian Silk Roads. Readings will include ancient travel accounts (e.g., the Chinese novel Journey to the West, Marco Polo); modern fiction and film (e.g., Inoue Yasushi, Wole Soyinka); and modern critical approaches to the study of linguistic and literary-cultural contact (e.g., Lydia Liu, Emily Apter, Mikhail Bakhtin, Edward Said). Topics will include bilingual texts, loanwords, race and heritage, Orientalism. No prior knowledge of the topic is expected and all texts will be available in English.

**COLT
1310R**

**From "Wild Beast" to "True Born Prince":
Native Resistance in Native & Anglo-American**

N. Khan
TTh 2:30-3:50

How does Wampanoag war leader, Metacom, go from "a Salvage and a wild Beast" in 1677 to a "true born prince" in 1814? Coaxing Anglo-America's violent Native history into a positive national epic has made this collective amnesia an American commonplace. In this course, we first concentrate on contemporary accounts of three early conflicts between Native peoples and settlers: the second Anglo-Powhatan War (1622-'32), "King Philip's War" (1675-'76), and Tecumseh's War (1810-'13). The second half of the course will turn to the Removal Era, a high point in American literature's obsession with the "fate" of indigenous peoples. This is also the time of James Fenimore Cooper's and Washington Irving's contributions to that narrative, both of whom we will read. Accompanying them, however, will be Native retellings of those same conflicts (e.g. William Apess, George Stiggins, E. Pauline Johnson, and others').

**COLT
1310S**

**The Jewelers of the Ummah: The Jewish
Muslim World is Not History**

A. Azouley
W 3:00-5:30

The independence of Algeria in 1962 marked the end of a centuries-old intertwined Jewish and Muslim world in North Africa and the Middle East. This end, however, is made into a non-event in the annals of history. We will study

the colonial projects that produced this termination as a non-event, and will ask questions about the role of different imperial technologies such as art, museum, and archive in normalizing it. The Maghreb will be our point of departure, but students are invited to explore other imperial geographies and ask how practices of art-making such as jewelry, pottery, embroidery and others – not works of art destined to be displayed in museums – can resuscitate imaginaries of shared worlds?

**COLT
1420B**

**A Mirror for the Romantic: The Tale of Genji
and The Story of Stone**

D. Levy
W 3:00-5:30

In East Asian Buddhist culture, the mirror is a symbol of the mind in both its intellectual and emotional aspects. These masterworks detail the lives and loves of Prince Genji, cynosure of the medieval Japanese court, and Jia Baoyu, the last hope of an influential Chinese clan during the reign of Manchus. We examine both works as well as the sources of Genji and literary aesthetics of the Tang dynasty.

**COLT
1431H**

Woman Writing Epic

S. Eccleston
TTh 10:30-11:50

This course will introduce students to English translations and adaptations of Greek and Roman epic poetry to consider the politics of representing and publishing women in the modern (mostly) North American literary marketplace. Ancient Greek and Roman epic can be quite androcentric: a genre dominated by men about men talking with or fighting each other, all in the hopes of reproducing “great” men. Often, the women function as backgrounded appendages of the foregrounded men or, if significant, effect something catastrophic. We will revisit these dynamics in the ancient texts and read contemporary works that address them. We will thus explore how literary genre genders authors and readers in relation to war, citizenship, race, class, sexuality and/or celebrity. How does epic reify, reflect, and otherwise negotiate social identities or formations? What needs to happen for women to write epic? What happens when women write epic? Which kind of women does the publishing industry want/allow to write epic now?

**COLT
1610V**

The Promise of Being: Heidegger for Beginners

G. Richter
TTh 1:00-2:20

“The most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is,” Martin Heidegger writes, “that we are still not thinking.” Our undergraduate seminar will study, slowly and carefully, some of Heidegger’s most fascinating and challenging paths of thinking, especially as they relate to questions of Being and

our being-in-the-world. We will encounter his unique engagements with art and literature, his critique of modern technology, his reflections on what it means to “dwell” somewhere, his views on finitude and death, and his notion of being “on the way” toward language. No previous familiarity with Heidegger is assumed; curious students from diverse fields welcome.

**COLT
1810G**

Fiction and History

L. Valente
M 3:00-5:30

How the historical fiction that has flourished over the past four decades challenges the notions of objectivity and totalization, while providing alternative viewpoints for the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the past. Authors considered include Grass, Doctorow, Delillo, García-Márquez, Allende, Danticat and Gordimer. Theoretical texts by White, LaCapra, Benjamin, Ricoeur, and Chartier. Films such as *The Official Story* and *Europa, Europa* will be viewed and incorporated into the discussions. Prerequisite: two previous courses in literature. Enrollment limited to 19. Instructor permission required.

**COLT
1813Q**

Literature and Judgement

S. Stewart-Steinburg
TTh 1:00-2:20

There exists a close but complex relationship between the acts of making literature and making judgments. This course will explore some of these relationships and ask, for instance: how does judgment weigh upon the literary act? how do literary considerations bear on our making judgments? what criteria are called forth in both of these moments? Texts treated will be literary, critical-analytical, legal, and cinematic, and include such authors as Arendt, Benjamin, Derrida, Freud, Henry James, Kafka, Kant, Primo Levi, Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Verga.

**COLT
1815U**

Encountering Monsters in Comparative Literature

H. Silverback
T 4:00-6:30

What is a monster? What happens when one encounters a monster? This literature-based seminar considers monsters in different literary traditions, including ancient epic, folktale, poetry, theory, science fiction, and cinema. Monstrous figures from different cultural traditions, places, eras, genres, and forms will guide us through various representations of monstrosity—a concept which both invites and defies definition. We will ask: What cultural and imaginative needs do monsters fill? How do monsters help us think about identity politics, and the cultural production of ideas of self and other? To what extent are monsters tools of ideological oppression, and to what extent are

monsters liberatory figures that offer conceptual alternatives to systems of oppression and violence?

**COLT
1815V**

**"Blitzlesen", or Fascism and Speed-reading:
Deleuze, Cixous, Heidegger**

D. Mullins
MWF 12:00-12:50

Today everyone, it seems, is a lightning reader, or "Blitzleser". Rather than feel guilty about this, our course will ask: what would it mean to speed-read responsibly? Reading is, like democracy, always a matter of counting, of deciding which frequencies count (whether of letters, words, motifs etc.). Speed-reading risks overloading democracy with too much information and too many dots to connect, feeding paranoiac narratives in the style of QAnon or indeed Nazism itself. How to speed-read like a democrat? Our eyes will dart from Deleuze's claim that Cixous invented stroboscopic literature – difficult literature which only becomes readable when one reads quickly – to fascism's obsession with speed, which led Hannah Arendt to claim fascism desires "only a movement that is constantly kept in motion." Key authors include: Bernhard, Woolf, Martinetti, Deleuze, Guattari, Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger. Media: The Lighthouse, Speed Racer.

GRADUATE COURSES

**COLT
2540N**

Alexandrian Poetry

J. Reed
Th 4:00-6:30

We will read extensive selections in the original languages from Hellenistic Greek poetry and Latin poetry with Hellenistic influence, with an eye to their historical and cultural context and to their intertextual dimension.

**COLT
2540N**

Translation: Theory and Practice

E. Whitfield
T 1:00-3:30

This seminar will address the theory and practice of translation, and their place in the Humanities. Essays by translators, authors and scholars will be drawn from a range of contexts, as will literary and historical texts. Each participating student will work on a substantial translation project over the course of the semester. The seminar is a requirement for students completing the Department of Comparative Literature's Graduate Certificate in Translation Studies. Open only to graduate students.

LT

Literature and Prayer

M. Redfield

2822H

M 3:00-5:30

This graduate seminar will take up the question of what a literary prayer might be. Readings will range from the Bible to Ovid to metaphysical, romantic-era, and modern European poetry.

COLT
2822L

Gender and Political Control in Medieval Literature

A. Hicks-Bartlett
M 3:00-5:30

This seminar will examine how questions of gender, embodiment, voice, and sexuality in their various iterations, inform and intersect with political concerns. Readings will include popular works such as Marie de France's *Lais*, a romance by Chrétien de Troyes, selections from Pizan and Chartier, along with the *Roman de Silence* and romance-language texts that utilize representations of nonconformity or "alterity" to challenge and resist political control. We will give particular attention to gender, race, and authority in the "miroirs aux princes" genre and politically-grounded didactic manuals, while also studying texts that propose alternative visions of governance or political configuration. We will use critical interventions from a range of theoretical frameworks (critical race, disability, feminist, queer, trans studies, etc) to help us take an intersectional approach to Medieval literature. Instruction in English.