

What is Minor Literature?

GRMN/LIT 203

Fall Semester 2025

Time: T/Th 02:30 PM-03:45 PM

Place: C. J. 222

Professor: Dr. Christiane Fischer

Email: cfische1@hamilton.edu

Office: C. J. 202A

Office hours: Tuesday 10 AM-12 PM and by appointment.

When language becomes a tool of resistance, literature can redefine culture.

This course examines literary works by authors who write from the margins of the German-speaking world, using language to challenge dominant narratives and cultural norms. Beginning with Franz Kafka and extending to contemporary migrant and refugee voices, we will investigate how literature articulates alternative visions of identity, belonging, and cultural value. Central to our inquiry is the distinction between *minority*—a sociopolitical position within a broader society—and *minor*, a mode of cultural production that subverts the dominant language from within. This dual lens will guide our analysis of how marginalized perspectives engage, unsettle, and transform the “major” culture.

Students will read both works of fiction and influential theoretical texts by thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, and Hannah Arendt, engaging with ideas that illuminate the interplay between literature, politics, and cultural power.

Key topics include:

- The role of marginalized voices in shaping cultural canons
- Language politics and the dynamics of “major” vs. “minor” literatures
- Literature as a form of political resistance
- Migration, exile, and transnational storytelling
- The politics of cultural legitimacy and recognition
- Through close reading, discussion, and critical analysis, students will engage with works that question established narratives and reimagine the contours of culture

in the 20th and 21st centuries. Taught in English, no prior knowledge of German required.

Blackboard Site:

Readings not required for purchase are available on the GRMN/LIT 203 Blackboard site.

Books for Purchase at the Hamilton Bookstore:

Yoko Tawada, *The Naked Eye*

Sasha Marianna Salzmann, *Beside Myself*

Olivia Wenzel, *1,000 Coils of Fear*

Fatma Aydemir, *Djinns*

Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

Jaques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin*

Course Requirements:

Preparation, Discussion Questions, Class Participation (25%): Conscientious preparation for and participation in class discussions, including reading all assigned texts. Class preparations might entail taking detailed notes, looking up words in the dictionary, and reading the text several times depending on its level of difficulty. While you are expected to contribute with concrete discussion questions, you are not expected to understand everything.

2 Three-Page Papers (15%/each): Students will write two short response papers throughout the semester on a text of their choosing that was assigned before the paper's due date. For this assignment, you need to write an argumentative essay that uses textual evidence to support your claims. Furthermore, you need to formulate your own original thesis and engage with two to four text passages that you deem appropriate for demonstrating the thesis in a meaningful and convincing way. These papers do not require a research component.

Text Analysis Presentation (15%): Each student will prepare and deliver one text analysis presentation during the semester. This assignment requires you to present a close reading of the assigned text or text passages that highlights key literary elements such as language, tone, structure, symbolism, or theme. Your goal is to demonstrate how the passage contributes to the larger work and to facilitate the following discussion with the class. Presentation introductory remarks should be 5–7 minutes long and include a handout or visual aid.

Final Paper (30%): You will write a final research paper (8-7 pages double-spaced), which presents your original interpretation of one aspect of the materials covered in class. The research component of the paper requires meaningful engagement with 3-4 secondary

sources. I also encourage you to conduct your research on topics of special interest to you. If you need help, please reach out to me or the library staff. I look forward to helping you in developing your research project and encourage you to visit me during office hours early in the semester and as often as necessary to discuss your ideas. You are welcome to schedule a meeting with the Writing Center. You can book an appointment [here](#). Don't forget to properly cite all your sources! Here is a link to the [MLA](#) guidelines.

Course Grading Scale:

93-100: A

90-92: A-

88-89: B+

83-87: B

80-82: B-

78-79: C+

73-77: C

70-72: C

Final Grades will be weighed as follows:

25% Preparation and Class Participation

15% Three-Page Paper #1

15% Three-Page Paper #2

15% Text Analysis Presentation

30% Final Paper

Attendance:

Attendance is, of course, required. If you must miss class for a good reason (family emergency, illness, etc.), please let me know before class. You may miss **three classes** without these absences affecting your grade. If you have more than **three** unexcused absences, your FINAL grade will be dropped by half a letter grade for every class missed. Example: a B becomes a B-

Office Hours:

I strongly encourage you to visit me during office hours to continue conversations from class, discuss ideas for your papers, address class concerns, or just get something off your chest. Some assignments will require you to visit me during office hours. If you cannot meet with me during my regularly scheduled office hours, write me an e-mail, and we will find a time that works for both of us. I generally check my email between 9 am-6 pm Monday - Friday and sporadically on the weekend. I will get back to you as soon as I can, Monday - Friday.

Health and Accessibility Resources:

Students with disabilities of any kind who may need accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Assistant Dean for Accessibility Resources Allen Harrison at ahariso@hamilton.edu. Students experiencing mental or physical health challenges that are significantly affecting their academic work or well-being are encouraged to contact me and/or speak with a dean so we can help you find the right resources. Conversations with students will remain private and confidential unless you permit to disclose information to others.

Inclusivity:

The Hamilton community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and non-visible categories. I welcome all students in this course and expect that all students contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. If you feel that you are not being welcomed, included, or accepted in this class, please come to me or a college administrator to share your concerns.

Course Policies:

Use of online dictionaries, translators, and AI tools:

The use of artificial intelligence software (Chat GPT or other) is not allowed. These tools will take away from the learning process, as you will most likely be unable to reproduce what the online tool has done for you in class. **If a student has used an online translator or AI tool for an entire sentence, paragraph, or paper, they will be reported to the Dean of Students for Academic Dishonesty.**

Honor Code:

Please refer to the [Honor Code](#). Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course and will be immediately reported to the Dean of Students.

Late Work:

1. No late homework will be accepted.
2. Late essays will be lowered by half a grade for each day that they are late within a three-business-day range. For each day it is late, your grade will be lowered by half a letter grade for the first and second drafts. After the third day, the assignment will no longer be accepted.

Classroom:

Please observe normal rules of courtesy in class and refrain from engaging in disruptive behavior. **Chronic late arrivals, early departures, and/or leaving the classroom in the middle of class will result in the lowering of your participation grade.**

Date	In Class	Homework Assignments
Week 1 8/28	Introduction Syllabus Discuss Kafka	Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i> , Chapter I
Week 2 9/2	Discuss Kafka	Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i> , Chapter II
9/4	Discuss Kafka, Deleuze and Yildiz	Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i> , Chapter III Deleuze, "Minor Literature" Yildiz, "The Uncanny Mother Tongue: Monolingualism and Jewishness in Franz Kafka" (e-book)
Week 3 9/9	Discuss Arendt	Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man"
9/11	Discuss Derrida	Derrida, <i>Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin</i> , Chapters 1-5
Week 4 9/16	Discuss Derrida	Derrida, <i>Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin</i> , Chapters 6 - Epilogue
9/18	Discuss Spivak	Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?" (e-book) [read full essay in preparation]
Week 5 9/23	Discuss Spivak	Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?" (e-book) Discussion cont.
9/25	Discuss Tawada	Tawada, <i>The Naked Eye</i> , Chapters 1-4
Week 6 9/30	Discuss Tawada	Tawada, <i>The Naked Eye</i> , Chapters 5-9 Response Paper 1
10/2	Discuss Tawada, Yildiz	Tawada, <i>The Naked Eye</i> , Chapters 10-13 Yildiz, "Detaching from the Mother Tongue: Bilingualism and Liberation in Yoko Tawada" (e-book)
Week 7 10/7	Discuss Bhabha	Bhabha, "Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse"
10/9	Discuss Özdamar, Yildiz	Özdamar, "Mother Tongue" Yildiz, "Surviving the Mother Tongue: Literal Translation and Trauma in Emine Sevgi Özdamar" (e-book)
Week 8 10/14	Discuss Aydemir	Aydemir, <i>Djinns</i> , Chapters: Hüseyin, Ümit
10/16	Fall Break	

Week 9 10/21	Discuss Aydemir	Aydemir, <i>Djinns</i> , Chapters: Sevada, Peri, Hakan
10/23	Discuss Aydemir	Aydemir, <i>Djinns</i> , Chapter: Emine
Week 10 10/28	Discuss El-Tayeb	El-Tayeb, <i>Un/German</i> , Section 3 (e-book)
10/30	Discuss Wenzel	Wenzel, <i>1,000 Coils of Fear</i> , Section I
Week 11 11/4	Discuss Wenzel	Wenzel, <i>1,000 Coils of Fear</i> , Section II
11/6		Response Paper 2
Week 12 11/11	Discuss Wenzel, May Ayim (a poem we will read in class)	Wenzel, <i>1,000 Coils of Fear</i> , Section III
11/13	Discuss Butler	Butler, <i>Undoing Gender</i> (e-book)
Week 13 11/18	Discuss Salzmänn	Salzmänn, <i>Beside Myself</i> , Chapters: Going Home, The Beginning
11/20	Discuss Salzmänn	Salzmänn, <i>Beside Myself</i> , Chapters: Kato, Etya and Shura, Danya and Emma
Week 14 12/2	Discuss Salzmänn	Salzmänn, <i>Beside Myself</i> , Chapters: T, Kostya, Valya
12/4	Discuss Salzmänn	Salzmänn, <i>Beside Myself</i> , Part II
Week 15 12/9	Peer Writing Workshop	Working Thesis: First articulation of the argument you want to make and initial ideas of the evidence you might want to use (150-200 words). Bring your laptop!
12/11	Final Paper Presentation	Final Paper Presentation: 5 minutes presenting topic, outline and proposed evidence followed by questions and discussion.
TBD		Submit Final Paper!

—Any changes to the syllabus will be communicated to the class in advance!—