

Introduction to Comparative Literature (CMLT 1300)

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جعفر خان — اینها که خیلی خوب کار بست . همین چیزها
است که باعث *progrès* و *civilisation* يك مملکت ميشه ، در تمام
اروپا، هم *asile des aliénés* دارند ، هم *asile des pauvres*
دارند ، هم *orphelinat* دارند ...
دائی — (حرفش را قطع میکنه) صبر کن ، داداش ، صبر کن .
اولاً اگر برای من حرف میزنی ، زبون آدم حرف بزن تا حالیم بشه .
من عرف لیلی صرف لیلی سرم نمیشه .

What do we learn about works of literature by placing them in conversation? This course introduces students to the histories and methodologies of comparative literature. Moving across national boundaries and artistic genres, we explore different aspects of the field, from adaptation to translation. In the process, we confront the challenges of cross-cultural comparison. How do we compare literatures and cultures that do not share the same conceptual vocabulary? Is the very act of comparison political? And who gets to compare in the first place? We will attempt to answer these questions by looking to fiction, poetry, drama, and cinema from the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Authors include Anne Carson, Tayeb Salih, Virginia Woolf, and Jorge Luis Borges.

- Requirements:**
- 1) weekly discussion posting & participation [20%]
 - 2) ten-minute presentation [10%]
 - 3) midterm exam [20%]
 - 4) 2-3-page close reading [20%]
 - 5) 7-8-page final essay [30%]

Required Texts

- 1) Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* [[NYRB](#)]
- 2) Eliot Weinberger, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* [[New Directions](#)]
- 3) Anne Carson, *Antigonick* [[New Directions](#)]
- 4) Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* [[Harcourt](#)]
- 5) Shakespeare, *Othello* [[Norton Critical Ed.](#)]
- 6) Toni Morrison, *Desdemona* [[Douglas](#)]
- 7) Anton Chekhov, *Plays* [[Penguin](#)]

All other texts will be available on Canvas.

Unit One: Origin Stories and Invented Traditions

- 1/10: Introduction. Presentation sign-up.
- 1/17: Pascale Casanova, Introduction to *The World Republic of Letters*
Rabindranath Tagore, "World Literature" / "Vishva Sahitya"
optional: Sheldon Pollock, "Cosmopolitan Comparison" (+ video)
- 1/22: Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus's Scar" from *Mimesis*
- 1/24: Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Device"
Leon Trotsky, "Literature and Revolution"
Chinua Achebe, "Africa and Her Writers"
- 1/29: T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
Jorge Luis Borges, "The Argentine Writer and Tradition"
Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors"

Unit Two: Rewritings of Tradition

- 1/31: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*
- 2/5: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*.
Excerpt from Edward Said, *Orientalism*
Excerpt from Zeynep Çelik, *Europe Knows Nothing about the Orient*
- 2/7: Shakespeare, *Othello*
- 2/12: Shakespeare, *Othello*.
- 2/14: Toni Morrison, *Desdemona*.

2/19: Nuri Bilge Ceylan, *Winter Sleep* [[Kanopy](#)]
Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect"

Unit Three: Modernity and Global Modernism

2/21: Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*

2/23: *First essay (500-700-word close reading) due at midnight

2/26: Chekhov, continued.
Optional, Eric Hobsbawm "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870-1914"

2/28: Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life";
Selected poems from *The Flowers of Evil*

3/4: Adunis, "Poetics and Modernity"
Selected poems from *Songs of Mihyar*

3/6: Forough Farrokhzad. "Another Birth" & "Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season." Listen to at least one of the Persian-language recordings. Optional: Raymond Williams, "When was Modernism?"

3/18: Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (up to page 107)

3/20: Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (up to page 206)

3/25: Finish *The Waves*
Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown"
Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction"

3/27: Midterm review. Excerpts from Orhan Pamuk, *The White Castle* and *The Museum of Innocence*

4/1: Midterm exam.

Unit Four: Commitment and the Politics of Comparison

4/3: W. E. B. du Bois, *Souls of the Black Folk*
Octavio Paz, "Mexican Masks"

4/8: Solanas & Getino, *The Hour of the Furnaces*;
Solanas & Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema"

Excerpt from Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theater"

- 4/10: Walter Mingolo, "The Rise of the Third Nomos of the Earth"
Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile"
Gloria Anzaldua, except from *Borderlands/La frontera*
Henry Corbin on Suhrawardi ("Na-Koja-Abad")
*optional film: Ai Weiwei, *Human Flow*

Unit Five: Translation

- 4/15: Eliot Weinberger, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*
Excerpt from Ronit Ricci, *Translation in Asia*
Excerpt from the *Dictionary of Untranslatables*
- 4/17: Anne Carson, *Antigonick*.
Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator"
Excerpt from A. K. Ramanujan, "Three Hundred *Ramayanas*"
- 4/22: Leah Price, Intro. to *What We Talk About When We Talk About Books*
Raymond Williams, "Drama in a Dramatized Society"
In-class lecture on argumentation.
- 4/24: Roland Barthes, "The World of Wrestling" from *Mythologies*
*Optional: Adorno, "The Culture Industry" & "Free Time"
Come to class with a thesis statement. In-class workshop.
- 4/28: Second critical essay (7-8 pages) due.**