

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.

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")

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*
Don Mee Choi, "Translation is an anti-neo-colonial mode"
- 4/17: Anne Carson, *Antigonick*.
Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator"
Excerpt from A. K. Ramanujan, "Three Hundred *Ramayanas*"
Optional excerpt, Kilito, *Thou Shall Not Speak My Language*
- 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.**

Course Policies

Weekly responses: The purpose of these short assignments is to direct class discussion toward the passages, topics, and questions that you are particularly drawn to. **Please post them to Canvas by Tuesday at midnight.** The responses should be around 150 words long.

Essays: I am happy to discuss drafts of your essays. If you would like to talk to me about a draft, please let me know in advance and email it to me at least one day before our meeting. I will not be able to discuss drafts the day before an essay is due. I accept late essays but will lower the essay grade by a third for each day past the deadline (e.g. from A to A-, or from B+ to B).

Participation: It is important that you share your thoughts during class discussions and actively listen to others. If you find it difficult to speak in a seminar setting, please do not hesitate to come talk to me about it in office hours. You can miss class twice without an excuse. Any further absences will lower your participation grade.

Grading: Feedback is not intended to be all-inclusive or exhaustive; student adherence does not guarantee specific grades/evaluative measurements nor will failure to seek such feedback excuse problematic, incorrect, or poor performances. It is the student's responsibility to regularly check and monitor their grades. Written or verbal feedback will be provided on major assignments (excluding tests); students are responsible for receiving this feedback and may also request additional feedback as desired. The only definitive, binding, and official grade for the course is the one delivered by the instructors to the University through official channels. Excluding specific and extreme situations stipulated by formal and official University policies, all grades in this course are final and not open to negotiation.

Academic honesty: Before the first essay is due, we will review proper ways to cite sources. It is always all right to ask me for advice about citations, especially if you are not sure how to acknowledge a particular source. Plagiarizing may cause you to fail the course and to incur more serious academic penalties. All students are covered by a policy that prohibits dishonesty in academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. Students are required to pledge all written work that is submitted for a grade: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this work" and their signature. **The pledge may be abbreviated "pledged" with a signature.**

Support

Trinity faculty hold students to the highest academic standards and also know that the very best students seek out help when necessary. The following resources are in place to support your academic success:

[Academic Success](#): time management, student skills, test anxiety, note taking, supplemental 1:1 tutoring

[Career Services](#): major exploration, career guidance

[Counseling Services](#): mental health concerns, mental health referrals

[Quantitative Reasoning and Skills Center](#): tutoring for quantitatively demanding coursework

[Student Accessibility Services](#): accommodations for a diagnosed disability

[Wellness Center](#): nutrition, sleep, stress management

[Writing Center](#): starting a paper, finding a thesis, drafting and editing

English Major Pathways

This course satisfies **Approaches to Creation and Analysis: Humanities**. Upon successful completion of a Humanities (HU) course, students will have demonstrated the ability to

- discuss the significance of ideas, texts, performances, or cultural artifacts within an appropriate intellectual or historical framework.
- apply the interpretive or analytical methods that characterize at least one of the humanistic disciplines.

This course also satisfies **Core Capacities: Global Awareness**. Upon successful completion of a Global Awareness (GA) course, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- analyze major historical events and processes that have given the regions in question their unique cultural character or affected their relations with other regions and peoples of the world.

- identify and articulate the perspectives or values of diverse peoples, groups, institutions, or cultures of regions outside the United States.
- gather and evaluate information from scholarly sources concerning the perspectives and values of the peoples of regions outside the United States.