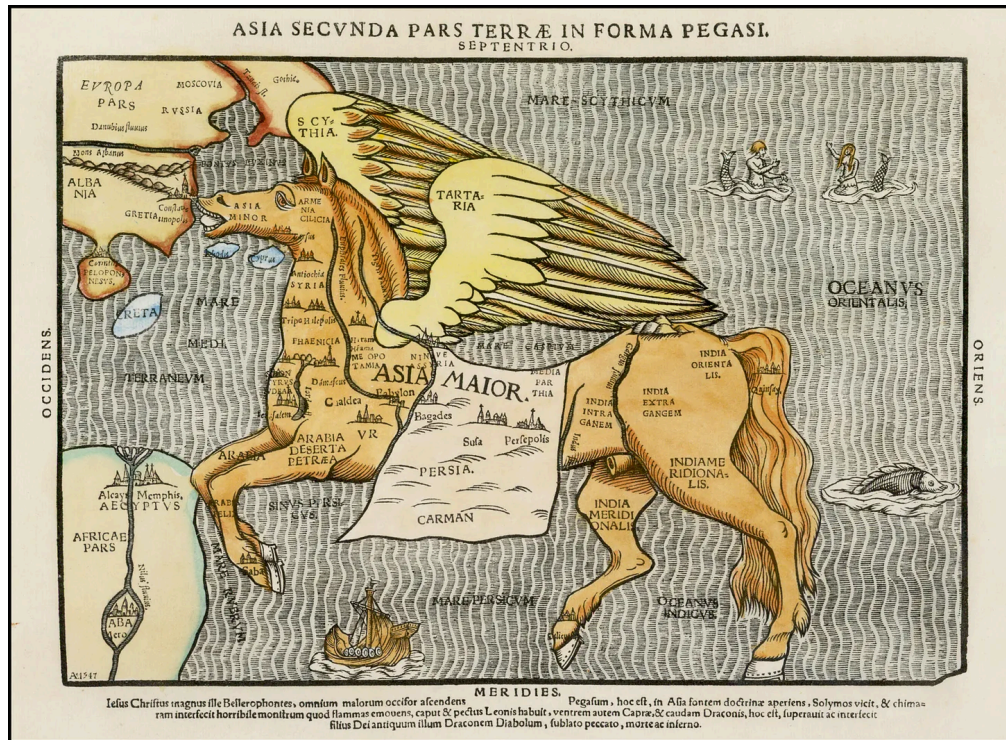


Literature and Asia (FYE 1600-22)

Prof. Shaj Mathew (smathew@trinity.edu)



Heinrich Bünting's Map of Asia (1581) in the Shape of Pegasus

This course introduces students to the literature, cinema, and philosophy of Asia, broadly construed. It bridges cultures and even historical periods, venturing from the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita to their afterlives in modern literature and even politics. At the same time, "Literature and Asia" investigates the vexed history of orientalism and cross-cultural relations, asking what exactly "Asia" refers to, and whether the concept is even separable from its reception in Europe. The course seeks to provide a bird's eye view of these questions, as well as a more general appreciation of literary classics from Asia.

Required Texts

1. Orhan Pamuk, *The White Castle* ([Vintage](#))
2. Laurie Patton, translator of the *Bhagavad Gita* ([Penguin](#))
3. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* ([Pantheon](#))

Assignments

1. Attendance, Discussion Posts & Participation [30%]
2. 2-3-page essay on Asia [15%]
3. 4-5-page close reading of a text [25%]
4. 6-8-page final essay [30%]

Course Schedule

Unit One: What is Asia?

8/26: Introduction.

AK Ramanujan, "Some Thoughts on Teaching 'Non-Western' Classics"

8/29: Ayşe Zarakol, excerpt from *Before the West* + [interview](#)

9/4: Edward Said, Introduction to *Orientalism*.

Zeynep Çelik, *Europe Knows Nothing About the Orient*

(Post 150-word comment on readings to Canvas)

9/9: Marshall Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*

Karen Wigen & Martin Lewis, *The Myth of the Continents*

*Watch video

9/12: Janet Abu Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*

Andre Gunder Frank, *ReORIENT*

9/16: Yoshimi, "Asia as Method" / Intro to Okakura, *Ideals of the East*

9/19: Rabindranath Tagore, "Vishva Sahitya / World Literature" + nationalism essays
+ excerpts from "Talks in China."

***9/20: Essay One: What Is Asia? (2-3 pp.) – submit to Canvas before midnight**

Unit Two: The Middle East / West Asia

9/23: Ja'far Panahi, *Crimson Gold* (film on Canvas)

"Beyond Eurocentrism"--Aeon article on Samir Amin & political economy

9/26: Forough Farrokhzad, selected poems

9/30: Orhan Pamuk, *The White Castle*

10/3: Pamuk, continued.

*optional "Under Western Eyes" chapter of *Istanbul*.

10/7: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*.

10/10: *Persepolis*, finish.

***10/11: Essay Two: Close Reading (4-5 pp.)**

Unit Three: South Asia

10/14: Upanishads I.

*optional readings by Evan Thompson (*Waking, Dreaming, Being*), Jonardon Ganeri, S. Radhakrishnan, Roberto Calasso, and Leela Gandhi

10/17: Upanishads II

10/21: Bhagavad Gita.

Vedanta Society article: "The Bhagavad Gita Casts Its Spell on the West"

10/24: Bhagavad Gita.

*optional readings by Martha Nussbaum and Dorothy Figueira

**Compare the four translations of the *Gita*

10/28: *Gandhi* film + excerpts from Gandhi's memoir.

*optional, Chakrabarty & Majumdar, "Gandhi's *Gita* & Politics as Such"

10/31: Leo Tolstoy, "Letter to a Hindu."

Gandhi, "Hind Swaraj"

George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi"

*optional, KC Bhattacharaya, "Swaraj in Ideas"

11/4: BR Ambedkar, *The Annihilation of Caste*

11/7: AK Ramanujan, "Is there an Indian Way of Thinking?"

Tagore redux.

Unit Four: The Use and Abuse of History

11/11: *On Earth or in Poems*, excerpt from Eric Calderwood (cf. this [NPR](#) segment)

*optional, Nietzsche, "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life"

11/14: The Silk Road (Valerie Hansen). Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*

11/18: Jia Zhangke, *Still Life* / Edward Yang, *Yi Yi*.

11/21: Wong Kar-wai: *Chungking Express* + *In the Mood for Love*

12/2: Lecture on argumentation / course evaluation

12/9: Final Essay Due (6-8 pp.)