

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS
University of Virginia, Academic Sponsor

Voyage: Spring 2016
Discipline: English
ENMC 3500: Contemporary World Literature
Division: Upper
Faculty Name: Jennifer Green-Lewis
Credit Hours: 3; Contact Hours: 38

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In our own time, the global reach of communications has created tensions between the relative stasis of traditional life patterns, and the fluidity of modern life experience. This course will study twenty and twenty-first century writers in the context of the historical events, geographical realities, and cultural practices that have produced them and that define their work. We will read comparatively, focusing on topics that we will trace across works from China, Japan, India, as well as South and North Africa. Of particular interest to our study will be representations of home, stability, and tradition, as counters to narratives that explore human trauma, displacement, and suffering. Among the many questions we will ask: how are the costs of warfare represented across cultures? What role does narrative play in the reconciliation between past trauma and present circumstance? How does, or can, beauty—of literature, art, and landscape --be a source of redemption? What different social practices and interactions are celebrated in the places that we visit? What traditions are critiqued and reassessed by the fiction we read?

Written assignments for this course will include informal pieces that focus on the specifics of in-country experience in light of our on-board reading, as well as more formal and broader comparative responses to the different regions we encounter. Since one of the goals of this course will be to articulate our experience of world and word as coherently and elegantly as possible, all students will be encouraged to take advantage of the on-board Writing Center.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The goals of this course are:

- to deepen our understanding of shared human experience and cultural difference through the comparative study of literary works in context
- to describe, coherently and with purpose, the process of reading places and texts through oral accounts, journal entries, and formal analytical prose
- to identify, name, and explore themes raised by our readings that cross nations and continents
- to consider our own places of origin from the outside as well as from within

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Yu Hua
TITLE: To Live
PUBLISHER: Anchor
ISBN #: 978-1-4000-3186-3
DATE/EDITION: 2003

AUTHOR: George Orwell
TITLE: Burmese Days
PUBLISHER: Mariner
ISBN #: 015614501
DATE/EDITION: 1974

AUTHOR: Charles Larson, ed.
TITLE: Under African Skies
PUBLISHER: FSG
ISBN #: 978-0-374-52550-7
DATE/EDITION: 1997

AUTHOR: Kenzaburo Oe, ed.
TITLE: The Crazy Iris, and Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath
PUBLISHER: Grove Press
ISBN #: 978-0-8021-5184
DATE/EDITION: 1985

AUTHOR: John Hersey
TITLE: Hiroshima
PUBLISHER: Vintage
ISBN#: 0679721037
DATE/EDITION: 1989

AUTHOR: Ama Ata Aidoo
TITLE: No Sweetness Here, and other stories
PUBLISHER: The Feminist Press at CUNY
ISBN #: 1558611193
DATE/EDITION: 1995

AUTHOR: Laila Lalami
TITLE: Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits
PUBLISHER: Harvest
ISBN #: ISBN-015603087X
DATE/EDITION: 2006

AUTHOR: Anita Nair (ed.)
TITLE: Where the Rain is Born
PUBLISHER: Penguin India
ISBN #: 0143029193

DATE/EDITION: 2002

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Depart Ensenada- January 5:

B1- January 8: Introduction: The transmission of culture

Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History" (pdf in academic folder)

Adam Zagajewski, "Try to Praise the Mutilated World" (handout)

B2-January 10: Trauma and Memory

Yu Hua, *To Live: A Novel*

pp 1-87

*Watch the movie on the film loop tonight!

Honolulu: January 12

B3- January 13: *To Live: A Novel*

One-page response to Yu Hua due (diagnostic)

pp 87 to end

B4-January 15: John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

pp 1-90

B5-January 18: *Hiroshima*

Paper topics discussion

pp 91-end

Study Day: January 19

B6- January 21: Oe Kenzaburo, ed. *The Crazy Iris: And Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath*

"Summer Flower"; "The Land of Heart's Desire"

Haikus and imagist poetry

B7-January 23: *The Crazy Iris*

"Human Ashes"; "Fireflies"; "The House of Hands"

Pointers for field notes

5-page paper due in by 10pm

Yokohama: January 24-25

In-Transit: January 26

Kobe: January 27-28

B8- January 30: Eileen Chang, “Love in a Fallen City” (pdf in academic folder)
Pointers for field notes

Shanghai: January 31-February 1

In-Transit: February 2-3

Hong Kong: February 4-5

B9- February 7: History and identity

Orwell, *Burmese Days*

Chapters 1-7

Ho Chi Minh: February 8-12

B10- February 14: *Burmese Days*

Chapters 8-12

No class: February 15

B11-February 17: *Burmese Days*

Chapters 13-19

Assignment and discussion of field lab topics

Yangon: February 18-February 22

Field Lab: February 19

To give context to our reading about Burma, we will take a guided walking tour of some of the colonial architecture that is still visible in modern-day Myanmar.

B12-February 24: *Burmese Days*

Chapters 20-25

Discussion of port experience; bring field notes to class

B13- February 26: Anita Nair, ed. *Where the Rain is Born* (anthology of writings on Kerala)

Shashi Tharoor, “Charlis and I”; Bill Aitken, “The Power of One”

*Field lab project due in

Cochin: February 27-March 3

B14-March 5: Lalithambika Antherjanam, “Sesame seeds, flowers, water”; Jaishree Mishra, “Ancient Promises”; Suresh Menon, “The Voice”

Where the Rain is Born

Study Day: March 6

B15-March 8: Alexander Frater, “Chasing the Monsoon”; Arundhati Roy, “God’s Own Country”;
Vaikom Basheer, “The Blue Light”
Where the Rain is Born

Port Louis: March 9

B16- March 11: Mandla Langa, “A Gathering of Bald Men”; Sindiwe Magone, “I’m not talking
about that, now” (*Under African Skies*)

Study Day: March 12

B17-March 14: Es’Kia Mphahlele, “Mrs. Plum”; Bessie Head, “The prisoner who wore glasses”
(*Under African Skies*)

Cape Town: March 15-20

B18- March 22: Chinua Achebe, “The African Writer and the English Language” (pdf in
academic folder)

Chinua Achebe, “ The Novelist as Teacher” (pdf in academic folder)

B19-March 24: Ama Ata Aidoo, *No Sweetness Here* (stories to be assigned)

B20-March 26: *No Sweetness Here* (stories to be assigned)
5-page paper #2 due in

Takoradi: March 27-28

Tema: March 29-31

B21-April 2: Laila Lalami, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*
pp 1-73

B22-April 4: *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*
pp 74-126

B23: April 7: *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*
pp 127 to end.
Closing discussion; exam pointers

Casablanca April 8-12

Study Day: April 12

B24: April 14 Final Exam

April 16: Arrive in Southampton

FIELD WORK

Experiential course work on Semester at Sea is comprised of the required field lab led by your instructor and additional field assignments that span multiple ports.

FIELD LAB (At least 20 percent of the contact hours for each course, to be led by the instructor.)

Field lab attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of your field lab.

The field lab for this course takes place on: **Friday, February 19.**

The field lab for this course will take place in Rangoon and will be organized around our reading of George Orwell's colonial novel *Burmese Days*. We will visit sites of cultural and religious significance in and around Rangoon to enrich our understanding both of the novel and of the colonial history with which it engages, primarily focusing on the colonial history that is part of modern Yangon's past. You will take notes and pictures, in preparation for writing a 5-page essay. The essay should include some secondary research (a minimum of three sources, which should be drawn from the field lab itself).

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be expected to take notes in port as well as in class. You will draw on these notes to produce your papers (you will be helped in this by being posed specific questions to address –field note pointers that will guide you in your journaling). Your notebook should be always with you, and you may be asked to read from it during class. The two formal papers that grow out of your note-taking will make connections between the on-board readings and your in-country experience.

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC

One diagnostic paper, ungraded

Two papers, 5 pages each (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font): 50%

In-class participation, preparedness, field notes may all result in an increase of grade

Field Lab project: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

RESERVE BOOKS AND FILMS FOR THE LIBRARY

AUTHOR: Achebe

TITLE: Morning Yet on Creation Day

PUBLISHER: Anchor

ISBN #: 0385017030

DATE/EDITION: 1975

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

(Professor will provide pdfs)

Chinua Achebe, “The Novelist as Teacher,” from Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*.

Chinua Achebe, “The African Writer and the English Language” from Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*.

Cathy Caruth, “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History,” from Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*

HONOR CODE

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University’s honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager’s Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: “On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.” The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed “[signed].”