

English 226: Non-Western World Literature

Spring Semester 2016

Instructor: Lowell Duckert

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Meeting Time: 10:00-11:15 am TR

Meeting Place: Woodburn Hall G4

Office: Colson Hall 131

Office Hours: 2:30-5:30 pm T and by appointment

Office Phone: (304) 293-9700



(Planting ideas in Manali, Himachal Pradesh, India)

This course introduces you to the diverse non-Western literary traditions of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and South America. As environmental issues like *global* warming and the *Great Pacific Garbage Patch* make clear, the concept of a “West” separated from the rest of the world is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. We will investigate ecological issues in works of fiction (mainly modern novels) that spread across national and bodily boundaries – contentious topics like pollution, the animal, resource extraction, con/pre/servation movements, and refugeeism – in order to take seriously the future of our precarious, and increasingly globalizing, world. We will ask how non-Western writers, by incorporating modes of environmental health and justice into their art, may mobilize worlds that are healthier and more *just* for humans and nonhumans both – desirable worlds that encompass as many directions as possible.

This course meets the GEC objectives for “Artistic Expression” and “Non-Western Culture.” If you are an English major, this class will help you achieve the first of the English B.A. Program Goals. After taking this class, you will be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts
 - a. by identifying genre conventions and analyzing their effects.
 - b. by identifying and analyzing effects of complexity or ambiguity.
 - c. by locating texts in social / economic / political / literary histories.
 - d. by connecting texts to other literary or cultural texts.

Required Books: (available from the WVU Bookstore; it is important that you purchase the exact edition specified)

Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (Mariner)

Zakes Mda, *The Whale Caller* (Picador)

Mayra Montero, *In the Palm of Darkness* (Harper)

Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt* (Vintage)

Nnnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon* (Saga)

Indra Sinha, *Animal’s People* (Simon and Schuster)

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* (Coffee House)

Requirements:

1. *The basics:* attend class; finish assigned readings on time; participate in discussions. I expect you to be prepared for every meeting – meaning that you need to pose thoughtful questions and ideas to the group. (This is not a straightforward lecture course!) Difficult terrain lies ahead, but the challenge, I assure you, will be mutual. I want us to grapple with the texts, engage in spirited conversation, and pose more questions than answers.
2. *Quizzes*, one per book and given at random, will consist of 2-3 short-answer questions posed at the beginning of class. While the quizzes will be open-book, they will be impossible to answer sufficiently without having read the material in advance. Your answers will spur that day’s discussion and (I hope) serve as valuable studying guides for your exams.
3. *Complete* the midterm and the final exam (both will be passage analysis).

Grading:

Participation and attendance in class	15%
Quizzes (7 total)	30%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	30%

Attendance Policy and Code of Courtesy:

I define “present” as arriving on time with your cellphone silenced; bringing the appropriate book to class; giving me and your peers your full attention; and remaining in the room until the class ends. Laptops are allowed only for note-taking purposes. I will allow **three** absences: after that, your grade drops a letter for each additional absence (for example: an A becomes a B). At six absences, you fail the course. Missed quizzes cannot be made up; I will, however, drop your lowest quiz grade to accommodate the occasional

absence. The midterm, but not the final, can be taken later (with a valid reason). If you foresee a scheduling conflict, please notify me as soon as possible. Incompletes will be considered only if you apply to me before the end of the term; once I agree, we will negotiate the conditions under which the grade of "I" will be changed to a letter grade and sign a contract. Incomplete work will be submitted before the last day of class of the following semester (at the latest).

Academic Integrity:

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Catalog at <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification/#academicintegrity> text. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Inclusivity Statement:

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. **Any attempt to disrupt the nondiscriminatory environment of this class will not be tolerated.** If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Adverse Weather Commitment:

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use their best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Students who cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions must contact their instructors as soon as possible. Similarly, instructors who are unable to reach the class location will notify their students of any cancellation as soon as possible, through the many means at their disposal, to prevent students from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If students cannot get to class because of weather conditions, instructors will make allowance relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled tests or quizzes. Safety should be the main concern.

Contact:

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours (information above), and feel free to email/call me at any time. Never hesitate to ask a question, express a doubt, or request clarification. Make sure that your MIX email address is operational; I will frequently notify you about what to read for a given day (for one).

Schedule of Readings (subject to change):

Week One

T 1/12 Introductions
R 1/14 (Non-Western) World Literature and the Environment: *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (online)

Week Two

T 1/19 Sinha, *Animal's People*
R 1/21 Sinha

Week Three

T 1/26 Sinha
R 1/28 Sinha

Week Four

T 2/2 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
R 2/4 Ghosh

Week Five

T 2/9 Ghosh
R 2/11 Ghosh

Week Six

T 2/16 Montero, *In the Palm of Darkness*
R 2/18 Montero

Week Seven

T 2/23 Montero
R 2/25 **Midterm exam**

Week Eight

T 3/1 No class
R 3/3 Mda, *The Whale Caller*

Week Nine

T 3/8 Mda
R 3/10 Mda

Week Ten

T 3/15 Munif, *Cities of Salt*
R 3/17 Munif

Week Eleven

No class: Spring Recess

Week Twelve

T 3/29 Munif
R 3/31 Munif

Week Thirteen

T 4/5 Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*
R 4/7 Yamashita

Week Fourteen

T 4/12 Yamashita
R 4/14 Okorafor, *Lagoon*

Week Fifteen:

T 4/19 Okorafor
R 4/21 Okorafor

Week Sixteen:

T 4/26 Final review
R 4/28 Class conclusion

T 5/3 **Final exam** (7:00-9:00 pm)