

Non-Western World Literature

Professor Farina

Spring 2019, Tu-Th 1:00-2:15

“What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?”

So asks Haroun, the young protagonist of Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. As he awakens to adult realities, Haroun struggles to distinguish between liberating fictions and malevolent frauds. Now, with fake news and disinformation circulating globally through social media and other vectors, the question he poses is more vital than ever. Yet Rushdie’s novel was inspired by an ancient collection of stories, the *Alf layla wa-layla*, or *1,001 Nights*, itself an extended meditation on the politics and power of storytelling.

This class will explore conceptions of the storyteller’s place and purpose in literary traditions from around the world. We will begin with the *1,001 Nights* -- which continues to inspire authors world-wide -- and then will read works of fiction from the Middle East, Africa, South America, and Asia. We’ll consider how storytelling functions as a moral, political, intellectual, environmental, and aesthetic force in different cultural contexts.

If you are an English major, this class will help you achieve Goal 1 of the major: the ability to interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts. You will practice making interpretive arguments about literary works from around the world and supporting your opinions with textual and contextual evidence. This class also counts for the GEF “Global Studies and Diversity” requirement.

Required Texts:

One Thousand and One Nights, as retold by Hanan al-Shaykh (978-0-30794899-1)

Tales of a Severed Head, by Rachida Madani (978-0-30017628-5)

The Storyteller, by Mario Vargas Llosa (978-0-31242028-4)

After Dark, by Haruki Murakami (978-0-30727873-9)

The Seventh Day, by Yu Hua (978-0-80417205-9)

Refugee Tales, as told to Ali Smith, et al. (978-1-91097423-0)

*It is important that you have the specified version of the *One Thousand and One Nights*; other versions will contain different material.

Required Coursework:

- * Participation in class discussion (15 pts)
- * Short assignments (5 pts total)
- * 5 quizzes (5 pts each, 25 total)
- * Midterm exam (25 pts)
- * Final exam (30 pts)

Participation: You will receive one point for every day you contribute to class discussion or actively participate in small group discussion.

Short Assignments: Will usually be things to be completed out of class and will be worth a few points each. There will probably be 3-4 of these.

Quizzes: will consist of two interpretive short-answer questions; they will be open-book, but you will have a hard time answering the questions if you haven't done the assigned reading. If you have an electronic copy of the reading, I may ask to see your computer or phone during the quiz. Anyone found looking up answers online will receive a 0 on the quiz and will not be allowed to use devices for future quizzes.

Exams: The midterm will be passage analysis; the final will combine passage analysis and essay questions.

Course Policies:

Attendance: This is a participatory class. You may miss two classes without penalty. Missing more will diminish your grade by one point per missed day. If you miss six classes, you will receive an F for the course. Lateness is rude and disrupts discussion and small group work. If you are more than 10 minutes late, your lateness will count as half of an absence (so, two lateness = one absence). In general, I do not care why you are absent or late; the only "notes" I need to see are for University-sponsored activities (e.g. class field trips, sports teams, etc.).

Late Coursework: There are no make-up opportunities for missed quizzes. I will, however, allow you to drop your lowest quiz grade from your total grade for the quizzes. A missed midterm exam may be taken later, provided you have a valid reason for missing the scheduled date. Missed final exams may not be taken later. Exams missed and not made up in timely fashion will result in failure of the class.

Access: 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: <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>

Plagiarism: Any language copied from another source and not acknowledged as such is plagiarism. This includes copying from online sites, encyclopedias, scholarly writings, other student's papers, and even your own work for another class. Note that WVU regards these acts as plagiarism *whether they are intentionally meant to deceive or not*. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me. Plagiarized work in this course may result in an "Unforgivable F" for the course.

Conduct: I expect all members of the class to be respectful of each other and me, regardless of religious, social, or political differences. I will not condone discriminatory remarks regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, health, economic status, etc. Disruptive behavior may impact your class participation grade and, if egregious enough,

result in your expulsion from the class. Be mindful that the best way to participate in class is to *both talk and listen* to what others have to say. I don't expect class members to agree, but I do expect that you will acknowledge other points of view.

Support: If you are under stress, having a difficult time balancing your responsibilities, or dealing with distressing events, I would encourage you to make use of the Carruth Center on the Evansdale Campus: <https://carruth.wvu.edu> . You can talk to a counselor or get referrals to care-providers there. If you experience discrimination, harassment, threats, or violence, the Carruth Center will put you in touch with the appropriate resources (you will have a choice as to whether or not you want to officially file a claim).

Announcements: If there are changes to our schedule or assignments, I will email the class as well as announce them in class.

Contact Info: My drop-in office hours are Tuesday 3:00-4:30, in my office: 335 Colson Hall (3rd floor). I am also readily available for meeting with you at other times; just drop me an email to make an appointment. You can reach me at Lara.Farina@mail.wvu.edu.

Schedule:

Readings marked "(PDF)" will be available on ecampus

1/8: Introduction: Okri, "All We Do"

1/10: Telling stories: listen to Radiolab, "War of the Worlds"
<https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/war-worlds>

1/15: *One Thousand and One Nights*, 1-43

1/17: *One Thousand and One Nights*, 44-100

1/22: *One Thousand and One Nights*, 101-196

1/24: *One Thousand and One Nights*, 197-228, 284-288; Hariharan (PDF)

1/29: *Tales of a Severed Head*, pp. 3-67

1/31: *Tales of a Severed Head*, pp. 69-105

2/5: *Tales of a Severed Head*, pp. 107-151

2/7: *The Storyteller*, pp. 3-69

2/12: *The Storyteller*, pp. 70-145

2/14: *The Storyteller*, pp. 146-188; excerpts from "The Metamorphosis" (PDF)

2/19: *The Storyteller*, pp. 189-246

2/21: No class

2/26: **Midterm Exam**

2/28: Rushdie, "Heraclitus" (PDF); *Refugee Tales*

3/5: *Refugee Tales*

3/7: *Refugee Tales*

Spring Break

3/19: No class; watch *After Life* (on reserve at library)

3/21: *After Life* discussion & assignment due

3/26: *After Dark*, pp.

3/28: *After Dark*, pp.

4/2: *After Dark*, pp.

4/4: *The Seventh Day*, pp. 3-56

4/9: *The Seventh Day*, pp. 57-130

4/11: *The Seventh Day*, pp. 131-170

4/16: *The Seventh Day*, pp. 171-213

4/18: Okri, from *Stars of the New Curfew* (PDF)

4/23: Adiche, from *The Thing Around Your Neck* (PDF)

4/25: Review