COLI 110-03 WORLD LITERATURE 1

A Literature of Occasions

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COURSE DESCRIPTION-RATIONALE

This course represents an appraisal of world literature that is first interested in the mode of existence at stake in *the world* named in "world literature" itself. Following the expansive definition of Eric Hayot, literary worlds may well be understood as technically achieved, "self-enclosing, formal and expressive unities" of works. The idea of a communication of a world with literary form introduces a precarity to the character of the worlds, making them volatile constructions hinging on an exigent artistic consistency and experimentation. In the works of this course, the unities at stake are in a special way a function of textual and individual relationality. Perhaps, a pragmatic test of an expression of worldliness in literature would be to see whether and how a work or the experience at stake in it opens up an affective relation to what is barely conceivable, either putting a particular history—formal, cognitive, individual, collective—of habituation into crisis, or taking this habituation on its own terms and actually giving it the power to dissolve itself. This dissolution is perspectival as well. Thus defined, world literature is not far removed from a question—only seemingly whimsical—Anne Carson asks: "what if you get stranded in the town where pears and winter are variants for one another? Can you eat winter? No." Worlds are established, but also risk collapsing or getting thoroughly denaturalized with encounters, and the works that will concern this course will be those in which this sensitivity to occasions, along with a labor of necessity to redeem them can be observed. Whether their problems are about taking a position (Henry James) correlated with a certain notion of "seeing" (Gertrude Stein), depatriation (Henri Michaux), or happening upon matters of wonder like sea shells (Paul Valéry), many of the texts here seem to have a fascination with what confronts thought with its beginnings in circumstantial, disjunctive affect and also what drives it to take its own occasions as a matter of interest.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Throughout this course the students will be familiarizing themselves with the techniques and desiderata of literary reading—historical research, close textual analysis, an awareness of literary tropes and styles of narrative—that will help them make better sense of the selected texts. At the same time these same techniques and desiderata will facilitate an exercise that will allow them to develop skills related to writing and research that will certainly be of use to them later in their paths.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Our learning outcomes for composition as specified by the university guidelines are the following:

Students in C courses will

1. Demonstrate understanding of course content through formal academic writing;
2. Construct effective prose that demonstrates critical thinking and advances sound conclusions, appropriate to the course and discipline; and
3. Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve their writing in both form and content.

REQUIRED READINGS

The reading materials for the course can be obtained at the university bookstore. Some of the readings will be found in blackboard under the Course Reserves section.

Some of the books to be found in the bookstore:

Plainwater by Anne Carson

Collected Stories by Lydia Davis

At the Mountains of Madness: The Definitive Edition (Modern Library Classics) by H. P. Lovecraft with an Introduction by China Miéville (Please note that this edition is the only accepted version for this class.)

The Man without Qualities Vol. I by Robert Musil


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course fulfills the General Education Composition (C) requirement which stipulates that the students produce a minimum of 20 pages of expository writing undertaken in the framework of this course.

Overall, these writings will be in two different forms: Response papers and essays.

Response papers—as the name suggests—are to be responses to our reading materials. Their main functions are encouraging the practice of a dialogue with the questions that animate the texts and lending a more habitual quality to the act of writing through their frequency. Overall there will be 5 response papers, preferably each about 1 page long and single-spaced. The dates they are due are specified in the schedule below.

The two essays are to be more extensive assignments that will ask the students to undertake a type of research that is well determined in its limits, and use the guidelines for academic writing in pursuing it.
MLA format for citation is strongly preferred. For details about the MLA format please visit:

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

For the focus of their essays the students will be free to decide upon a personally more congenial reading from among the readings they have encountered until the due date for the assignment, while not having to introduce new material. However if they wish to introduce new material they should first discuss their proposal with me at least two weeks in advance of the submission date. It seems to me, this arrangement leaves enough liberty to make the thought of the essays exciting, without allowing enough room for a major indecision.

The essays are to be each 5-7 pages long, and double-spaced. For the purpose of determining the possibilities of improvement, the first essays will be subject to revision and evaluated twice, once before and once after the revision, the average informing the final grade. For further information on grading please consult below.

Academic Honesty

PLAGIARISM is defined by the university student handbook as "presenting another person's work as one's own," and it is a severe violation of academic honesty. This comes down to the absolute necessity of showing proper acknowledgment for other people's work in your research, ideally reciprocated when it is a question of your own work. For this course, the MLA citation format is the preferred tool with which this necessity of acknowledgment is to be discharged. If a paper is found out to be plagiarised, the consequences for the liable student will be an F for the assignment in question and a report in the university records.

Attendance-Participation

Attendance is of primary importance if the students wish to do well in this course, and it will inform the grades. This is mainly because there is not a less laborious and more effective way of training in composition than constantly attending a composition class which allows them to exercise their developing skills on a regular basis.

Students are allowed 2 days of unexcused absence in the whole semester. Every day they miss after that will cause their final grades to be lowered by half a letter (A to A-). If there is a situation that really dictates that they do not come to the session, they should e-mail me or explain it in the office hours.

Because my preferred in-class procedure will be facilitating discussions rather than a unilateral lecture mode, students are required to come to every session of the class having done all the readings necessary for that day, prepared to make an active input. Most often, questions and interesting quotations from the text that they bring to the class from their readings will go a long way in contributing to a lively and participatory class session.
## GRADING

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## Tentative Schedule

### Week 1

- **September 2**  Introduction to Class
- **September 4**  Henry James – “Figure in the Carpet”

### Week 2

- **September 9**  H.P. Lovecraft – *At the Mountains of Madness*
- **September 11**  H.P. Lovecraft – *At the Mountains of Madness*  
  -- Response paper 1
**Week 3**

September 16  
Samuel Beckett – The Radio plays *Embers* and *All that Fall*

September 18  
Samuel Beckett – "The Lost Ones"; "Fizzle 1"

**Week 4**

September 23  

September 25  
No classes (Rosh Hashanah)

**Week 5**

September 30  
Gertrude Stein- "Composition as Explanation" and "What are Masterpieces and Why are There So Few of Them?"

October 2  
Screening: *Midnight in Paris*

**Week 6**

October 7  
Paul Valéry – "Man and the Sea Shell" (From *Paul Valéry: An Anthology*, ed. James Lawler)

October 9  
Paul Valéry – Selections from "Eupalinos, or the Architect", trans. W. M. Stewart --- **Response paper 3**

**Week 7**

October 14  
October 16  Jacob Von Uexküll – *A Foray*....

**Week 8**

October 21  Robert Musil – Selections from *The Man Without Qualities*

October 23  Robert Musil--- **First Essays Due.**

**Week 9**


October 30  Henri Michaux – Selections from *Emergences-Resurgences*

**Week 10**

November 4  Anne Carson – *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry*

November 6  Anne Carson – *Plainwater*

**Week 11**

November 11  Jorge Luis Borges – "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"; "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins"... **Response paper 4**

November 13  Marcel Mauss – "Techniques of the Body"

**Week 12**

November 18  Selections from Lydia Davis' *Collected Stories.*
November 20  Lydia Davis Continued…

Week 13

November 25  Juan José Saer – The Witness

November 27  No classes (Thanksgiving)

Week 14

December 2  Juan José Saer – The Witness---Response paper 5


Week 15

December 9  Selected Stories from J.G. Ballard

December 11  Selected Stories from J. G. Ballard

Week 16

December 14 Finals week

December 16

The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus and the schedule of readings during the semester.