

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS
University of Virginia, Academic Sponsor

Voyage: Spring 2016
Discipline: English
ENMC 3559-101: Women's World Literature
Division: Upper
Faculty Name: Jennifer Green-Lewis
Credit Hours: 3; Contact Hours: 38

Pre-requisites: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will draw on a diverse and rich array of twenty and twenty-first century fiction by women around the world. We will explore and compare their representations of love, sexuality, identity, and place, and as we do, we will examine the ways in which those representations are shaped by the pressures and conventions of culture and gender. Among the first questions we will ask: How meaningful a category is women's fiction in a post-colonial age? What is lost, and what gained, by such a category? To what extent are our responses to that question conditioned by our own cultural biases? Following our exchange of theories, we will move rapidly to practical engagement, undertaking close study of literary works and equally close study of cultural and geographical realities onshore. Specific pointers given in class for fieldwork will require that we listen, ask questions, take notes, and bring back our observations to further our ongoing onboard discussion about women's lives and literature.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- *To read challenging and subtle works by and about women from those regions of the world that we'll be visiting on our voyage
- *To write carefully and attentively about our readings, especially in light of our on-land observations
- *To think comparatively about the relationship between gender and culture, wherever possible drawing on port experience

NB: Occasionally, pointers may be given as guides for note-taking when in port; if so, these notes should accompany you to the following class. Be prepared to read aloud from them in class.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Yiyun Li
TITLE: A Thousand Years of Good Prayers
PUBLISHER: Random House
ISBN #: 978-0-8129-7333-4

DATE/EDITION: 2006

AUTHOR: Nadine Gordimer
TITLE: Life Times
PUBLISHER: Penguin
ISBN #: 978-0-14-311983-8
DATE/EDITION: 2011

AUTHOR: Eileen Chang
TITLE: Love in a Fallen City
PUBLISHER: New York Review of Books
ISBN #: 978-1-59017-178-3
DATE/EDITION: 2007

AUTHOR: (Ed.) Kenzaburo Oe
TITLE: The Crazy Iris, and Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath
PUBLISHER: Grove Press Books
ISBN #: 978-0-8021-5184-1
DATE/EDITION: 1985

AUTHOR: Arundhati Roy
TITLE: The God of Small Things
PUBLISHER: Random House
ISBN #: 0812979656
DATE/EDITION: 2008

AUTHOR: Ama Ata Aidoo
TITLE: No Sweetness Here, and other stories
PUBLISHER: The Feminist Press at CUNY
ISBN #: ISBN-10: 1558611193
DATE/EDITION: 1995

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

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Depart Ensenada- January 5

A1- January 7: Introduction: Is there such a thing as Women's Writing?

<http://harpers.org/archive/1998/06/scent-of-a-womans-ink/>

Discussion of article, "Scent of a Woman's Ink," by Francine Prose

A2-January 9: Yiyun Li, *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*: "Immortality"; "Love in the Marketplace."

A3- January 11: *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*: "The Arrangement"; "Death is Not a Bad Joke if Told the Right Way."

1-2 page papers due (diagnostic)

Honolulu: January 12

A4-January 14: *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*: "Persimmons"; "A Thousand Years of Good Prayers."

A5-January 17: *The Crazy Iris, and other stories of the Atomic Aftermath*. Introduction: "Toward the Unknowable Future." Tamiki Hara, "Summer Flower"; "The Land of Heart's Desire."

*Paper topics assigned

No class: January 19

A6- January 20: *The Crazy Iris*: Kyoko Hyashi, "The Empty Can"; Hiroko Takenishi, "The Rite."

Bring draft of paper to class

Short writing workshop on a few key issues

A7-January 22:

The Crazy Iris: Yoko Ota, "Fireflies"; Ineko Sata, "The Colorless Paintings."

5-page paper #1 due in

Yokohama: January 24-25

In-Transit: January 26

Kobe: January 27-28

A8- January 29

Love in a Fallen City: Eileen Chang, "Love in a Fallen City."

Shanghai: January 31, February 01

In-Transit: February 2-3

Hong Kong: 4-5

A9- February 6: *Love in A Fallen City*: Eileen Chang, "Aloeswood Incense."

Discussion of Chang in light of Shanghai and Hong Kong

Ho Chi Minh: February 8-12

A10- February 13: Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

No class: February 15

A11-February 16: *The God of Small Things*

Rangoon: February 18-22

A12-February 23: *The God of Small Things*

A13- February 25: *The God of Small Things*

Cochin: February 27-March 3

February 27: Field Lab in Cochin

A14-March 4: Discuss field lab experience in light of reading Roy;
in-class workshop on papers

No class: March 6

A15-March 7:

Nadine Gordimer, *Life Times*: “Something Out There”

*field lab project due in

Port Louis: March 9

A16- March 10: *Life Times*: “Not for Publication”; “The Smell of Death and Flowers.”

A17-March 21: *Life Times*: “Six Feet of the Country”; “Which New Era Would That Be?”

Cape Town: March 15-20

A18- March 21: Ama Ata Aidoo, *No Sweetness Here, and other stories*

A19-March 23: *No Sweetness Here, and other stories*

A20-March 25: *No Sweetness Here, and other stories*

5-page paper #2 due in

Takoradi: March 27-28

Tema: March 29-31

A21- April 1: Laila Lalami, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (stories)

A22-April 3: *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*

A23: April 5: *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*;
closing discussion

Casablanca: April 7-11

Study Day: April 12

A24: April 13: Final Exams

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 will be organized around our reading of Anundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*, which is set in the region of Kerala—our destination in India. We will visit at a number of sites of worship in the port city in order to give some context for understanding the diverse and complex religious history of this part of the world. Later in the day, we will attend a traditional Kathkali dance performance.

Alternative field lab: Women writers in Akkra: A visit to the Mbaasam Foundation in Akkra, “a registered non-governmental organization that supports and promotes women’s writing in Ghana and across Africa.” <http://mbaasem.net>

Possible meeting with author Ama Atta Aidoo (who lives in Akkra) and/or with other Ghanaian women writers connected with the foundation.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

The field lab itself will call for written responses to specific questions that arise from our reading of Roy's novel, resulting in a paper that will also include secondary sources consisting of in-person research in Cochin and, if students choose, also sketches and photographs of the landscape.

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC

Grades will be broken down as follows:

*Field Lab response: 25%

*Two five-page papers discussing individual works in light of on-land experiences that will draw

on class and field notes. Guidelines for taking field notes will be given in advance. Field notes will develop into informal prose, and ultimately become formal pieces that respond to specific questions that have grown out of our class discussion. Final papers may include secondary sources where appropriate, and must answer the questions posed: (50%)

*In-class work: Excellent in-class work may result in a raise of grade

*Final exam: 25%

RESERVE BOOKS AND FILMS FOR THE LIBRARY

AUTHOR: Caroline Brettell and Carolyn Sargent

TITLE: Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective

PUBLISHER: Pearson

ISBN #: 0205247288

DATE/EDITION: 6th/2012

(useful critical and theoretical background)

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]."