

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: Spring 2013

Discipline: Literature

ENSP 3559: World Literature and Film

Division: Upper

Professor: Susan Fraiman

Prerequisites: none

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course traces out the stops on our voyage by means of stories, memoirs, and films. We will, of course, be interested in what these texts have to say about their particular cultures. How do they convey a sense of national identity and how do they see themselves in relation to the world as a whole? How do they reflect a heritage that includes the mixing of cultures, in some cases the occupation of their land by colonizing powers? How do they negotiate between global modernity and local traditions? How do they represent such intimate subjects as family, romance, and domesticity? How do these texts require you to rethink your understanding of places like Mexico, India, and South Africa? Are you surprised at how they represent (or ignore) the United States? Because this course juxtaposes two very different media, it also raises questions about genre. How is the language of film different from that of literature, and what difference does this make in telling a story? Is there anything that literary texts do better than cinematic ones—and vice versa? We are used to reading closely and thinking critically about literature, but may be less accustomed to doing so when it comes to movies. In this course, we will not only sit back and enjoy the show but also focus in on particular scenes, consider the effects of various techniques—the framing of shots, editing, lighting, etc. We will, in short, treat our films, along with our memoirs and stories, as complex objects of interpretation. **Note: In addition to regular class meetings, students are REQUIRED to attend 8 film screenings, which will take place in the early evening.**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To engage with the literature, cinema, and culture of the places we visit
- To think about issues of genre—literature and film in particular
- To develop the skills of close reading and attentive screening
- To develop the written expression of ideas and arguments

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Barbara Solomon, ed., *Other Voices, Other Vistas* (Signet: 2002)
- Maxine Hong Kingston, *Hawai'i One Summer* (U of Hawaii P: 1998)
- J. M. Coetzee, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (Penguin: 1998)
- Electronic course packet

READINGS/ITINERARY

1. Introduction

Mexico

2. Alfonso Cuarón, *Y Tu Mamá También*, film (screen Jan. 12)

Pacific Islands

3. Maxine Hong Kingston, *Hawai'i One Summer* (United States), pp. 3-7, 15-33
4. Kingston, pp. 35- 39, 47-57, 67-72
PAPER #1 DUE JANUARY 19 (3-4 pp.)

Japan

5. Akira Kurasawa, *Rashoman*, film (screen Jan. 22)
6. Yukio Mishima, "Act of Worship"*

China

7. Wong Kar-Wai, *In the Mood for Love*, film (screen Jan. 26)
8. Wang Anyi, "The Destination"*

Southeast Asia

9. Anh Hung Tran, *The Vertical Ray of the Sun*, film (Vietnam) (screen Feb. 10)
PAPER #2 DUE FEBRUARY 11, based on field lab (3-4 pp.)
10. Eric Khoo, *12 Storeys*, film (Singapore) (screen Feb. 18)
11. Aung San Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma* (Burma),
pp. vii-xii; chaps. 7, 11-14, 21, 22, 26, 30, 40, 51**

India

12. Jhumpa Lahiri, "Interpreter of Maladies"**
13. R. K. Narayan, "A Horse and Two Goats"*
14. Mira Nair, *Monsoon Wedding*, film (screen March 12)
15. Mahasweti Devi, "Dhowli"*
PAPER #3 DUE MARCH 16 (3-4 pp.)

Southern Africa

16. J. M. Coetzee, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (selections)
17. Coetzee
18. Gavin Hood, *Tsotsi*, film (screen March 23)

West Africa

19. Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, "Jumping Monkey Hill" (Nigeria)**
20. Ama Ata Aidoo, "A Gift from Somewhere" (Ghana)**

Morocco

21. Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*, pp. 57-64, 66-72, 175-87**
22. Michelle Medina, *All I Wanna Do*, film (screen April 13)
23. Final Exam

* In *Other Voices, Other Vistas*

** In electronic course packet

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (films)

- Alfonso Cuarón, *Y Tu Mamá También*
- Akira Kurasawa, *Rashoman*
- Wong Kar-Wai, *In the Mood for Love*
- Anh Hung Tran, *The Vertical Ray of the Sun*
- Eric Khoo, *12 Storeys*
- Mira Nair, *Monsoon Wedding*
- Gavin Hood, *Tsotsi*
- Michelle Medina, *All I Wanna Do* (or Nabil Ayouch, *Ali Zaoua*)

FIELD LAB ASSIGNMENT

This course's field lab will take place on February 3 in China. Attendance is mandatory.

The Field Lab associated with this class is a visit to the Shanghai Film Studios, located 15 kilometers away in Songjian. Accompanied by one or more Chinese film students from the Xiejin Film School of Shanghai Normal University, we will tour the sets that recreate Old Shanghai and have provided the setting for many a celebrated film, including Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*. To complete their field assignment, students take notes throughout the day and use these journal entries as the basis for a formal paper (3-4 pp.). Papers might consider such questions as: What are some of the features distinguishing popular Chinese cinema from movies produced by Hollywood? Where do the two traditions overlap and seem to borrow elements from one another? How does an awareness of how films are actually made—the experience of looking behind-the-scenes at elaborate studio sets and other machinery—alter your experience of watching a film? What does Chinese cinema have to say about how this country views its pre-Communist past? Consider the role of urban as opposed to rural settings in Chinese cinema—how are these settings used to dramatize ideas about class differences, relations to the West, and modernization? If possible, papers should bring your field experience into dialogue with class materials/discussions. Ideally, they should avoid stating the obvious—instead, elaborate on a specific observation that startled you, forced you to revise your preconceptions, and gave you a more complex, nuanced understanding of a specific local culture. The field assignment component of the course (based on your completed paper, not journal entries) will count for 20% of your final grade.

REQUIREMENTS

- Two papers (3-4 pp. each) based on readings (40%): due January 19 & March 16
- One paper (3-4 pp.) based on the field lab (20%): due February 11
- Participation: attendance at class & screenings, quizzes, contribution to discussion (20%)
- Final exam (20%)

POLICIES

Papers must be typed, double-spaced with 1" margins, and follow MLA citation guidelines. Late papers will be accepted one class after the due date, in which case they will be penalized by one third of a grade. You are allowed one unexcused class absence and one unexcused screening absence; after that, each absence will result in a lowering of your class participation grade.

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]."