

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS  
University of Virginia, Academic Sponsor

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

**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.”

Cape Town: March 15-20

**A17-March 13:** *Life Times*: “Six Feet of the Country”; “Which New Era Would That Be?”

**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.)  
Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup>

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 some 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.

### **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:** 6<sup>th</sup>/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]."