

MIDDLE EASTERN LITERATURE

Course Description

This course covers Middle Eastern literature in a world context, with a special emphasis on events and trends. Students will read historical texts and will discuss them from different critical stances. Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the works by responding to questions focusing on the economic, political, philosophical, technological, and socio-cultural developments. Students will develop potential interpretations of the causes, impacts, and meanings of historical events by responding to questions. In addition, they will discuss the historical, social, cultural, or biographical contexts of the works' production. This course is intended for students who already possess a bachelor's and, ideally, a master's degree, and who would like to develop interdisciplinary perspectives that integrate with their prior knowledge and experience.

About the Professor

Dr. Susan Smith Nash has developed numerous literature courses in the humanities, including world literature, American literature, and film. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma, and is widely published in the areas of literature, e-learning, and discourse. In addition, she has served as editor for journals focusing on literature and literary criticism.

Study Guide

Instructions for the Study Guide: Please use the questions to develop a deeper understanding of the text and to review the concepts. As you read, consider the questions. Keeping careful notes or a journal will help you prepare to write the essays at the end of each section as well as the final essay. Your required and supplemental readings can be found in the "Readings" file.

Instructions for Essays: Please write a 1,250 – 1,500 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Instructions for Final Essay: Please write a 5,000 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Required Texts

Bedford Anthology of World Literature, Books 1-6. Boston: Bedford-St. Martins, 2004.

UNIT/ WEEKS	WORK	INTRODUCTION
I		Ancient Literature
1-3		
Overview	Mesopotamia: Earliest Literatures	
Myth	<i>The Descent of Inanna</i>	<p>There are numerous well-known myths from ancient times which describe a heroine or hero's descent into the underworld. One of the more significant is the story of Inanna, the Sumerian Goddess, who hearing the call, made her own eventful journey and return.</p> <p>Inanna's story is also known as the Babylonian Ishtar's Descent, but whereas Ishtar's tale is told with only 145 lines, the original story from which it was copied, Inanna's Descent, is told with 415 lines. The difference is attributed to the patriarchy, as it steadily eroded the power and significance of the Goddess during the second millennium BC.</p> <p>Inanna's Descent into the Underworld is both a fascinating story and a prime archetype of spiritual initiation. Both are provided in the article entitled "Initiation -- Descent into Hades", which is included below. A fictional account of the basics of Inanna's myth is recounted in a television script, <i>Descent into Hades</i>, originally written for the series, <i>Star Trek: The Next Generation</i>, and based on its characters. http://www.halexandria.org/dward385.htm</p>
	Comparative Literature: Descent into the underworld	<p>Homer <i>The Odyssey</i></p> <p>Virgil <i>The Aeneid</i></p> <p>Where do we go when we die? What happens to the sun to make it sink in the west, and then reappear in the east? Does it go underground? If so, is that why the underworld is associate with darkness, death, passages, and fear. It is interesting that many ancient civilizations developed narratives that involved travel to the underworld. How did the Mesopotamian view differ from that of the ancient Greeks and Romans?</p>
	Comparative Literature: The nature of reality	<p>Plato "The Allegory of the Cave"</p> <p>In Plato's allegory, the nature of reality is probed, and a theory about how the mind makes meaning is proposed. It resonates with Plato's other writings, which in large part promote logic and reason over myth and superstition. One might argue that Inanna's descent is an allegory and functions as an extended metaphor and a part of a discourse of explanation. What is your impression?</p>
	Comparative Literature: Journeys	<p>Dante <i>Inferno</i></p> <p>The structure of Dante's inferno is in essence a medieval cosmology, which is to say that it is a study and an exposition of the order and structure of the world. Not only does it depict a spiritual design, it creates hierarchies that illustrate the relation of God to man, and moral / spiritual codes. How does the Mesopotamian underworld reflect a larger cosmology?</p>
Epic	<i>The Epic of Creation</i>	<p>Stories describing creation are prominent in many cultures of the world. In Mesopotamia, the surviving evidence from the third millennium to the end of the first millennium B.C. indicates that although many of the gods were associated with natural forces, no single myth addressed issues of initial creation. It was simply assumed that the gods existed before the world was formed. Unfortunately, very little survives of Sumerian literature from the third millennium</p>

B.C. Several fragmentary tablets contain references to a time before the pantheon of the gods, when only the Earth (Sumerian: ki) and Heavens (Sumerian: an) existed. All was dark, there existed neither sunlight nor moonlight; however, the earth was green and water was in the ground, although there was no vegetation. More is known from Sumerian poems that date to the beginning centuries of the second millennium B.C.
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/epic/hd_epic.htm

Literary Terms	Myth
Comparative Literature: Cultural values	Genesis Creation myth The Biblical creation story suggests that the earth and the cosmos were formed in stages. According to the account in Genesis, the process took 6 days, with one day of rest. In the account in Genesis, the divine hand created different realms, and essentially put them in motion where they found their own level of equilibrium. So, the divine force is essentially a precipitating, catalyzing activity. There are no attendant gods or helper gods to keep things going. How is this different than the Mesopotamian view?
Comparative Literature: Creation myths	Hesiod <i>Theogony</i> For the Greeks, it would be very difficult to envision a “hands off” God. After all, a more intrusive set of gods could hardly be imagined. Not only do the Greek gods become involved in the day-to-day workings of people and gods, they are also enmeshed with each other, with power struggles, intrigue, and obsessions. In the <i>Theogony</i> , we can read about the first generations of Greek gods, with battles between fathers and sons. How is the Mesopotamian vision the same or different?
Theme: Creation Myth	The primary difference between creation myths seems to be the difference between a monotheism and polytheism. Creating the world seems to be much simpler with a single god who creates everything, and puts everything in motion for it to survive on its own. In order to assure survival, the monotheistic creation has a series of codes or rules to live by; the consequences are administered by nature (or by human proxies) rather than directly by one of many deities. What are some of the thoughts that come to mind as you contemplate the differences?
Idea: Developing cultural identity	Creation myths establish the essential character of a people by positing their relationship to the world around them, and they relate how and why certain rites and practices emerge. If you lived in Mesopotamian Sumeria, what would your core rites and rituals consist of, knowing what you do about the nature of the divine and their relation to the human population?
Epic Poetry	<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i> The oldest substantial poem that has survived from antiquity, an Assyrian recension dating from the 7th century bc found on clay tablets in the ruins of the Royal Library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, Iraq. The subject of the epic is man’s conquest of his environment and his quest for the secret of immortality. The hero is Gilgamesh, the lord of Uruk, and his friend the beastman Enkidu. http://www.answers.com/topic/the-epic-of-gilgamesh-2
Literary Terms	cuneiform
Comparative Literature: Hero’s journey	Homer <i>The Odyssey</i> Virgil <i>The Aeneid</i> Both <i>The Odyssey</i> and <i>The Aeneid</i> revolve around the issue of journeys and discoveries – not of new territories, per se, but of new spiritual and psychological truths. While Greek and Roman narratives involve the individual and a deep-seated need to know what to do when encountering external threats, the Gilgamesh narrative involves friendship, overcoming isolation, and one’s confrontation with reality.
Comparative Literature:	<i>Beowulf</i> Both Gilgamesh and Beowulf involve encounters with beasts. In one case, the

	Psychological realities	beast is a threat to one's existence, and even the future of the community. In the other, the encounters lead to deep friendship. In both cases, one could look at the issue as an extended metaphor to explain / describe what happens when the individual faces challenges. What does each reveal about how people come to understand what they cannot explain without using a story or a metaphor?
	Idea: Friendship	Friendship implies volition, while loyalty implies duty. Much of the content of ancient literature involves loyalty – to one's family, to one's community, and to one's deities.
Poetry	<i>Egyptian Hymns</i>	
	Comparative Literature: Threats to survival	<i>Sumerian Epic of Creation</i> Both the Egyptian and Sumerian cultures were polytheistic. The gods represented the day-to-day issues that both threatened and insured survival. The duties of the human population included constant attention and supplication in order to keep a favorable relationship with the gods.
	Comparative Literature: Death and Resurrection	<i>Descent of Inanna</i> For Sumerians, death and resurrection was linked to agricultural cycles. The Egyptians had a similar paradigm; death and resurrection. For the Sumerians and the Egyptians, time was not so much linear as cyclical, and they shaped their idea of the cosmos on the cycles they relied upon to come back. Given the dramatic nature of the seasons, the flooding of the Nile, and the death and rebirth of crops, it is not surprising that human life would be considered akin to agricultural life. What are the different aspects of life that seem to follow a death and resurrection cycle?
	Comparative Literature: Defeating the Dragon	<i>Rig Veda</i> In the Egyptian Hymns, there are elements that emerge that disrupt the natural order of things. In the Rig Veda, similar disruptions occur; they often have to do with invasions / incroachments, which then require a defense. For the Rig Veda, it was necessary to defeat the serpent, thereby re-establishing order. What would happen if order could not be restored? One gets the idea that no one would dare try to experiment with chaos.
Lyric Poetry	<i>Love Poems</i>	
	Literary Terms	Allegory
	Comparative Literature: Erotic imagery	Song of Songs Sensuous imagery can be found in the Song of Songs as well as in the Egyptian love poems. Both can be surprisingly erotic. However, the eroticism is never simply eroticism for eroticism's sake. Instead, the erotic ties in quite nicely with the Egyptian worldview, which suggests that there must be a process by which resurrection / rebirth takes place. The erotic is a way to awaken the self, and to compel it to be reborn.
	Comparative Literature: Love	Courtly Love Lyrics Romantic love and obsession are characteristic of the Courtly Love Lyrics of medieval Europe. However, romantic love is the driving force that keeps chivalry alive. One might argue that romantic love is not really about a specific person, or the love between two people. Instead, it is about the underlying energy of striving for something, and desiring something – all the while dramatically enacting loyalty and self-sacrifice.
Overview	Ancient Hebrew Literature	The literature of the ancient Hebrews is collected in the sacred texts, which include history, legal codes, spiritual practice, poetry, allegorical stories, and prophecies.
Scripture	<i>Hebrew Scriptures</i>	
	Comparative	<i>Epic of Creation</i>

	Literature: Modes of creation	In Indra Slays the Dragon Vritra, creation is able to “stick” and hold its form only if the counterforce – that of chaos and destruction – is kept at bay. In the Hebrew scriptures, the rebellious (and presumably disruptive to the creative activity of the divine and single Godhead) angels are cast out so they can no longer interfere with divine plans. Satan is the lead rebellious angel, and he is cast out. In Indian scriptures, the dialectic involves a battle, and Indra effectively nullifies the chaotic, destructive power of the dragon.
	Comparative Literature: Role of the sun	“Hymn to Aten” When the sun was created, so were day and night. Thus, the Hebrew scriptures recognize the sun as a central and important part of the creation process. The sun is not the same as the God of the Hebrews, however. The sun is not a god, although it was created by God, and thus a part of universe. In contrast, Egyptians did have a sun god, which had very clear roles.
Poetry	<i>The Song of Songs</i>	The Song of Songs (Hebrew, מִירֵשֶׁה רִישׁ, Shir ha-Shirim), is a book of the Hebrew Bible—one of the five megillot (scrolls)—found in the last section of the Tanakh, known as the Ketuvim (or “writings”). It is also known as the Song of Solomon, Solomon’s Song of Songs, or as Canticles, the latter from the shortened and anglicized Vulgate title Canticum Canticorum (Latin, “Song of Songs”). It is known as Āisma in the Septuagint, which is short for Āisma āismatōn (Greek, ἄσμα ἄσματων, “Song of Songs”).
	Comparative Literature: Creation	<i>Book of Songs</i> The Chinese collection of poems has a great deal to do with nature and how human being interact with it. Many are lyrical and suggest intimacy. The approach to nature is different than in the Song of Songs in the sense that in the Hebrew text, the songs are allegorical and they suggest that the relationship to one’s lover parallels the relationship to one’s God. In contrast, the underlying religious constructs are different in the Chinese tradition and Taoism / Buddhism traditions suggest that nature illustrates a state of mind. Is there any convergence in the two approaches? Would reading the Song of Songs from a Buddhist perspective bring different insights?
	Comparative Literature	John Milton <i>Paradise Lost</i> Milton’s rendering of humans’ first sin suggests an alternative reading of the biblical creation story. For Milton, Satan’s role was to encourage individuals to question authority. In contrast, the Hebrew Song of Songs encourages one to avoid separation, but to search for unity by embracing authority, even in a sensual sense.
	Unit Essay	E1. Compare and contrast creation myths.
II Middle Period		
4-6		
Overview	Arabia and Persia	
Author	<i>Imru Al-Qays</i>	Ameru’ al-Qays, or Imru’u al Quais, Ibn Hujr Al-Kindi, Arabic (نَبْرَج بن سَيْوَلَة ذُرْمَلَة), was a celebrated pre-Islamic Arabian poet of the sixth century, circa 500-535 C.E. and the author of one of the Muallaqat, an anthology of Arabic literature attributed to seven famous poets. Reputedly, al-Qay’s poetic skill was praised by Muhammad and by such early Muslim leaders as Ali[1] but he was also the subject of condemnation because of the content of his work. Muhammad Non-Muslim scholars have argued that the Qur’an borrows from al-Qays’ poetry, a charge that Muslims strongly refute. However, he helped shape the literary style in which the Qur’an is written. Love poetry, too, continued to be written, especially by the Sufis and his thematic influence can be identified. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Imru%27_al-Qays
Lyric Poetry	<i>Mu’allaqah</i>	The Muallaqa of the Pre-Islamic Arab poet Imru al Qays is his most important poem. It is considered by many to be one of the greatest masterpieces of ancient

Arabic literature, or even of Arabic literature in general. It has been translated into English several times; the first translation was done by Sir William Jones in the 18th Century, and the most recent just a few years ago, by the Irish poet Desmond O'Grady. The Muallaqat are seven Pre-Islamic Arabic poems from around the 6th Century AD that are considered the best of their kind. The meaning of the name 'Al-Muallaqat' is 'the suspended', and this derives from the myth which developed about these poems - that, being the best poems of their time, they were written on parchments using golden ink, and hung on the walls of the Ka'ba² for all to see. However, that name first appeared only a long time after the Muallaqat had been written, and is not mentioned at all in sources from that period; it therefore seems to be a false myth, which comes from romanticisation of the Pre-Islamic period by later scholars.

Comparative Literature: Ode	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> The name, Mu'allaqat, means the "suspended odes," or the "hanging poems." The Mu'Allaqat is a collection of seven long poems (quasida), and they are pre-Islamic. They represent almost every type of ancient Arabian poetry, and were so valued that they hung them up for display. In many ways, they represent the values, codes, and spirit of the pre-Islamic culture. In certain ways, the Epic of Gilgamesh also represents cultural values. Can you see similarities? Differences?
Comparative Literature: Love	<i>Song of Solomon</i> The Song of Solomon contained sensual descriptions of love, but the structure and the intent are quite different than the love poems found in the Mu'allaqat. The Song of Solomon can be viewed as an extended allegory.
Comparative Literature: Memory	John Keats "Ode to a Nightingale" "Ode on a Grecian Urn" For Keats, the ode represented an opportunity to appropriate a form or a genre and to use to explore passionate uses of memory. The Mu'allaqat odes have a similar sense of longing and desire. How are they the same or different?
Idea :	Qasidah (ode): rhymed couplets that express reflection and sentiment
Author	Abu Al-Qasem Ferdowsi Abu al-Qasim (who used the pen name Firdawsi) was born around 920 CE near Tus in northeastern Iran into a family of small landowners. He died about 1020 or 1025.
Epic Poetry	The Tragedy of Sohrab and Rostam This epic tale is structured around the mythical and historical reign of 50 Persian Kings - Shahname literally means 'Book of Kings'. The tale can be roughly divided into three parts: the first part tells of the mythical creation of Persia and its earliest fabled past; the second part tells of the legendary Kings and the heroes Rostam and Sohrab; the third part blends historical fact with legend, telling of the semi-mythical adventures of actual historical Kings. The manuscripts were made for Kings, and the epic is about both Kings and kingship, though many of the Kings recorded in the epic were in reality unable to live up to these high principles.
Comparative Literature: Epic	Gilgamesh Both <i>Gilgamesh</i> and <i>Sohrab and Rostam</i> are epic poems that explore loss, disappointment, and the idea of friendship. However, there are significant differences. For one, the idea of father-son tensions and dynasty are in the forefront, while the other has more to do with the individual in the world and a kind of existential solitude. Which one resonates more with your own experience? Explain.
Comparative Literature Epic / Kings	Milton Paradise Lost is, in many ways, a defense of antinomian, anti-authoritarian forces. It was, for that reason, viewed as anti-monarchical, and pro-democratic. In contrast, the fact that Rostam kills Sohrab is more of a case of mistaken identity and is deeply tragic, for Rostam does not know he has killed his own son. There is a longing for order and for quiet, well-reasoned succession, and not the chaos and tragedy of war.
Comparative	Homer

Literature: Hero / Hubris	<i>The Iliad</i> Pride responsible for misfortune? Hubris leads to the core tragedies of <i>The Iliad</i> . In the Shahname, the shahs and their sons constitute the core of the drama, and the actions that happen due to human frailty and forgetfulness as much as pride.
Idea: Kingship and the Historical Epic	The earliest historical epics often centered around the way nations rise and fall, and how fathers and sons come in conflict, while people around them lust for their power and position. The behaviors of the kings are the behaviors of the people; it is very important for all to have examples of good leaders.
Author	Farid Ud-Din Attar Fariduddin Attar was one of the earliest Sufi poets of Persia, and there is no doubt that the work of Attar was the inspiration of Rumi and of many other spiritual souls and poets of Persia. He showed the way to the ultimate aim of life by making a sort of picture in a poetic form. Almost all the great teachers of the world, when they have pointed out the right way to seeking souls, have had to adopt a symbolical form of expression, such as a story or a legend which could give a key to the one who is ready to understand and at the same time interest the one who is not yet ready. Thus, both may rejoice, the one who sleeps, and the one who is already awakened. This method has been followed by the poets of Persia and India, especially the Hindustani poets. They have told their stories in a form which would be acceptable, not only to the seekers after truth, but to those in all the different stages of evolution. http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0818259.html
Mystical Poetry	The Conference of the Birds An allegorical poem about the search of the world's birds for the perfect king illustrates the mystical beliefs of Sufism. http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0818259.html
Comparative Literature:	<i>The Thousand and One Nights</i> Both <i>The Thousand and One Nights</i> and <i>The Conference of the Birds</i> reflect issues with ruling and authority. For Sheherezade, it is important for her to keep weaving intriguing stories in order to keep herself alive. <i>The Conference of the Birds</i> does not illustrate a single person's quest for life, but instead involves a quest for unity wherein the differences between people are erased / effaced.
Comparative Literature: allegory	Plato Allegory of the Cave Gaining an understanding of the nature of reality is a core concern of Plato and of the author of <i>The Conference of the Birds</i> . While Plato does not speak directly of mystical awakenings or unity in the Allegory of the Cave, he does allude to a way of perceiving and knowing the world that problematizes empiricism.
Comparative Literature:	Edmund Spenser <i>The Faerie Queene</i> Spencer's epic is an extended allegory, and it contains many subnarratives that are used to enact the beliefs and values of Renaissance England. Since much of his work was done in support of the Queen of England, issues of loyalty with the knights (the Redcrosse Knight, for example), have more weight than they might otherwise have.
Idea: Mystical literature	Mysticism in literature involves an extinction of the ego and the total identification of the believer with the divine. How does the example of Sufism in this unit illustrate the mystical process?
Author	Jalaloddin Rumi In the modern West, Jalaloddin Rumi has become the best known Persian poet. Some Persian speakers may consider him the greatest poet of their language, but not if they are asked to stress the verbal perfections of the verses rather than the meaning that the words convey. Rumi's success in the West has to do with the fact that his message transcends the limitation of language.
Mystical Poetry	Poems In 1244, the brilliant poet Rumi and the wandering dervish Shams of Tabriz met and immediately fell into a deep spiritual connection. The Glance taps a major, yet little explored theme in Rumi's poetry-the mystical experience that occurs in the meeting of the eyes of the lover and the beloved, parent and child, friend and soul mate.

	Comparative Literature: Poetry and metaphysical philosophy	John Donne Metaphysical Poetry John Donne effectively merged poetry and metaphysical philosophy. We are all connected, and the idea of individual self and identity is an ultimately destructive illusion. Rumi uses the idea of sight, eyes, and the gaze as the vector of transformation, whereas for Donne.
	Comparative Literature: Transcendence	Petrarch Canzonieri The structure of Petrarch's sonnets involves unusual juxtapositions and seeming paradoxes, which generate a sense of transcendence and unity.
Fiction	A Thousand and One Nights (The Arabian Nights)	One Thousand and One Nights (Arabic: <i>وَلَيْلَةُ قَلِيلٍ فَلَأُ بَاتِكَ</i> Kitāb 'alf layla wa-layla; Persian: <i>هزار و یک شب</i> Hezār-o yek šab) is a collection of Middle Eastern and South Asian stories and folk tales compiled in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age. It is often known in English as the Arabian Nights, from the first English language edition (1706), which rendered the title as The Arabian Nights' Entertainment.[1] The work as we have it was collected over many centuries by various authors, translators and scholars across the Middle East and North Africa. The tales themselves trace their roots back to ancient and medieval Arabic, Persian, Indian, Egyptian and Mesopotamian folklore and literature. In particular, many tales were originally folk stories from the Caliphate era, while others, especially the frame story, are most probably drawn from the Pahlavi Persian work <i>Hazār Afsān</i> (Persian: <i>هزار و یک شب</i> , lit. Thousand Tales) which in turn relied partly on Indian elements.[2] Though the oldest Arabic manuscript dates from the 14th century, scholarship generally dates the collection's genesis to around the 9th century. (Wikipedia)
	Comparative Literature: Stories Against a Backdrop of Death	Boccaccio <i>The Decameron</i> Sheherezade has to tell stories in order to save her life; in <i>The Decameron</i> , the travelers have to tell stories and they spend time to stay sequestered away from the plague.
	Comparative Literature: Sexuality	Chaucer <i>Canterbury Tales</i> Sexual tension underlies many of the stories in A Thousand and One Nights, while in Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i> , the stories themselves deal with sexual behavior and human contradictions.
	Comparative Literature: Gender Relations	Margarite de Navarre Heptameron A Thousand and One Nights is perhaps the ultimate war of the sexes. It involves the power relations between men and women; in particular in marriage and love.
	Idea : Story-telling / Narratives	Story-telling is more than simple narrative. It reflects the beliefs, values, and archetypes of a culture, and it explores the inner life and psychology of the teller and the audience.
	Unit Essay	E2. Discuss the various functions of love in medieval Middle Eastern literature.

III Early Modern Middle Eastern Literature

7-9

Author	Celebi	Evliya Çelebi (عبدلی چیلو) was a Turkish traveler who journeyed throughout the territories of the Ottoman Empire and the neighbouring lands over a period of forty years. (Wikipedia)
Life Writing	Book of Travels	Evliya Çelebi showed an undying interest in the characteristics of the countries in which he journeyed and in the people he met. This unflagging curiosity and extraordinary ability for observation is obvious in his work. One can read a long and detailed account of every city, town, mosque, medrese (theological school), inn, bath, castle and rampart he deemed important. In his works he also gives a vivid account of the wars he experienced and the characteristics of the pashas

and viziers he served.

Evliya Çelebi was a knowledgeable man with a passion for discovery. His famous Seyahatname (book of travels) cover all his journeys and the historical events of the 17th century Ottoman Empire with vivid insights into the life of the period. It is an invaluable source of historic and geographic knowledge.

Comparative Literature: Travel	Jonathan Swift <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> The purpose of Gulliver's Travels is satire. However, the purpose of Celebi's narrative is the exploration of difference, and an affirmation of one's own cultural identity.
Comparative Literature: Gender issues	Lady Mary Wortley Montagu <i>Journal</i> Women in different cultures have different cultural expectations. Sometimes the cultures are not so different, but they are perceived as such.
Theme	Travel leads to adjustment of perspectives.
Unit Essay	E3. How does Celebi face the possibility of encountering new, uncomfortable, and/or hostile cultures / people?

IV Modern Middle Eastern Literature

10-15

Author	Tawfiq Al-Hakim Tawfiq al-Hakim, the son of a wealthy Egyptian judge, was born in Alexandria in 1898. He studied law in Cairo, graduating in 1925, and then continued his studies in Paris. Following his return from France, he worked as a deputy prosecutor in Alexandria, combining his legal work with writing. In 1929, he transferred to the civil courts and worked in other cities, including Tanta, Damanshour and Dessouk. He also worked as a journalist in Akhbar al-Yom newspaper, and as a manager of the Egyptian National Library. Although he wrote novels, poems and essays, he is best remembered as a prolific playwright who played a key role in the development of Arabic drama. He died in 1987.
Drama	The Fate of a Cockroach The play depicts the feelings of a husband while watching the struggle of a cockroach to climb out of the bathtub. The husband, in fact, fears his wife as much as the cockroach fears the mop of the servant. http://www.bibalex.org/
Comparative Literature: Identity	Franz Kafka <i>The Metamorphosis</i> The qualities of a cockroach parallel the qualities of the dehumanized self in the twentieth century.
Comparative Literature: Satire	Jonathan Swift <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> <i>The Fate of a Cockroach</i> suggests that extended metaphors break down upon close examination; however, satire has the opposite effect, and it creates the space in which human nature is allowed to unveil itself.
Comparative Literature: The Absurd	Albert Camus "The Myth of Sisyphus" The nature of fruitless effort is explored in Camus's work; further, in "The Fate of a Cockroach" the effort is less futile than ultimately frightening. Thwarted humanity can be dangerous; oppression can inspire extreme determination. When the efforts are, though, futile, a sense of the absurd ensues.
Theme: Satire	Satire can bring human nature to the surface in ways that other modes cannot.
Author	Naguib Born in Cairo in 1911, Naguib Mahfouz began writing when he was seventeen. His

	Mahfouz	<p>first novel was published in 1939 and ten more were written before the Egyptian Revolution of July 1952, when he stopped writing for several years. One novel was republished in 1953, however, and the appearance of the Cairo Trilogy, <i>Bayn al Qasrayn</i>, <i>Qasr al Shawq</i>, <i>Sukkariya</i> (<i>Between-the-Palaces</i>, <i>Palace of Longing</i>, <i>Sugarhouse</i>) in 1957 made him famous throughout the Arab world as a depicter of traditional urban life. With <i>The Children of Gebelawi</i> (1959), he began writing again, in a new vein that frequently concealed political judgements under allegory and symbolism. Works of this second period include the novels, <i>The Thief and the Dogs</i> (1961), <i>Autumn Quail</i> (1962), <i>Small Talk on the Nile</i> (1966), and <i>Miramar</i> (1967), as well as several collections of short stories.</p> <p>http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1988/mahfouz-bio.html</p>
Fiction	Zaabalawi	<p>The protagonist is afflicted with a disease which doctors are unable to cure and sets out on a quest for Zaabalawi, a holy man reputed to possess healing powers. While in this search, the protagonist visits a variety of figures including a religious lawyer, a book seller, a government officer, a calligrapher, and a musician. Not able to find any definite answers as to the whereabouts of Zaabalawi, he begins to doubt his existence. Eventually, however, while in a drunken sleep in a tavern, he dreams that he is in a beautiful garden and experiences a state of harmony and contentment. He awakes to find that Zaabalawi was with him but has now disappeared again. Though upset at having missed him, the protagonist is encouraged by his dream and determined to continue his search for Zaabalawi.</p> <p>http://fajardo-acosta.com/worldlit/mahfouz/zaabalawi.htm</p>
	Comparative Literature: Quest	<p>Joseph Conrad <i>Heart of Darkness</i> Conrad creates a journey into the interior to find something but finding a psychological reality instead that is horrible, dark, and without hope of escape or positive transformation.</p>
	Comparative Literature: Existentialism	<p>Soren Kierkegaard "The Sickness unto Death" Modern life is diseased and modern man must seek a cure. Literature is in a quest to modern's society's illness. The search for a cure may involve a search for wisdom, and it may also require one to sleep and to remember one's dreams.</p>
	Comparative Literature: Spiritual Enlightenment	<p>Wu Ch'eng-en <i>Monkey</i> In setting out to recover or discover spiritual knowledge, it is important to pass a series of tests. In <i>Zaabalawi</i>, the desire to find knowledge or understanding makes one willing to undergo a series of tests. The state of mind is that of receptiveness.</p>
	Theme:	<p>Spiritual journeys figure prominently in modern literature, and they often create a contrast with ancient literary narratives that illustrate a path to enlightenment. Twentieth-century spiritual journeys are often descents into darkness without hope of re-emergence.</p>
	Idea:	<p>Existentialism is a philosophy that resonates with modern literature / life.</p>
Author	Alifa Rifaat	<p>Alifa Rifaat is an Egyptian author of short stories. Her works pose challenges to what it means to be a Muslim women living within a traditional Muslim society. Her writing has progressed from an early romanticism, often marred by sentimentality, to a more recent sparse realism. Without the benefit of a university education-the expression of a desire to continue her education and to study art was interpreted by her family as a sign that it was time to find her a suitable husband-she possesses no competence in a foreign language. Her reading has thus been restricted to Arab writers of fiction and such foreign fiction as has been translated into Arabic; in addition she is deeply read in works of religion, in particular the Qur'an and the Hadith.</p> <p>Most of her married life has been spent in various parts of provincial Egypt, which provide the settings for many of her stories; apart from this her only travels outside Cairo have been two recent visits to Mecca and Medina for the purpose of performing Pilgrimage. This background gives her writing freshness and actuality.</p>

Most of her stories express, implicitly, rather than explicitly, a revolt against many of the norms and attitudes, particularly those related to woman and her place in society. Her revolt remains within a religious framework. She does not look for change for Muslim women in the models of the Christian west.

She shows that men have the job of behaving towards women with kindness and generosity and that if a man's behavior falls short of what is expected of him, the woman's natural acceptance of her role is likely to change to contempt and rebellion. Her revolt is against certain man-made interpretations and accretions that have developed over the years and remain unquestioned by the majority of both men and women. <http://www.awsa.net/literature/alifarifaat.html>

Fiction

My World of the Unknown

Excerpt from a student essay: Through her dreams, secret wishes or subconscious the woman feels drawn to a small white house, surrounded by gardens with bushes of yellow flowers by a canal where swans and sail boats reside. In her reality she is moving to a new town with her husband and children and she finds a house, like she envisioned and despite warnings the house might be haunted by spirits they move into the house and her journey to another world begins. As the story develops she sees a snake and the snake talks to her and tells her stories of love and desire and she even relates making love with the snake. In the end a snake is killed by her husband and she must move from this house and leave her love behind and she still longs to go back to her lover.

This story is a symbolic tale of the yearning of women to find true and equal love in a life that is ruled by the dominance of a patriarchal society. The beauty, by which she describes the love she receives through the spirit of the snake, shows the longing of this woman to find some true passion in life, even if it is only in her mind. In; "My World of the Unknown", Alifa weaves a powerful, beautiful, inspiring tale that opens our eyes to the possibility of life beyond this planet. Alifa inspires us to overcome oppression; she blatantly tells men how easy it is to love a woman and how perfect we are, and what if the roles were reversed and women ruled the world? Would you expect women to treat men as equals after years of oppression? <http://www.blogster.com/julbos/alifa-rifaat-my-world-unknown>

Comparative Literature:
Women's worlds

Charlotte Perkins Gilman
"The Yellow Wallpaper"
Alifa Rifaat writes of a world that features totally different spaces for men and for women. Women's space and women's desire are linked; the isolation for women is nourishing for some, but for others it leads to madness.

Comparative Literature:
The Fantastic

Franz Kafka
The Metamorphosis
When Gregor Samsa starts to metamorphose, horror intrudes into the consciousness of those around him. When "My World of the Unknown," starts to have a feeling of horror, the situation starts to feel out of control.

Theme:

Transformation can often be positive, or it can be disintegrating.

Idea:

Women in a patriarchal society are challenged by change.

Unit Essay

E4. Discuss the lives of women as depicted in the works in this unit. How do the roles differ? What do they say about the relations between genders, and roles in families and communities?

V Finals

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Review, Annotated Bibliography, Research Paper

Final Essay

FE1. Discuss the role of women in the literature of the Middle East.
FE 2. Compare and contrast the themes of love found in Middle Eastern literature.
FE 3. Discuss the themes of travel and spiritual journeys in Middle Eastern literature.

Syllabus

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Discuss the major developments and texts found in the subject of the course.
2. Identify unique theoretical underpinnings and influential thinkers in the course topic.
3. Analyze the relationship between historical texts and the particular social, cultural, and biographical contexts of their production.
4. Research and critically evaluate historical, social, cultural, or biographical criticism relevant to the analysis of specific events.
5. Use secondary sources and close reading skills to produce a substantive critical essay relating a one or more specific historical texts to the economic, social, cultural, or biographical contexts of its production.
6. Demonstrate a balanced perspective and a deepened understanding of the cultures, times, people, and situations that produce these works.
7. Write coherent historical arguments that explore the relationships of various concepts and texts, and which provide a clear synthesis.

Course Goals:

1. To provide students with a broad perspective of approaches to world history and an understanding of the various ways in which they manifest themselves and to assess students' ability to express their perspectives through exams and essays.
2. To provide students with a deeper understanding of diverse historical and interdisciplinary traditions the course focus and to express this deepened understanding in written tests and a critical essay.
3. To provide an overview of historical analysis and interpretation methods and help students apply these skills in writing essay examinations and a critical essay.
4. To read widely and critically in a variety of historiographic and historical texts and to demonstrate the depth and breadth of this reading in essay examinations and a critical essay.
5. To do library research on a particular trend, event, concept, an individual theorist, or an issue in the area of history studies and to write a critical essay which incorporates this research.

Course Content:

1. Historical events and texts that have been designated as being produced within the category of the course topic.
2. Discussion of the theoretical, social, cultural and biographical contexts in which those works were produced.
3. Historical movements in various periods.
4. Discussion of the historical issues and questions related to theoretical, social, cultural, and biographical approaches to the study of the course topic.
5. Key ideas about how to evaluate and interpret historical events, texts, and approaches.
6. Criticism and reflection upon political and economic systems as reflected in literature.
7. Discussion of the relevance of course readings to the understanding of contemporary

- global issues.
8. Critical analysis and interpretation of history.
 9. Conducting scholarly research on and off-line.

Course Outline:

For the detailed course outline, please see the study guide.

Course Readings:

The course readings for this course will be available through the Online Library, which will provide students access to selected journal articles, book chapters, and reference materials.

Course Preparedness:

This course is a history course which requires analysis, research, and writing. It assumes the mastery of prerequisite college-level skills in spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and essay writing. It also assumes the ability to read and analyze literary texts. This course provides instruction in history and does not address remedial writing issues at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level. The California Department of Education "English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools" offers context for understanding the standard for writing at the college level. Students who do not meet the standards outlined in the "English-Language Arts Content Standards" will not pass this course.

In short, this course assumes that students already "write with a command of standard English conventions, write coherent and focused texts that convey a well-defined perspective and tightly reasoned argument, and use clear research questions and creative and critical research strategies" (California Standards, Grades Nine and Ten). This course focuses on texts and analysis and requires college-level writing skills that exceed those required at the secondary level.

Course Workload:

In accordance with accreditation standards, requires approximately two hours of outside work for every contact hour. For a 3-hour course, there are 48 contact hours, plus a minimum of 96 hours outside work. For a sixteen-week course, students can expect to devote a minimum of 6 hours of independent study per week in order to complete the coursework.

Grading Factors:

Discussion Board (20%)

The Discussion Board provides the learner a place to respond to questions on the topic and to exchange ideas, reactions and analyses of the texts. Discussion questions concentrate on ideas, themes, and characters in literary works. There will be one question per week. Discussion Board questions will be responded to by all learners in the course and will be evaluated by the instructor. The Discussion Board is not available for OCW courses.

Journal (20%)

Your journal consists of your responses to questions in the Study Guide. These questions

require you to reflect on the material and to write a one to two-paragraph response. At the end of the course, you will gather together all of your Study Guide responses and will turn them in as a final portfolio.

Essay (20%)

You will write an essay on one of the topics provided to you by your instructor in which you apply a critical paradigm from theorists or issues raised by the Study Guide questions. You should start your paper with a succinct thesis statement, describe the critical paradigm and the text(s) being analyzed. Be sure to cite critical passages to demonstrate support for your argument.

Length: 1,000—1,500 words. Essay topics will be assigned by the instructor and will reflect material covered in the Study Guide and the readings.

Exam (40%)

Students must complete the assignments, submit them, and take the proctored exam.

Definition of Grades:

Graduate Courses

- A** Outstanding Achievement
- B** Commendable Achievement
- C** Marginal Achievement
- D** Unsatisfactory *
- F** Failing *

* Students receiving this grade in a course that is required for his/her degree program must repeat the course.

- I Incomplete** A grade given at the discretion of the instructor when a student who has completed **at least two-thirds of the course class sessions** and is unable to complete the requirements of the course because of uncontrollable and unforeseen circumstances. The student must convey these circumstances (preferably in writing) to the instructor prior to the final day of the course. If an instructor decides that an "Incomplete" is warranted, the instructor must convey the conditions for removal of the "Incomplete" to the student in writing. A copy must also be placed on file with the Office of the Registrar until the "Incomplete" is removed or the time limit for removal has passed. An "Incomplete" is not assigned when the only way the student could make up the work would be to attend a major portion of the class when next offered.

An "I" that is not removed within the stipulated time becomes an "F." No grade points are assigned. The "F" is calculated in the grade point average.

- W Withdrawal** Signifies that a student has withdrawn from a course after beginning the third class session. **Students who wish to withdraw must notify their admissions advisor before the beginning of the sixth class session in the case of graduate courses, or before the seventh class session in the case**

of undergraduate courses. Instructors are not authorized to issue a "W" grade.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or work as one's own. Students must give credit for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge. If a student borrows ideas or information from another author, he/she must acknowledge the author in the body of the text and on the reference page. Students found plagiarizing are subject to the penalties outlined in the Policies and Procedures section of the Catalog, which may include a failing grade for the work in question or for the entire course. The following is one of many websites that provide helpful information concerning plagiarism for both students and faculty:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

Ethics:

Ethical behavior in the classroom is required of every student. The course will identify ethical policies and practices relevant to course topics.

Technology:

Students are expected to be competent in using current technology appropriate for this discipline. Such technology may include word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software. Use of the internet and e-mail may also be required.

Diversity:

Learning to work with and value diversity is essential in every class. Students are expected to exhibit an appreciation for multinational and gender diversity in the classroom.

Civility:

As a diverse community of learners, students must strive to work together in a setting of civility, tolerance, and respect for each other and for the instructor. Rules of classroom behavior (which apply to online as well as onsite courses) include but are not limited to the following:

- Conflicting opinions among members of a class are to be respected and responded to in a professional manner.
- Side conversations or other distracting behaviors are not to be engaged in during lectures, class discussions or presentations
- There are to be no offensive comments, language, or gestures

Students with Disabilities:

Students seeking special accommodations due to a disability must submit an application with supporting documentation, as explained under this subject heading in the General Catalog. Instructors are required to provide such accommodations if they receive written notification from the University.

Writing Across the Curriculum:

Students are expected to demonstrate writing skills in describing, analyzing and evaluating ideas and experiences. Written reports and research papers must follow specific standards regarding citations of an author's work within the text and references at the end of the paper. Students are encouraged to use the services of the University's Writing Center when preparing materials.

The following website provides information on APA, MLA, and other writing and citation styles that may be required for term papers.

Online Library:

Our Online Library supports academic rigor and student academic success by providing access to scholarly books and journals electronically.