

WORLD LITERATURE AFTER 1600

ENGL 2210 – 10
Haley Center 2124
Tue./Thu. 3:30–4:45 pm
Spring 2020
adamabraham.info

Dr. Adam Abraham
Office: Haley Center 8092
Hours: Tue./Thu. 10:45 am–12:00 pm
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“Good readers read the lines and better readers read the spaces.”
—John Barth



The word *literature* means that which is written down: anything from a tragedy by William Shakespeare to the 1995 Manhattan phone book. To narrow the field, this course will focus on literature as a communication technology, one that has evolved over the years and one that impacts our understanding of the world. We will journey from the oral tradition to print culture—the rise of books, newspapers, and magazines—and finally to the emergence of digital technologies.

We begin with *The Arabian Nights*, with stories drawn from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and its primal scene of tale telling: Sheherazade tells stories in order to save her life. We then move on to the fairy-tale tradition and the transformation of oral tales into print. Representatives of print culture include prose narratives and works

meant to persuade. In the final weeks, we will consider the rise of digital culture and recent debates on its effects.

How do words influence our ways of thinking? What is the relationship between a medium and its message? Do we shape our tools, or do they shape us? As much as possible, this course will be run as a seminar: students will read each assignment carefully and come to class prepared to discuss.

Student learning outcomes include reading and thinking critically, analyzing and valuing creative artistic endeavors.

REQUIRED READING:

- Adams, Douglas. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. 1979. New York: Del Ray, 2017.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. 1813. New York: Bantam, 2003.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1961. New York: Grove Press, 2004.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*. 1925. New York: Schocken Books, 1998.
- Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. 1726. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Please use recommended editions so that we are all on the same page (literally). New and/or used copies are available at the Auburn University Bookstore. All other readings will be made available online.

ASSESSMENT:

- I. Attendance: 10 points
- II. Preparation and participation: 10 points
- III. Unannounced quizzes: 10 points
- IV. Essay no. 1: 10 points
- V. Essay no. 2: 10 points
- VI. Poster presentation: 10 points
- VII. Poster evaluation: 10 points
- VIII. Final examination: 30 points

TOTAL = 100 points

EXPECTATIONS:

Attendance

Woody Allen once said that 80 percent of success is showing up. In this course, attendance will count for 10 percent of your final grade. But attendance means more than just showing up. You must be fully *present*: awake, alert, attentive, engaged. Each student is permitted up to three *unexcused* absences. It's three for free, no questions asked. Upon the fourth unexcused absence, you will earn zero points for attendance. If you miss a few more classes, then you are at risk of receiving a failing grade.

Preparation

One goal of this course is to get students to read and think critically. You should read each assignment in its entirety before the class session listed. Be an *active* reader: underline words, scribble in the margins, write down questions, and make note of passages that confused you. It is also helpful to write a quick summary after finishing a reading assignment: spend two or three minutes noting key words and ideas.

Participation

We learn by articulating ideas and refining those ideas in conversation with others. Try to be a lively participant in each class discussion. Raise points, ask questions. Listen carefully and respectfully to what others are saying. It is okay to disagree with one another: disagreement does not mean disrespect. If you are mournfully shy, then I recommend that you write out one comment or question in advance of each class discussion. Then you can read your prepared comment or question to the group.

Note-Taking

Because this is a seminar-style course, I do not expect elaborate note-taking. Naturally, you are encouraged to jot down any ideas that strike you. In order to focus fully on our in-class discussions, I ask that you do not use laptop computers during class. They have a tendency to be distracting to yourself and to those around you. Further, studies show that students who take notes *by hand with a pen or pencil* earn higher grades than those who take notes on a laptop.

Electronic Devices

Because paying attention is one of the goals of this course, I ask that all phones and electronic devices are turned off and placed out of sight. Students texting in class will be marked absent for the day. If there is a genuine life crisis, please pretend that it is 1977 and that you have to go outside to use a payphone *before* texting or making that urgent call.

Quizzes

In order to assess that you are reading the assigned books, there will be four unannounced quizzes over the semester. These will be rather easy if you have completed the assignments. I will drop the lowest grade. Because the element of surprise is essential, you will *not* be able make up these quizzes if you are absent or late.

Screenings

Whenever the syllabus says “SCREEN,” you are expected to watch that film or television show before the class date mentioned. You may access the video through purchase, rental, or streaming.

Essays

Deleuze says that we write “at the frontiers of our knowledge,” and college writing assignments are designed to push those frontiers, to expand our knowledge. I will ask each student to write two essays over the semester. Each essay must be submitted in *hard copy only* in person or to my departmental mailbox by 4:30 pm on the due date. Essays will be graded in two areas: content and expression. *Expression* refers to English grammar, spelling, punctuation, and so on. If this is a weakness for you, it is not too late to improve. Details for each assignment will be provided when the dates draw closer.

Late Work

You are a busy person; I understand. If you want to submit a late essay, send me an email one or two days before the deadline to request permission to submit late. *Do not tell me your reasons*. Simply ask for permission. I will reply by email and extend the deadline by one calendar week. If you do not seek permission or do so too late, your essay will be marked down by one point. An essay submitted more than one week after the original or extended deadline will be graded without the benefit of comments and corrections from the instructor. Please note that any work submitted after the final day of classes (Friday 24 April) will receive a score of zero.

Poster Presentations

In the natural sciences, the poster presentation is a standard mode. We will borrow this mode for your final assignment. Each student will choose one text from the course and create a physical poster (two feet by three feet) that represents the text in words and images. The student will then present his or her poster during a four-minute session by explaining its design and answering questions from fellow students. Obviously, this assignment draws on different skills: visual thinking and public speaking. It also aims to fulfill the goal of analyzing and valuing a creative artistic endeavor.

Learning Needs

You are welcome to come to my scheduled office hours to discuss anything related to the course. Other meeting times can also be arranged. If you require accommodation for a diagnosed disability, please notify me privately at the beginning of the semester.

Academic Integrity

It is the assumption that the work you present in this course will be your own. If you incorporate someone else’s words or ideas, you must cite that person, text, or source. If you do not know how to cite sources, read chapter 14 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or ask me for guidance. If you submit someone else’s work as your own, you may be in violation of the Student Academic Honesty Code.

SCHEDULE:

Reading assignments must be completed by the start of the class period mentioned. Please bring the relevant paperback book or pdf (hardcopy or electronic) to each class. Items marked with an infinity sign (∞) will be found on the website adamabraham.info.

I. THE ORAL TRADITIONJANUARY

Thu. 9 Prologue

- Tue. 14 • *The Arabian Nights*, part 1 ∞
 Thu. 16 • *The Arabian Nights*, part 2 ∞
 Tue. 21 • Folk and Fairy Tales, part 1 ∞
 Thu. 23 • Folk and Fairy Tales, part 2 ∞
 Tue. 28 • Folk and Fairy Tales, part 3 ∞
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II. PRINT CULTURE

Thu. 30 • *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 5–50

... **ESSAY NO. 1 DUE** Friday 31 January by 4:30 pm

FEBRUARY

- Tue. 4 • *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 51–138
 Thu. 6 • *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 139–179
 Tue. 11 • *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 180–277
 Thu. 13 • *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 1–49
 Tue. 18 • *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 49–167
 Thu. 20 • *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 167–220

[FEBRUARY cont'd]

- Tue. 25 • *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 220–334
 • SCREEN: *Bride and Prejudice* (UK, 2004) Gurinder Chadha
- Thu. 27 • *The Trial*, pp. 3–53

MARCH

- Tue. 3 • *The Trial*, pp. 54–180
- Thu. 5 • *The Trial*, pp. 181–231

... **ESSAY NO. 2 DUE** Friday 6 March by 4:30 pm

Tue. 10 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Thu. 12 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

- Tue. 17 • Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* ∞
- Thu. 19 • *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 1–62
- Tue. 24 • *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 63–180
- Thu. 26 • *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 181–239
 • SCREEN: *The Battle of Algiers* (Italy-Algeria, 1966) Gillo Pontecorvo

III. MOVING TOWARD DIGITAL

- Tue. 31 • Borges, part 1 ∞

APRIL

- Thu. 2 • Borges, part 2 ∞
- Tue. 7 • *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, pp. 1–150

[APRIL cont'd]

- Thu. 9 • *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, pp. 151–216
- Tue. 14 • Carr, *The Shallows*, chapters 1–3, 6–7 ∞
- Thu. 16 ••• **POSTER PRESENTATIONS:** Nos. 1–15
- Tue. 21 ••• **POSTER PRESENTATIONS:** Nos. 16–30
- Thu. 23 Review, Reflect, and *Black Mirror*
- SCREEN: *Black Mirror* (one episode to be determined)

••• **FINAL EXAMINATION**

Wednesday 29 April

4:00–6:00 pm



UNIVERSITY BOILERPLATE:

Academic Honesty

All portions of the Auburn University Student Academic Honesty code (Title XII) found in the *Student Policy eHandbook* at http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/student_policies/ will apply to this class. All academic honesty violations or alleged violations of the SGA Code of Laws will be reported to the Office of the Provost, which will then refer the case to the Academic Honesty Committee.

Accessibility Statement

Students who need accommodations are asked to electronically submit their approved accommodations through AU Access and to make an individual appointment with the instructor during the first week of classes – or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately. If a student has not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility, but need accommodations, the student should make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

Early Alert Grade

You will receive an Early Alert Grade one week prior to mid semester (31st class day). The Early Alert Grade represents your current performance on class work graded at that point in the semester. Check the grading scale for this course so that you are aware of what percentage of the total points is represented by your Early Alert Grade. If your Early Alert Grade is a "D", "F", or "FA" you will receive an email from the Retention Coordinator.

Early Alert Grades can be viewed by logging into AU Access and opening the *tiger i* tab. Select "Student Records" and open the "Midterm Grades" window from the dropdown box. If the grade seems inaccurate, please contact the instructor.

Emergency Contingency

If normal class and/or lab activities are disrupted due to illness, emergency, or crisis situation, the syllabus and other course plans and assignments may be modified to allow completion of the course. If this occurs, an addendum to your syllabus and/or course assignments will replace the original materials.

Withdrawal from the Course

No grade penalty will be assigned for dropping a course on or before midterm. A student who withdraws from a course prior to the 15th class day during Fall or Spring semester will receive no grade assignment; however, after the first 15 days, a "W" (Withdrawn Passing) grade will be recorded for the course. A course may be dropped with a "W" after midterm only under unusual conditions (e.g., serious illness of the student, serious illness or death of a member of the student's immediate family). When approval for dropping the course under such circumstances is granted by the student's dean, a "W" may be assigned only when the instructor indicates that the student is clearly passing the course. Otherwise, a grade of "WF" (Withdrawn Failing) will be assigned. The last day to withdraw with no grade penalty is 3 April.