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LIT 522.01: Seminar in Comparative Literature - Globalization

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"It has become a sign of living in the present to note the increasing globalization of the world—the transnationalism of the currents along which capital, goods, labor, persons, and information flow; the interconnectedness of diverse cultures; the networks and internets that, despite their inequitable distribution, have nonetheless become the icons of rapidly changing, intricately interlinked societies. Global consciousness, speaking everywhere with the inexcusable voice of the new, also appears to two traditional academic bodies of knowledge within its orbit: "adapt," it seems to say, "or die."

—V. Cooppan

"In the sixteenth century, Europe was like a bucking bronco. The attempt of some groups to establish a world-economy based on a particular division of labor, to create national states in the core areas as politico-economic guarantors of this system, and to get the workers to pay not only the profits but the costs of maintaining the system was not easy. It was to Europe's credit that it was done, since without the thrust of the sixteenth century the modern world would not have been born and, for all its cruelties, it is better that it was born than that it had not been. It is also to Europe’s credit that it was not easy, and particularly that it was not easy because the people who paid the short-run costs screamed lustily at the unfairness of it all. The peasants and workers in Poland and England and Brazil and Mexico were all rambunctious in their various ways. As R. H. Tawney says of the agrarian disturbances of sixteenth-century England: 'Such movements are a proof of blood and sinew and of a high and gallant spirit.... Happy the nation whose people has not forgotten how to rebel.' The mark of the modern world is the imagination of its profiteers and the counter-assertiveness of the oppressed. Exploitation and the refusal to accept exploitation as either inevitable or just constitute the continuing antinomy of the modern era, joined together in a dialectic which has far from reached its climax in the twentieth century.” Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. I, p 233.

“*One man’s imagined community is another man’s political prison.*” — Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*.
Course Description

The relationship between literary art and literary studies and the practices and discourses of globalization are the subject matter of this seminar. In the course we will trace the lineage of our contemporary economic, environmental, resource based and cultural world system—to describe globalization in the terms of Immanuel Wallerstein—to the colonial expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century. After exploring the roots of the present in what is (only apparently) the deep past, through the lens of the most important current work in Colonial and Globalization studies—Appadurai, Wallerstein, Moretti, Roy, Jameson, Tsing, et al.—we will also read in the diverse, complex and evolving body of culture that emerges out of and addresses the forces of globalization. English is now a global literary language (the language of global power) and we will read Anglophone authors—established and emergent—in order to gauge the impact of globalization on the lives of human beings. We will attend particularly to the narratives of diaspora, of migration, and of displacement frequently at the center of what is currently called “postcolonial fiction.” We will also attempt to read and critically parse the dreams of self-making and economic freedom that undergird narrative and “official” stories of globalization. Primary theoretical readings will, therefore, be accompanied by a range of cultural and theoretical sources. Key terms in the discourse will be sounded and discussed: cosmopolitanism; migration, displacement, detention, immigration, and return; the global literary marketplace; and the function of literary texts in an epoch characterized by the proliferation and dominance of digital media.

The Seminar:

The word seminar is derived from the Latin word seminarium, meaning "seed plot." A classic English Literature/Cultural Studies seminar functions to bring together small groups to focus on a particular subject in which all involved are asked to actively participate in the form of engaged dialogue. Primarily, then, the course is community, rather than individually driven. I will offer up opening remarks to begin class: these remarks may take the form of a small contextual lecture or they may involve the consideration of an outside source (video, filmic, textual). I might also call for a focus on sections of a text, or I might ask you what you want to focus on. We may, if people feel it productive, work in groups on individual texts or sections of texts. The bottom line is that the focus of the class is the responsibility of all concerned: this is not a lecture course. It is a seminar in the classical sense in which dialogue— inquiry and discussion between individuals—predicated on posing, probing and addressing questions in done in order to respond to the critical imperative and to illuminate what is unfamiliar. The seminar is a relatively informal space when compared with the lecture method of academic instruction. There is not a hierarchy but a fluidity of the most intense rigor. You will discover that there is not enough time in any class day to cover the material that is on the schedule. The seminar is meant to provide a venue for all participants to familiarize themselves more extensively with the methodology and focal areas of the field and also to allow for engagement with practical problems. The seminar is a place of discussion and debate. Assigned readings always exceed the capacity of the class to directly discuss, but they must all be read since they form the important context of an issue/text/idea/politic/aesthetic. All readings are inherently and necessarily selective. The focus of the class will be determined by the participants themselves and this may mean that not all the work assigned and read for the day will be directly discussed.
I deliberately ask you to work without a net in reading (that is to begin to engage with the text without “things to look out for” or “questions to answer”). This kind of work can be daunting and sometimes can feel as though you are working in or through the dark, but in my experience, such structures, if given in advance, foreclose creative and new responses to the text. The great Cultural Studies theorist Stuart Hall would tell you that doing theoretical work is often like “wrestling with angels,” and it is so. You will wrestle for a while by yourself and then we will undertake collective grappling with the text, with some guidance in the shape of lectures, context, discussion directions provided by one or more of us, often me. I will, then, be giving you lectures on the topic, but they will not be the only work of the class, they will not often be the first work we do in class, and they may be of differing length and form. This classroom discussion schemata is constructed to allow us to avoid the Socratic dialectic, which is inappropriate to the course material itself. That being said, please feel free to ask questions during my “lectures” about anything: concepts, history, terminology, and etc. Simply raise your hand and ask.

One note about General Discussion: it is hard, even in a smaller class, to accommodate all ideas, questions, comments, etc. Often participants will get stacked up in a discussion line. Listening, discussion, and, occasionally, polite interruption and re-interruption should be the order of the day.

The Seminar Paper
A seminar paper has two primary aspects. First, the seminar paper demonstrates the author’s development in the course itself, obvs. Moreover, a good seminar paper fits into the author’s scholarly trajectory. However closely tied to the specific subject matter of the course, the seminar paper ideally generates ideas, skills, research, and questions that contribute to the individual’s own larger scholarly project. These two aspects of the seminar paper may, at first glance, seem contradictory, but since the Literature seminar (be it in Education, Creative Writing, or Literature and Cultural Studies) constitutes the groundwork for all future academic work the dichotomy is somewhat of a false one. Seminar papers can and should motivate and structure thesis/novel/poetry/dramatic inquiry and labor and yet remain their own individual intellectual exercise.

The seminar paper is the ONLY assignment of the semester. It is an assignment that you will begin working on the first day of class.

Ways to conceptualize the use-value of seminar papers (and why seminar papers must be thought of as the work of an entire semester):
Y a text written with an eye toward future publication, complete with thorough knowledge of secondary criticism, footnotes, and bibliography;
Y a highly informed and detailed exploration of a single primary text or set of primary texts using the theories of the course or reading one of the texts of the course; an intensified close reading;
Y a work of literary production (drama, poetry, auto-theory, short story, novel chapter that acknowledges the materials, issues, questions of the course;
Y an application of the skills and knowledge the seminar is intended to transmit, referring to the texts, theories, or approaches covered during the semester;
Y a very specific type of paper with a pre-defined structure or purpose (e.g., an application of a particular theory to a particular text);
Y an opportunity to pursue individual inquiries as long as those inquire relate to the materials, issues, questions of the course.
Coursework:
Work will happen in three separate categories of coursework:
1. Participation 10%
2. Abstract Presentation 10%
3. Final Essay 80%
Total: ........................................100%

Final Research Essay with Abstract:
Members of the class will turn in an abstract in week 13 of the final essay before submitting the final version on April 30th. Bring 16 copies to class of a two page, double spaced abstract (precis, plan, blueprint, conceptual map) of your final paper to the community for presentation during class. You will also be asked to provide your fellow students with a brief (five to eight minute) verbal overview of your planned project and a copy of your abstract and sources. You will need to include a working annotated bibliography of the sources and texts you will be working with: sources should be no less than eight in number—these from outside the course texts. Abstracts without an annotated bibliography will not be accepted. You may, of course, meet with me at any time between to discuss the essay. The Final Draft of the essay is due on Monday, May 9th by 5:00 in my office. Please turn in a paper copy.

Attendance:
Attendance is required and will be recorded: two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course itself. Late arrivals and early departures will, if they occur frequently, count as absences. If you do arrive late you will be responsible for letting me know after class that you were present for the day. If any emergency or life contingency arises, let me know as soon as you can.

Disabilities Accommodation
Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations for coursework. To request accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible in the semester. I will work with you and with Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website or call 406.243.2243 (Voice/Text).

Names/Pronouns
If you have an alternative name or nickname that you would prefer to be called, please let me know. If you have an alternative pronoun that you would like me to use, please let me know. In both cases, I ask for your patience as I navigate my neurological eccentricities.

Scholastic Dishonesty:
Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty—in as much as they keep the individual student as well as the collective community from learning—will result in an automatic F and may entail a variety of other sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University. DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM. The Provost’s Office has asked all faculty at the University of Montana to attach the following statement on plagiarism to their syllabi: “All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is
subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student.conduct.php

THE PURCHASED PAPER

“The Internet and email are now the tools of choice for plagiarism. Advertisements in college papers and in the regular press as well as on the Internet announce the availability of student and professional services, sometimes couched in such euphemistic terms as ‘editorial assistance,’ but often blatantly offering commercially prepared essays, academic papers, and even theses for sale. The easy availability of such assistance from various web sites has increased student ‘cut and paste’ activity to the degree that it is now expected and regarded as a common practice” (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000).

“Lack of integrity and unethical behavior within the educational sector is inconsistent with one of the main purposes of education; that is to produce ‘good [critical] citizens, respectful of the law [and willing to challenge it when necessary], of human rights and fairness (it is also incompatible with any strategy that considers education as one of the principle means of fighting corruption)” (“Combating Academic Fraud: Towards a Culture of Integrity”)