Lit 150/150G: Third World Literature
Literature of Nations Reconfigured or created in the last 130 years

*Literature is not in the business of copyrighting certain themes for certain groups. And as for risk: the real risks of any artist are taken in the work, in pursuing the work to the limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what is possible to think. Books become good when they go to this edge and risk falling over it—when they endanger the artist by reason of what he has, or has not artistically dared.*

Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homeland*

**Course description**
In this course we will examine literary works devoted to the coming into being of nations, communities and individuals and their contributions to the sum of “what is possible to think.” We will also attend to “artistic daring” as it is expressed in new and hybrid literary forms, particularly what I call the fictional memoir, and the “coming of age” of a nation.

**Required Texts**
Vargas Llosa, Mario. *The Storyteller*
Garcia Marquez, Gabriel. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
Soyinka, Wole. *Ake: The Years of Childhood*
Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight’s Children*
Amichai, Yehuda, *Poems of Jerusalem & Love Poems*
Anchee Min. *Red Azalea*
Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*

Selected Readings on Blackboard

**Assignments**
- Participation: 15%
- 4 response papers, 2-3 pages in length: 60%
- Short Answer Final Exam: 25%

**Participation**—each class meeting I will ask students selected at random to answer any of the response topics. Grades will be calculated according to how well the student answers. To decrease the chances I’ll call on you, volunteer to contribute to class discussion and share your response papers with the class.

The **response paper: suggested** topics are given for each reading. They are only suggestions. If you wish to write on a different topic, you may, but notify me via email. No outside reading is required, but if you do outside research, please footnote and document your work. This includes ideas you may have gotten from online sources. Papers are due at the beginning of class each
week, and are meant to enrich class discussion. You may NOT write two response papers for the same book.

**Final Exam** will be taken *directly* from the response paper topics. If you are prepared for each class, you will be prepared for the final exam. Each answer will require 2-4 sentences.

**Academic Dishonesty:** I take plagiarism and academic dishonesty very seriously, and I am required to report cases to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, whose policy is to fail students for the course. Please read the university's Academic Integrity Code closely, and be sure to ask me if you have any questions. The code is available online at [http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm](http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm).

In writing papers, you must properly cite all sources (1) directly quoted, (2) paraphrased, or (3) consulted in any fashion. Sources include all printed material as well as the Internet. Proper citation means using a standard citation format: MLA, APA, or Chicago.

It is also considered plagiarism if you merely rework source material, placing an author's thoughts in other words without contributing your own ideas. For that reason, you must include some kind of source note whenever drawing on someone else's interpretation. A source note can be a sentence or more in your paper, or it can be a footnote. A source note should clarify the extent to which your interpretation is indebted to your source, explaining both (1) what you use and (2) where you depart or differ from the source.

It is also considered plagiarism to submit drafts, response papers, and other informal assignments without properly citing sources and acknowledging intellectual debts. Failure for the course is the typical sanction in such cases.

You must receive prior permission from me if you want to submit a paper or part of a paper that you have written for a previous class.

I expect all work that you do on homework and on in-class exams to be your own work. Consulting with and sharing answers with other students violates the Academic Integrity Code, so too does consulting outside resources such as notes, textbooks, and the Internet.

**Assessment Criteria (applicable to single assignments and final grades)**

**F**—Failure to complete assignment (no partial credit).
- Failure to grasp basic concepts.
- Absences in excess of 5.
- Plagiarism (including but not limited to, *passing off someone else's ideas as your own* or *paraphrasing without citing source* or *copying at least one sentence of a published or non-published source without quotation marks or without citing the source*.

**D**—Assignments completed, basic ideas grasped. Minimum requirements and standards have been met.

**C**—Assignments completed satisfactorily. Paper has a clear thesis, which is developed in and supported by the body of the paper. The writing and syntax is satisfactory; there is no excess of errors.

**B**—Assignment has a good, arguable thesis, which is supported by and developed in the body of the paper and concluded compellingly. All aspects of the assignment have been met well, coherently, and convincingly. Writing is free of grammatical, syntactical and mechanical errors.

**A**—In addition to meeting standards listed above, paper makes outstanding and original argument, recognizes and engages in an established dialogue, and is flawlessly written.

**Late Assignments** will not be accepted unless they have been okayed by me in advance, in which case there will be a 5 pt. deduction for every class meeting the paper is late. Assignments are due at the beginning of class. If a student is absent, he or she should turn in the assignment before class.
General Education: Third World Literature is one of the eight foundation courses in Curricular Area 3 (Global and Multicultural Perspectives) of the General Education program at American University. The goal of the Curricular Area 3 sequence is to enable students to
* Understand those habits of thought and feeling that distinguish cultures from one another
* Explore comparative and cross-cultural perspectives
* Develop analytical skills appropriate to the study of international and intercultural relations and
* Analyze systematically major issues such as war and peace, global order, distributive justice and the future character of the earth’s resources.

Courses like this one at the foundation level also introduce students to the fundamental concepts, issues and achievements within a particular discipline, and are designed to help students achieve a broad view of how different fields of knowledge enhance basic communication skills, critical thinking and intuitive, creative and aesthetic faculties. Foundation courses are the first step in a two-course sequence linked by common or complementary ideas and approaches, whether within the same discipline or across disciplines.


Daily Work Schedule

1. M 8/25 Introduction

2. Th 8/28 Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?”
http://www.nationalismproject.org/what/renan.htm

Storyteller: 1-69

Response topics: 1. What, according to Renan, is a nation? Are the Machiguenga a nation? 2. Choose a scene in which at least two peoples are distinguished by two different narratives to explain the world. 3. Why does Saul Zuratas believe it is so important to allow the Machiguenga to continue to exist? (Is it possible or feasible to allow them to exist? How is this situation similar of different from, say, the need to preserve cultural biodiversity [http://www.undp.org/biodiversity/biodiversitycd/biodImport.htm]?)

M 9/1 LABOR DAY

3. Th 9/4 Storyteller 69-145
Response topics: 1. Why does Saul Zuratas object to the study of ethnography in general, and to the Institute of Linguistics in particular? How does the narrator’s opinion differ? Why does it differ? What are the values that underlie each opinion? 2. What is the hablador/storyteller, and what is his role for the Machiguenga? Does he create the beliefs of the people, or relay them? 3. Describe the world of the Machiguenga and their history. 4. What does the bifocal structure of this book allow that a single perspective (either the writer who finds himself in Florence, or the Storyteller) would not?

4. 9/8 Storyteller 146-246
1. How fair/accurate is his explication of Judaism and Christianity? How is his telling different from that of the Schneils and Catholic missionaries? *why might it be acceptable to the Machiguengas that the storyteller was born imperfect? *Is the storyteller authentic? Does he have a “right” to do what he does? Why or why not?

5. T 9/11
One Hundred Years of Solitude (1-101) & Garcia Marquez’s Nobel Prize speech, 1982:

Response topics: 1. Garcia Marquez, in his Nobel Prize Lecture, claims that “independence from Spain did not liberate us from madness.” What does he mean by “madness” and what does madness have to do with the discovery of the Continent by Europeans? 2. Comment upon the “founding” of the town of Macondo—what mythological elements does the founding scene have? What might their significance be? 3. What does Garcia Marquez mean by “outsized reality”?

One Hundred Years of Solitude (103 “Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all.” – 201)
Response topic: 1. What does Patricia Tobin mean by “Genealogical Imperative”? Do you agree with her that Marquez renders this imperative “wholly inoperative”? How does he do this? What are some of the consequences?

7. Th 9/18 Magical Realism and Garcia Marquez” Blackboard (assignments)
One Hundred Years of Solitude (203 “The Marriage was on the point of breaking up after two months” – 292)
response topics: 1. What is Magical Realism? Give examples of magical realism and its occurrence in Marquez, and show its significance. 2. What is the novel’s general attitude toward religion and the significance of religion? Give examples. 3. What is the role and nature of nature in the novel? What is the connection between religion and nature? 4. What is the role of technology?

8. M 9/22 One Hundred Years of Solitude (293 “The events that would deal Macondo its fatal blow...” – end)
Response topics: 1. What is the role and significance of memory? 2. How does the book’s ending effect the way you have been reading the story up to this point? 3. Can you see any connection between magical realism, the lack of genealogical imperative, and the founding of the town in this novel? Describe.

9. Th 9/25 Midnight’s Children: Intro (vii-xxi); 1-96
Rushdie’s “Imaginary Homelands” BLACKBOARD
Response topics *What does Rushdie mean by the statement “literature can, and perhaps must, give the lie to official facts” (IH 14)? Give examples of this from Midnight’s Children.

10. M 9/29 Midnight’s Children 97-210
“Hybridity” and “The Allegory of History” Blackboard
topics 1. Compare and contrast the roles of Rushdie, as author of the novel Midnight’s Children and Zurata as the author of the Machiguengas myths. 2. Explain Rushdie’s observation that “the past is a country from which we have all emigrated” in terms of Saleem Sinai’s goal in narrating his story. 3. What does Kortenar mean by “hybridity” and is it applicable to India and to this book?

11. Th 10/2 Midnight’s Children 211-263. “Errata” BLACKBOARD (“Course documents”:
“Imaginary Homelands” essay 2).
Response topics: 1. What are the advantages, according to Rushdie, of having an unreliable narrator for Midnight’s Children? Give examples from text illustrating the advantages. 2. What is the nature of the “unreliability”? Is the narrator really untrustworthy, or rather, unusually
honest? 3. Compare and contrast the role of Saleem, as the “creator” of his world with that of Melquades, who “wrote” Aureliano’s fate. in One Hundred Years of Solitude.

12. M 10/6 Midnight’s Children 320-389
“Magical Realism” Kortenar: Blackboard
Response topics: 1. What does Kortenar mean by Magical realism”? How does it compare with Garcia Marquez’s use of the technique? What does Saleem mean when he says “As a people we are obsessed with correspondences…it is a sort of national longing for form” (381)? Give examples of correspondences from the novel and discuss their narrative function. 2. How does the form of this novel manifest an “obsession with correspondences”? 3. Discuss manifestations of what Saleem describes as the “fear of schizophrenia” (447) in the novel.

Th 10/9 YOM KIPPUR

13. M 10/13 The Mystery of Midnight” BLACKBOARD
Response topics: 1. According to Rushdie’s essay, is this novel “pessimistic” or not? Why or why not? Do you agree? (give examples). 2. Comment on the way the novel supports this statement “Picture Singh and the magicians were people whose hold on reality was absolute; they gripped it so powerfully that they could bend it every which way in the service of their arts, but they never forgot what it was” (507). Is this the same thing as “Magic Realism”?

14. Th 10/16 Ake 1-76 (sect. I-V)
Selections from Myth, Literature (Blackboard)

15. M 10/20 Ake 77-148 (sec. VI-IX)
selections (blackboard)

16. Th 10/23 Ake 149-230 (Sect. X-XV)

17. M 10/27 Amichai 1-100
Blackboard interview with Joseph Cohen

18. Th 10/30 Amichai 101-200
Blackboard essay #2

19. M 11/3 Amichai 200-265 (end)
Blackboard Mahmoud Darwish (assignments)

20. Th 11/6 Mahmoud Darwish: Blackboard

21. M 11/10 Persepolis “introduction” and 3-79
Response topics: 1. What is a hero? What has a hero to do with national destiny and identity? 2. How reliable is the child narrator?

22. Th 11/13 Persepolis: 80-end
Response topics: 1. What is Satrapi’s objective in writing this book? How does the graphic novel (as a genre) facilitate or inhibit her objective?

23. M 11/17 Persepolis Screening
24. Th 11/20 Red Azalea Parts 1 & 2

25. M 11/24 Red Azalea Part 3-p. 232 (I finished my job by six o’clock I the evening and went to a back room to smoke. I had started smoking the day I was dismissed from the actor-training class...).
Response topics: Is autobiography, even a fictionalized one such as this, an individualistic, bourgeois genre? Describe the character of the Supervisor. How does his version of the cultural revolution compare to the official one (Mao’s)?

Th. 11/30 THANKSGIVING

26. M 12/1 Red Azalea 232-end
Wendy Larson, “Never this Wild....” Blackboard.
1. How, according to Larson, is sex an act of rebellion? And against what does it rebel? How is sex portrayed as idealized? Why is Jiang Ching, Madam Mao, presented here as an ideal? 2. According to Larson, in what ways does Anchee Min “westernize” her portrayal of the cultural revolution in China?

27. Th 12/4 Last Day of Class—final exam review