**Local Issues, Global Problems.**

**An exploration of Culture, Politics and Society through Literature**

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Office hours: TBD

Fall, AY 2021-2022

Elective course for 2nd year BA Culture, Politics and Society

2 Credits

Mondays and Wednesdays 10:40-11:40

**Course Description:**

Some of the most important global debates and problems are everyday subjective experiences for many people. Literature can provide a complementary angle to the understanding of complex issues such as injustice, poverty, inequality, prejudice, racism, etc. This is because fiction helps to engage with the daily struggles of groups and individuals.

In this course we will explore different literary texts in order to discuss topics such as, health including mental health, migration and the refugee crisis, discrimination, environment and climate change.

Since we are living in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, a global problem that has affected different places and communities in different ways and has magnified global poverty and inequality, we will take this issue as a point of departure in order to examine how writers from different parts of the world have imagined, interpreted and questioned important concepts and discourses related to human rights. Some of the questions that we will examined are what is “normal”?, to whom? and where?, what is literature?, how are literary works distinctive to grapple with social issues? how do literary works produce emotion in readers that might help to promote social changes?, in what ways do literary works depict exploitative or oppressive social and economic formations?

The course will function as a workshop where students will be encourage to bring their own ideas, concepts and readings about this topics from other courses they are taking at CEU. The idea is to enhance understanding of both the primary source texts and the topics of discussion. For this purpose, we will do a close readings of primary texts and will incorporate theoretical concepts from other disciplines such as literary criticism, philosophy, psychology and sociology.

**Outcomes:**

At the end of this course students will become familiar to a broad range of writers from different literary traditions and cultures.

Students will learn literary concepts to analyse the texts and will enable them to think about the ways in which literary works legitimate or challenge social structures.

Students will be able to established connections between literature and other disciplines.

**Week1 Introduction**

Monday (20 sept. 21) We will go over the syllabus together as a class, and I will explain exactly what is being asked of them with respect to the class presentation, and the short reflexions journal entrance. We will review the syllabus and objectives for the course. We will discuss what literature is, and how is related to Culture, Politics and Society

Wednesday (22 sept. 21) We will work with basic concepts from literary criticism and will do an exercise of literary analysis to discuss “what is normal?”

Ana Maria Shua “Respect for Genres” (read in class)

**Week 2 Humanity and its plagues**

Monday (27.09.21) Impact of epidemics in Literature

Wednesday (29.09.21) Barry Yourgrau “Botticelli”

https://lithub.com/the-spontaneous-quarantine-writing-that-became-a-hit-in-japan/

**Week 3 Cultural issues and social problems**

Monday (4 oct. 21) Edgar Allan Poe “The Mask of the Red Death”

https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1064/1064-h/1064-h.htm

Wednesday (6 oct 21) Ignacio Padilla, “Chronicle of the Second Plague” (read in class)

**Week 4 Health issues**

Monday (11 oct. 21) José Saramago, Blindness (fragment)

https://www.you-books.com/book/J-Saramago/Blindness

Wednesday (13 oct. 21) Ken Liu “The Plague” (read in class)

https://www.tor.com/2013/07/11/the-plague/

**Week 5 Health problems**

Monday (18 oct. 21) Susan Sontag, “The Way We Lived”

https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1986/11/24/the-way-we-live-now

Wednesday ( 20 oct. 21) George Bowering “Sense of Time” https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/92660/sense-of-time, Lieke Marsman “The Following Scan Will Last Four Minutes”, Martín Espada “Aubade with Concussion” (read in class)

**Week 6 Education issues**

Monday (25 oct 21) Chinua Achebe “The Vengeful Creditor”

http://www.socialiststories.com/en/writers/Achebe-Chinua/Vengeful-Creditor-Achebe.pdf

Wednesday (27 oct 21) Linh Dihn “Man Carrying Books” (red in class)

**Week 7 Education problems**

Monday (01 nov 21) Liliana Heker “The Stolen Party”

http://www.sturgeonenglish.com/uploads/1/3/6/0/13602064/short\_story-\_the\_stolen\_party.pdf

Wednesday (03 nov 21), Ana María Shua “Canibals and Explorers” (in class)

**Week 8 Environmental issues**

Monday (8 nov 21) Margaret Atwood “Time Capsule found on the Death Planet”

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/sep/26/margaret-atwood-mini-science-fiction

Wednesday (10 nov 21) Dorianne Laux “Evening”

**Week 9 Environmental problems**

Monday (15 nov 21) Barbara Litowski “Monarch Blue”

Wednesday (17 nov 21) Maya C. Popa “Letter to Noah’s Wife” (in class)

**Week 10 Human Rights issues**

Monday (22 nov 21) Ta-Nehisi Coates “Letter to My Son”

https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/tanehisi-coates-between-the-world-and-me/397619/

Wednesday ( 24 nov 21) Yásnaya Aguilar “Our Languages are not dying, They are being killed” https://globalvoices.org/2019/04/15/our-languages-are-not-dying-they-are-being-killed/print/

**Week 11 Human Rights problems**

Monday (29 nov 21) Ali Smith, “The detainees’s tale”

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/27/ali-smith-so-far-the-detainees-tale-extract

Wednesday (1 dic 21) Cristina Peri Rossi “The Uprooted”

**Week 12 Conclusion**

Monday (6 dic 21) Final Remarks

Wednesday (8 dic 21) Reading Journal Submission

**Learning Activities and Teaching Methods**

We meet twice a week for an hour each, and we will mainly work as a workshop. On Mondays, the instructor will give a short introductory lecture. Afterwards, there will be a 10 minute warm up exercise where we will discuss ideas about the text and topic. The long readings we will do are no longer than 15-20 pages. On Wednesdays there will be a reading of a short text (6-10 minutes max.) and a brief quiz about it as a warm up exercise. The rest of the class is a general discussion.

**NOTE: Readings may be subject to change, but I will let you know and provide them to you in advance.**

**Assignments:**

1. **Weekly reflexion -entrance for Reading Journal-** due on Mondays. Extension min. 200 - max. 300 words. Each Monday you will be expected to submit a short critical reflection on the week’s reading. They should focus on an idea, concept or problematic that you find interesting. You should not summarise the text. This is a simple assignment that asks you to reflect, in writing, on what you have been reading and discussing during the week. This reflexion may work as a prompt for participation in class.

**b) Presentation:** One 10-15 minutes presentation individual or in pairs. Each student will choose one week to make a presentation in front of the class (it can be individual or in groups of two). For this presentation, you will need to find one outside scholarly article related to the topic on which you are presenting. You will spend 10-15 minutes summarising this article and relating it to the text we are reading that week.

**c) Wednesday’s mini quiz** done in class, one or two questions related to the short text read in class

**d) Reading Journal** **due on 08/12/2021**

The Reading Journal basically consists of your weekly reflexions plus one final reflexion where you write about what have you learn from the texts and in class discussions.

**Assessment**

Weekly Reflexion 25%

Reading Journal 35%

Presentation 25%

Quizz 10%

Participation 5 %

**Grading criteria**

A an exceptional answer, showing a real understanding of the issue and evidence of real clarity of thought.

A- an excellent answer, showing a very good understanding of the question being asked.

B+ a very good answer, which gets the main point of the question and the issue behind it, even if it contains some small errors.

B a good answer in parts, which shows some understanding of the question but contains some errors or irrelevant material.

B- an answer which contains some correct material as well as material which is incorrect or confused, but is trying to answer the question seriously.

C+ an answer which contains a lot of confusion or error but nonetheless shows some attempt to answer the question.

F an inadequate answer which reveals no serious attempt to engage with the topic or to answer the question, and no real knowledge of the subject .

**Bibliography:**

Adagha, Ovo, and Chris Brazier. *One World Two: A Second Global Anthology of Short Stories*. New Internationalist Publications, Ltd, 2016.

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford UP, 2000.

Fletcher, Angus. Wonderworks: *The 25 Most Powerful Inventions in the History of Literature.* Simon&Schuster, 2021.

Shapard, Robert, James Thomas, and Ray Gonzalez. Sudden Fiction Latino. Norton & Company, 2010.

Thomas, James, et al. *Flash Fiction International: Very Short Stories from around the World*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2015.

Turner, Mark. *The Literary Mind.* Oxford UP, 1996*.*