**MALS HUMANITIES FOUNDATION: Reading Across Time, Space, Media, and Method**

Prof. Emily Francomano

[ecf5@georgetown.edu](mailto:ecf5@georgetown.edu)

ICC 407

Office Hours: Thursday 4-5pm or by appt.

1. **Description and objectives of the course**

The MALS Humanities Foundation Course is an exploration of reading literary and cultural texts across languages of origin, geographical locations, historical periods, expressive media, and interpretive methodologies. As we analyze literary/cultural texts and interpretive methods, we will also engage with some of the central and interrelated questions that inspired them, which concern the nature of meaning, literature, authorship, text, and translation.

Through representative essays, the course will offer a broad exploration of theoretical approaches to literature and culture. A diversity of literary and cultural texts from various national and linguistic traditions will provide opportunities to engage with literary theory in a comparative perspective.

This class is a **synchronous online course.** The course format is a combination of seminar, lecture, and on-line discussion revolving around a series of themes and questions. All students should prepare the readings carefully ahead of time and arrive ready to participate actively in class discussions. Students should strive to develop analyses that are intellectually rigorous and creative.

**II. Learning Goals**

By fulfilling the requirements of the course, students will:  
1. Develop knowledge of, and engagement with, the main trends in literary, humanistic, and cultural theories and methodologies.   
3. Develop and use analytical skills in a comparative perspective.

4. Produce sophisticated oral and written arguments on literary and cultural topics in comparative contexts.  
5. Begin to acquire a cross-cultural and global perspective of literature and culture.

6. Become familiar with and use research methods in literary, humanistic, and cultural studies.

**III. Principal texts**   
  
1. Calvino, Italo*. Invisible Cities*   
Publisher: Mariner Books; 1978, First Harvest/HBJ Printing edition (May 3, 1978)   
ISBN-10: 0156453800   
ISBN-13: 978-0156453806   
  
2. Rhys, J. *Wide Sargasso Sea*   
Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company (August 17, 1992)   
ISBN-10: 0393308804   
ISBN-13: 978-0393310481   
  
3. Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*   
Publisher: Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (November 3, 2009)   
ISBN-10: 0061849928   
ISBN-13: 978-0061849923

4. Rivkin and Ryan. *Literary Theory: An Anthology,* 3rd edition.

Publisher: Blackwell

ISBN-10: 1405106962

ISBN 13: 978-1405106962

All other readings will be made available online.

Films will be available through sharestream on Canvas.

**IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

***Attendance and participation***: This class is a **synchronous online course conducted on Zoom.** Regular attendance and active participation in class are fundamental components of the course.

**Zoom etiquette:** To be considered “in class” you must have your camera on and be visible to the professor and your fellow classmates. Please connect a few minutes before the official class start time to make sure your internet connection, audio, and camera are functioning.

The course format is a combination of seminar and lecture structured around a series of themes and questions. All students must prepare the readings carefully ahead of time and arrive ready to participate actively in class discussions. In order to maximize in-class participation, students will often be asked to prepare advance responses to discussion questions, or to create such questions on their own. At times, students will divide into small groups for analysis of a particular text, passage, or idea. If you do not participate, the professor and your classmates cannot know whether it is because you are timid, tired, or simply unprepared. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each student to come to every class with topics of discussion ready to introduce.

If you miss class, contact someone for the notes and consult the class recording, if available. I am glad to respond to your e-mails, though not of the “did I miss anything?” variety. I check and respond to e-mail on weekdays between the hours of 9 and 5, approximately.

***Canvas Discussion Board:*** Each student will post to the discussion in response to posted questions and topics discussed in class. There is no set word length or limit to posts, but posts should be discursive (no one word answers!). All students should read all posts prior to class. Your writing in the discussion board will not be evaluated as formal writing. CIVILITY must be maintained on the board even if you believe a fellow student is completely misguided in his or her interpretations! Each post is due by midnight before the next listed class meeting.

***Short Essays and Peer Reviews***: Each student will write 2 papers of 3 - 5 double-spaced pages. Time permitting, we will engage in in-class peer reviews. Papers and must be turned in on Canvas.

*Topics and instructions for the two short essays* will be provided as the term progresses and discussed in class.

The evaluation of short essays will take into consideration the following:

* *presentation* of ideas (context, style, syntax, vocabulary, clarity)
* *structure* and organization of the paper (title, thesis statement, methodology, form),
* *argumentation* (development of ideas, use of textual evidence and analysis)
* See attached rubric for more detailed expectations for written work

*Style and formatting*: normal fonts (maximum 12 point; Courier is prohibited) and margins (maximum 1 inch top and bottom, 1.25 inches left and right) should be used.

***Creative Reflection:*** Create an object that represents your interpretation of one of the course readings (either literary or critical). For your final discussion board post, due by midnight before the last class meeting, post a picture of your object and an explanation of how it reflects your interpretation. More detailed instructions will be distributed in class.

***The Final Essay:*** *Reading across time, space, medium, and method*. This essay presents your interpretation—in a comparative context— of one or more of the literary texts we have studied during the semester*.* This 10-12 page essay must incorporate the published critical opinions of others (5 books and or articles minimum). You must discuss your research and writing plans with the professor before embarking upon the project and choose your due date by our last class meeting.

*Academic references*:

*There must be a bibliography* of works cited following the essay.

As mentioned above, final papers must draw upon at least 5 critical, academic, monographs or essays concerning the work or theoretical approach chosen as the focus of the essay.

Students MUST consult with the professor when choosing secondary sources and before writing their final essays.

The evaluation of short essays will take into consideration the following:

* *presentation* of ideas (context, style, syntax, vocabulary, clarity)
* *structure* *and organization of the paper* (title, thesis statement, methodology, form),
* *argumentation* (development of ideas, use of textual evidence and analysis)
* *choice and use of secondary sources*

***Discussion Leading*** At least once during the term and perhaps several times, depending upon the size of the class, each student will lead a discussion on one of the critical and/or one of the creative texts we read. Discussion leading is **NOT** a presentation, but rather a selection of key points in the text for the class to discuss as a group. Discussion leaders should select three to four key points, prepare them in an outline to share with the class and come to class read to moderate a discussion.

**V. Distribution of grades**

Attendance, Class Preparation, and Participation: 15%

Discussion Posts and Creative Reflection: 15%

Discussion Leading: 15%

First essay: 15%

Second essay 15%

Final essay: 25%

**VI. Academic honesty**

The School of Continuing Studies proudly supports [Georgetown University's Honor System](http://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system). All students enrolled in the School's programs—including noncredit, credit, high school, summer, undergraduate, and graduate students—are held to the highest standards of ethical conduct as defined by the [Honor Council](http://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/).

**SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND READINGS**

**(Subject to change and adaptation; please note, reading load will be somewhat lighter than listed here)**

**UNIT I.** **WHAT AND WHY ARE LITERATURE/CULTURAL TEXTS**?

Class 1: Greetings and Introduction to the Course

Reading:

1. Boyd, B. “Evolutionary Theories of Art.” (2005) (Canvas)

2. Eagleton, T. “What is Literature?” (1983) (Canvas)

Class 2:

Discussion post #1: Consider: Is literature good for us? What about censorship?

1. “A Short History of Theory” (Anthology)
2. Aristotle, “Poetry as a Species of Imitation;” “Problems and Solutions;” from the *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE) (Canvas)
3. Plato, “Book X” from *The Republic* (c. 380 BCE) (Canvas)
4. *The Arabian Nights* (date unknown) (excerpts from 2 translations) (Canvas)
5. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (1978) (Chapters 1-3)

Discussion leader(s):

**UNIT II. WHERE DOES MEANING COME FROM?**

Class 3: ***Form and Content***

Discussion post #2: *Invisible Cities*, what does it mean?

Readings:

1. *Anthology:* Part One Introduction *Formalisms*
2. Juan Ruiz, Excerpt from: *The Book of Good Love* (c. 1330) (Canvas)
3. Moses Maimonides, M. Excerpt from *The Guide of the Perplexed* (late twelfth century) (Canvas)
4. Beardsley and Wimsatt “The Intentional Fallacy” (Anthology)
5. *Invisible Cities* (4-end)

Discussion leader(s):

Class 4: ***Form and Content***

Discussion Post #3: After reading several versions of “Little Red Riding Hood,” consider which motifs make the story recognizable as “LRRH” and consider the saying, “There is nothing new under the sun.” Is it possible to write an original story?

Readings:

1. *Anthology:* Part Two Introduction: “The Implied Order”
2. Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique” (1916) (*Anthology*)
3. O’Sullivan, “Broken on Purpose”(2011) (*Anthology*)
4. “Little Red Riding Hood” (date unknown) (Canvas)
5. *The Crying of Lot 49* (Chapter 1)

Discussion leader(s):

Class 5: ***Authors, Readers, Texts***

Discussion Post #4: Does it matter who wrote what? When, if ever, do you think it is important to know about an author’s biography?

Readings:

1. *Anthology:* Part Three Introduction: “Situations of Knowledge”
2. Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author.” (1967) (*Anthology*)
3. Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” (1970) (*Anthology*)
4. Stanley Fish, “Interpretive Communities” (1976) (Canvas)
5. Wolfgang Iser, “Indeterminacy and the Reader’s Response” (1971) (Canvas)
6. *The Crying of Lot 49* (Chapter 2)

Discussion leader(s):

Class 6: ***Psychoanalysis***

Discussion Post #5: TBA

Readings:

1. *Anthology:* Introduction to Part 5, “Strangers to Ourselves”
2. Sigmund Freud, “The Interpretation of Dreams.” (1900) (*Anthology*)
3. Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” (1914) (*Anthology*)
4. Sigmund Freud, “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” (1921) (*Anthology*)
5. Jaques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage.” (1966) (*Anthology*)
6. Lisa Hinrichsen, “Trauma Studies and the Literature of the US South” (2013) (*Anthology*)
7. *The Crying of Lot 49* (Chapter 3)

Discussion leader(s):

\*Time permitting, peer review of paper drafts

**III. WHERE DOES SIGNIFICANCE COME FROM?**

Class 7: ***Political Criticism and Historicisms***

Discussion Post #6: Is it possible for a work of literature to be apolitical? What about a work of literary/cultural criticism?

1. *Anthology:* Introduction to Part 6, “Starting with Zero”
2. Karl Marx, “The Philosophic and Economic Manuscripts of 1844.” “The German Ideology” (1846) (*Anthology*)
3. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1969) (*Anthology*)
4. Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact.” (1978) (Canvas)
5. Ayn Rand, *Anthem.* Last chapter: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1250/1250->h/1250-h.htm
6. *The Crying of Lot 49* (Chapter 4)

Discussion leader(s):

Class 8:

Discussion Post #7: TBA

1. Michel Foucault, “The Right of Death and Power over Life” (1978) (*Anthology*)
2. Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel.” (1934-5) (*Anthology*)
3. Montrose, Louis “New Historicisms” (1992) (*Anthology*)
4. *The Crying of Lot 49,* (Chapters 5-6)
5. Articles on *The Crying of Lot* 49 TBA (Canvas)

Discussion leader(s):

Class 9: ***Gender Studies***

Discussion Post #8: TBA

Readings:

1. *Anthology:* Part 7 Intro: “Feminist Paradigms/Gender Effects”
2. Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience” (1986) (*Anthology*)
3. Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women” (1975) (*Anthology*)
4. Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination (1991) (*Anthology*)
5. See “Jane Eyre” (1943) (Sharestream)
6. Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* I

Class 10: ***Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Race***

Blog/Discussion Post #9: TBA

Readings:

1. *Anthology:* Introduction to Part 8 “English Without Shadows: Literature on a World Scale”
2. Edward Said, Excerpt, *Orientalism* (1978) (Anthology)
3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts…” (1986) (*Anthology*)
4. Homi K. Bhabba, “Signs Taken for Wonders.” (1985) (Canvas)
5. Toni Morrison, “Playing in the Dark” (*Anthology*)
6. Henry Louis Gates, “The Blackness of Blackness: A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey.” (1988) (Canvas)
7. Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* II and III

Discussion leader(s):

\*Time permitting, peer review of paper drafts

**IV. IS TRANSLATION POSSIBLE?**

Class 11:

Discussion Post #11: TBA

Readings:

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator." (1923) (Canvas)
2. Laurence Venuti, “Translation, Empiricism, Ethics” (*Anthology*)
3. Jorge Luis Borges, “The Library of Babel.” and “Pierre Menard.” (1941) (Canvas)
4. *Blow-up* (1966) (Film) (Sharestream)
5. Julio Cortázar, “Blow-up” (“Las babas del Diablo”) (1958) (Canvas)

Discussion leader(s):

**V. IS MEANING POSSIBLE?** Postmodernism

Class 12:

Readings:

1. *Anthology:* Introduction to Part 4: “The Class of 1968
2. Gilles Deleuze “What is Becoming? (1989) (Anthology)
3. Jacuqes Derrida, “Differance” (1968) and “That Dangerous Supplement.” (1967) (*Anthology*)
4. Barbara Johnson, “Writing” (1990) (*Anthology*)

Discussion leader(s):

Class 13:

LAST Discussion Post: CREATIVE REFLECTION

Discussion of final papers

**SUMMER 2021 DUE DATES:**

**Short Essay #1: June 23 6:30 pm**

**Short Essay #2: July 21 6:30 pm**

**Creative Reflection: Aug 11 6:30pm**

**FINAL PAPERS: Aug 20 6pm**

**Rubric for the EVALUATION OF CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING**

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. This rubric is designed to give students a framework for understanding how written work and critical thinking will be evaluated.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Capstone**  (A) | **Milestones**  (B range) | | **Benchmark**  (C+) |
| **Context of and Purpose for Writing**  *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).* | Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and consistent throughout the assignment. | Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context). | Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions). | Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s). |
| **Thesis / Explanation of issues** | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated with limited clarification or description. |
| **Textual Evidence and Content Development** | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content throughout assignment. Content and textual evidence support argument, explore ideas, and further understanding in an original fashion. | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to develop and explore ideas. Shows originality and understanding. | Generally uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas. May lack originality. | Uses some appropriate and relevant content to develop ideas. Lacks thorough understanding and/or originality. |
| **Influence of context and assumptions** | Thoroughly analyzes existing assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position. | Identifies existing assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position. | Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa). | Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions).  Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position. |
| **Sources and Evidence**  **(For Final Paper)**  *Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion* | Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.  Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis.  Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly. | Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.  Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis.  Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning. | Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.  Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning. | Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.  Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation.  Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question. |
| **Control of Style, Syntax and Mechanics** | Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.  Uses varied vocabulary and sentence structures effectively throughout assignment.  Has a clear, descriptive, relevant, interesting title. | Uses clear language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.  Generally uses varied vocabulary and sentence structures effectively.  Has a clear, descriptive, relevant, interesting title. | Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.  Uses some varied vocabulary and sentence structures throughout.  Has a clear, descriptive title. | Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.  Vocabulary and sentence structures may lack variety and be ineffective.  Title is not indicative of content (or absent). |
| **Uses MLA Style** | Uses MLA Style consistently throughout assignment.  Accurately cites all material used in text and bibliography. | Uses MLA Style but may have some inconsistencies.  Accurately cites all material used in text and bibliography. | Uses MLA Style with many inconsistencies.  Accurately cites all material used in text and bibliography. | Does not use MLA Style.  Cites some material but does not accurately cite all material used in text and bibliography. |

Adapted from the AACU VALUE Rubrics http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/