**CPLTBC3001**

**Introduction to Comparative Literature**

Fall 2020

TR 11:40-12:55

Professor Emily Sun

Milbank 320D

Phone: 212-854-5321

Office hours: (on Zoom) W 9:30-10:30 a.m., Th 3-4 p.m., or by appointment

[esun@barnard.edu](mailto:esun@barnard.edu)

**Course Description**

This course introduces students to the study of comparative literature. For majors, it serves as the gateway course for Comparative Literature and Translation Studies at Barnard. For students generally interested in the multi-lingual, transnational, and cross-cultural study of literature, it serves to cultivate lifelong skills and habits of attentiveness and reflectiveness that are crucial to making us engaged and sophisticated citizens of the world.

The syllabus introduces students to methods and topics in the study of literature across national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, across historical periods, and in relation to other arts and disciplines. Readings are selected and juxtaposed in consecutive units designed to give students training in the practice of comparative criticism and to foster, through specific practical engagements, deeper reflection on underlying theoretical and methodological issues. We will study works of lyric and narrative poetry, scriptural narrative, novellas and novels, a film, and texts of literary and cultural theory and criticism. Topics include: the role of language and literature in different cultures and historical periods, the relationship between genres, the circulation of literary forms, literature and translation, postcoloniality, gender and sexual difference, and the relationship of literature to other arts. By engaging with the particular combinations of texts in the course, students will learn how to read closely and deeply and make informed, critical connections between textual and cultural phenomena that may yield new and surprising insights.

**Learning Outcomes**

* Learn fundamental formal, historical, and theoretical concepts and terms in the study of literature.
* Gain practice in reading closely and writing papers that use textual evidence in sophisticated ways to pursue and open up original lines of critical inquiry.
* Learn how to identify common structures and patterns across a wide range of literary and textual phenomena and thus put texts from different genres, periods, media, and disciplines in dynamic and fruitful dialogue with one another.
* Compare texts in different languages and analyze how translations mediate linguistic and cultural differences.

**Required Texts**

The following texts are required and will be available for purchase at Book Culture (on W112th St. between Broadway and Amsterdam).

1. Chefjec, Sergio, *Baroni, A Journey*, trans. Margaret Carson (Almost Island Books) ISBN-13 978-8192129549\*
2. Kafka, Franz, *The Metamorphosis,* trans. Susan Bernofsky (W. W. Norton) ISBN-13: 978-0393347098\*
3. Lispector, Clarice, *The Passion According to G. H.*, trans. Idra Novey (New Directions) ISBN-13: 978-0811219686\*
4. Woolf, Virginia, *To the Lighthouse* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) ISBN-13: 978-0156907392
5. Wordsworth, William, *The Prelude: A Parallel Text*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Penguin) ISBN-13: 978-0140433692

Where asterisked, the texts are **required** in the **exact translations and editions** specified above. There are, however, three exceptions to this course requirement.

1. If you can read the text in the language in which it was originally written (Spanish, German, or Portuguese), you should feel free to read the text in the original language in any edition published by a reputable press.
2. I’ve chosen the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich edition of Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* for its price. However, if you can find another English edition of the novel, you should feel free to use that.
3. I’ve chosen the Penguin edition of Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, with the parallel texts from 1798, 1799, 1805, and 1850 on the basis of its price. If you can find a used copy, you should feel free to use the more expensive Norton edition of Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, edited by M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill, as it also contains Wordsworth’s multiple revisions for comparison and comes with the expert scholarly footnotes that you will need to understand and analyze this difficult yet immensely rewarding text. Unless you are an expert already in English Romantic poetry, youshould **not** try to read this text in an unannotated version, either online or in hard copy.

The Barnard College librarians are also ready to help you get access to the course texts as well as guide you to the invaluable resources of the Columbia University Library system–one of the world’s great resources for scholarship that is yours to use.

All other readings will be available as pdfs on Courseworks.

**Course Requirements**

1. **Attendance and Participation**. Your regular and punctual presence in this course shows respect for our common work of learning. It ensures that you will learn the most effectively, both from the instructor and from conversation with your peers. If you live in a vastly different time zone, we will discuss other ways you can engage interactively in the course.
2. **Preparation and Active Reading**. You will have read the assigned material carefully by the day it is scheduled for discussion. Be prepared to share your questions and ideas.
3. **Reading texts in hard copy and taking notes with pen and paper.** The disciplined, rigorous, and creative study of literature depends on your paying close attention to textual details. Having hard copies of the texts makes it easier for you to discover large-scale textual patterns and zoom in on small details.

The covid pandemic has led us to spend more time online and on screens. While participating in the Zoom format, you may find, as I have, that using a pen and paper notepad for note-taking will help you focus your attention and think more clearly.

1. **Assignments**: Four essays and regular reading responses on Courseworks.

I will provide paper topics at least a week and a half before each deadline. If your paper is late, one third of a letter grade will be deducted each day it is late.

I will assign periodic reading responses. The reading responses should be brief (around 1-2 pages) and are aimed to facilitate focused reflection on the reading and to catalyze class discussions. In most cases, I will give you specific instructions. The schedule for the responses will depend on the size of the class: students will be divided into groups that rotate in posting responses. These responses are to be posted in the Discussion Forum section on Courseworks the evening before the class meeting in which we will discuss the reading.

**Course Evaluation**

Participation: 15%

Reading responses on Courseworks: 15%

Paper 1 (3-4 pages): 15%

Paper 2 (5 pages): 20%

Paper 3 (3-4 pages): 15%

Paper 4 (5 pages): 20%

**Academic Integrity**

You are required to uphold the Barnard College Honor Code, established 1912 and updated 2016, which details the codes governing plagiarism and standards of academic integrity. For the text of the Honor Code, go to https:/barnard.edu/honor-code. Any failure to uphold these standards of academic integrity will carry severe consequences.

Please note that the Addendum to the Honor Code for 2020-2021 includes relevant language for the proper use of electronic class material: “We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources.” This means that any recorded class content–from lectures, labs, seminars, office hours, and discussion groups–is the intellectual property of your professor and your fellow students, and should not be distributed or shared outside of class.

**Accommodation of Disability**

Students with a documented disability may be eligible for academic accommodations. If you have a documented disability, please let me know as early as possible in the semester so that the proper arrangements can be made. Please note that you are required to register in advance with the Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS). (For more information, go to: barnard.edu/disabilityservices.)

**Schedule**

T 9/8 Introduction. Goethe and Eckermann, from “Conversations on World Literature.” Williams, “Literature”

Th 9/10 Auerbach, “Philology and *Weltliteratur*.” Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature.” Spivak, “Planetarity.”

1. **Pairing and Comparing**

T 9/15 Ekphrasis. From *Iliad*, Bk. XVIII. From *Aeneid*, Bk. VIII.

Th 9/17 Gathering the troops. Epic catalogues compared. From *Iliad*, Bk. II; *Aeneid*, Bk. VII; *Paradise Lost*, Bk. I; *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto I.

T 9/22 Introduction to “Petrarch and the Love Lyric.” Petrarch, from *Rime Sparse*, poems 1, 3, 140, 164, 189, 190, 310.

Introduction to “Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder.” Wyatt, “The long love that in my thought doth harbor,” “Whoso list to hunt,” “Farewell, Love,” “I find no peace,” “My galley.”

Introduction to “Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.” Surrey, “The soote season,” “Love, that doth reign and live within my thought.”

Introduction to Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella*. Sidney, sonnets 1 and 6 from *Astrophel and Stella*.

Fussell, from *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*

Th 9/24 Shakespeare, sonnets 29, 73, 116, 129, 138. Selected sonnets by Louise Labé. Donne, Holy Sonnet 14, “Batter my heart, three-personed God.” Selected sonnets by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

1. **Narratives of the Passion: the Life of Christ and a Few of its Afterlives**

T 9/29 *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*

Kermode, “Matthew” and excerpt from “John” on passion narratives from *The Literary Guide to the Bible*

Th 10/1 *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*

T 10/6 Pasolini, “The Gospel According to Saint Matthew” (1964, 2 hrs 22 mins).

Multiple copies of the film are available on YouTube, with English subtitles. Make sure you watch the black and white version that Pasolini released in 1964, rather than the 2007 version that is cut to 90 minutes, rendered in color, and dubbed in English.

**Paper One due**

Th 10/8 Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

T 10/13 Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

Th 10/15 Lispector, *The Passion According to G. H.*

T 10/20 Lispector, *The Passion According to G. H.*

1. **Worlds of Translation, a World in Translation**

Th 10/22 Saussure, “The Nature of the Linguistic Sign.” Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation.”

T 10/27 Versions of Baudelaire’s “Correspondances” and “À une passante.” Bonnefoy, “Translating Poetry.” Versions of Morisseau-Leroy’s “Mwen menm ou menm” and commentary by Danielle Legros Georges.

Th 10/29 Versions of translations of Du Fu, “Thoughts while Travelling at Night”; Li Po, “The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter,” “Long Banister Lane,” “Ch’ang-kan Village Song” and “The Jewel Stairs’ Grievance,” “Jade-Staircase Grievance.” William Carlos Williams, “On Rexroth’s *One Hundred Poems from the Chinese*.” Rexroth and Snyder, “Chinese Poetry and the American Imagination.” Williams, “The Widow’s Lament in the Springtime.”

**Paper Two due**

T 11/3 ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY

Th 11/5 Appiah, “Thick Translation.”

Recommended: Geertz, “Thick Description.”

1. **Portraits of the Artist**

T 11/10 Wordsworth, from *The Prelude*

Th 11/12 Wordsworth, from *The Prelude*

T 11/17 Wordsworth, from *The Prelude*

**Paper Three due**

Th 11/19 Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

T 11/24 Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Th 11/26 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

T 12/1 Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Th 12/3 Chefjec, *Baroni, a Journey*

T 12/8 Chefjec, *Baroni, a Journey*

Th 12/10 Chefjec, *Baroni, a Journey*

**M 12/14 Paper Four due**