Graduate seminar. Winter 2018. ENGL 236; CLIT 220
Tuesday 2:00-5:00 pm. Phelps 6206

\textit{Cognitive Approaches to World Literature}

Prof. Dominique Jullien (French and Italian, Affiliate in Comparative Literature)
Prof. Sowon Park (English)

\textbf{Description}

This seminar introduces students to key contemporary theories of world literature along with recently formulated ideas of human identity in neuro-cognitive sciences. It provides an opportunity to engage in detailed study of the some of the more significant developments in contemporary discourse of mind/brain and to address the connections between the world literary archive and the human mind.

Students give one oral presentation and write a final paper. The seminar is taught in English and is open to qualified undergraduate students with instructors’ approval.

\textbf{Proposed syllabus}

\textbf{Tuesday January 9: ‘The Best That Has Been Thought and Said’ (SP)}

\textbf{Focus: What is a Classic? What is World Literature?}

Traditional definitions of ‘world literature’ are heavily based on the idea of universal cultural value. This seminar will consider some universalist definitions by examining influential ideas of ‘classic’ and ‘world’ and chart some of the main theoretical issues arising out of the various elaborations.

\textbf{Reading:} T. S. Eliot, J. M. Coetzee, A. Mukherjee, Goethe, Marx & Engels, D. Damrosch.

\textbf{Tuesday January 16: The 1001 Nights as an exemplary World Literature text (DJ)}

\textbf{Focus:} The making of a global masterpiece: Translation, adaptation, canonization, rewriting.

We discuss \textit{The 1001 Nights} as a global phenomenon and a literary paradox: a book born in the East yet received, transformed and made famous in the West, a book without boundaries, identifiable author, or single text, consisting of an ever-growing number of dramatically different translations; a book that epitomized Western fantasies about the East yet decisively molded the West’s politics, literature and culture.

\textbf{Reading:} stories from the \textit{Nights} in various translations, modern reworkings (E.A. Poe, N. Mahfouz), and essays by J.L. Borges and R. Irwin.

\textbf{Tuesday January 23: Reading: distant and close (SP)}

\textbf{Focus:} How do we read what we read?

The dynamic of ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’/‘tributaries’ will be brought to the foreground through
a comparative reading of Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* and the *Memoir of a Korean Queen*. 

**Reading:** Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* and the *Memoir of a Korean Queen*, and essays by F. Moretti and S. Shih.

---

**Tuesday January 30: Marcel Proust, Fiction, Cognition, Memory (DJ)**

**Focus:** Mental states in literature: Marcel Proust.

Proust’s modernist novel is, among other things, a portrait of mental life both conscious and unconscious, as well as a study in creativity. We discuss links between fiction & cognition, memory and creativity, writing and the inner world of sleep & dreams. The text also offers an opportunity for reading the classics through a cognitive lens, by focusing on an archetype of creativity: the catabasis (underworld motif) & its modern reworking.

**Reading:** excerpts from *Remembrance of Things Past*, Homer’s *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and essays by E. Ender, R. Epstein, J. Delacour, P. De Man.

---

**Tuesday February 6: Jorge Luis Borges and/as World Literature (DJ)**

**Focus:** Borges and / as World Literature; encyclopaedias as fiction; Borges and the cognitive turn

We focus on “Global Borges”: Borgesian cosmopolitanism; reverse influence theory; Borges and the universal text. Also, Borges’s signature blending of fiction and non-fiction: the place of knowledge, speculation and encyclopedias in the Borgesian imaginary and the cognitive dimension of Borgesian stories.

**Reading:** stories and essays by Borges, R. Nethersole, J. Alazraki, E. Kristal, B. Sarlo, M. Siskind.

---

**Tuesday February 13: Scriptworlds and Translation (SP)**

**Focus:** Why script?

Issues of translation form an inevitable part of any discussion on world literature. This seminar will focus on discrete ‘scriptworlds’ to interrogate the relationship between language, nation and world.

**Reading:** E. Apter, W. Benjamin, S. Dehaene, S. Park and A. Thirlwell.

---

**Tuesday February 20: Emotion (SP)**

**Focus:** Emotion and literary criticism.

A radical transformation in how the brain is understood occurred about forty years ago as a result of technical advances in brain imaging and cell labelling technique, in conjunction with human lesion studies and comparative animal neurology. This class will introduce the latest in the neuroscience of emotion and explore the dramatic shift in the conceptualization of emotion.
- from the glue that bonded social connections to an expression of an individual’s private subjectivity.

**Reading:** K. Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*, J. Ledoux’s *The Emotional Brain*

---

**Tuesday February 27: A Cognitive Approach to the Fantastic (DJ)**

**Focus:** Fantastic stories and cognitive estrangement.

The 19th century post-Enlightenment genre of fantastic literature can be understood as a reaction to loss of faith, crisis of rationalism, lack of spiritual certainties, as well as urban upheaval, technological innovations and disruptions of perception that characterize Western modernity. Key concepts of Uncanny (*Unheimlich*) and Modalization are discussed in a cognitive perspective.

**Reading:** classic 19th-century fantastic stories (Hoffmann, Poe, Mérimée, Gautier, Maupassant) alongside essays by Freud, Jentsch, Todorov, Cixous, Warner, Mori, Brooke-Rose, Suvin.

---

**Tuesday March 6: World Literature and the Human Mind (SP)**

**Focus:** Is a non-intentionalist, phylogenetic, cognitive evolutionary history incompatible with a literary history driven by human agency and subjectivity?

This seminar will examine how evolutionary models of the mind may be applied to literary criticism by addressing how cognitive universals might benefit from sociohistorical particulars and vice versa.

**Reading:** P. Richerson, Y. Harari, T. Cave, D. Lodge, G. Spivak, P. Casanova.

---

**Tuesday March 13: Worlding Writers: the case of “Global Poe” (DJ)**

**Focus:** Translation and globalization across national boundaries.

The case of Poe will serve to test Damrosch’s definition of World Literature as a mode of circulation, and writing that gains in translation. Poe’s legacy in Latin America both directly and through French translations (in particular Baudelaire); Edogawa Ranpo and the Japanese afterlife of Poe. Poe’s place in the creation of the prototypical World Literature genre, (analytic) detective fiction.

**Reading:** stories by Poe, Baudelaire, E. Ranpo, P. Auster, Borges, Cortázar; essays by Damrosch, Esplin, Welge, Irwin.