

COLI 214B-03: Literature and Society:  
Literatures of Violence, Modernity and the Everyday

Fall 2009

Instructor: Darwin H. Tsen, Ph.D in progress

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Attributes: Composition (C), Humanities (H)

Class Hours: T, R 11:40 AM – 1:05 PM

Class Location: Student Services Wing 307

Office Hours/Location: Thursdays, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM, LNG Room 204

Course Description:

In this course, we will be primarily concerned with how ‘violence’, in its many forms – ranging from robbery, domestic violence, homicide, war to cultural assimilation – presents its complex relationships with modern society through a detailed reading of, largely, modern fiction. Our selection consists mostly of 20<sup>th</sup> century novels by a diverse range of authors such as Camus, Mo Yan, Ibuse and Hunter S. Thompson; other genres include short stories by Raymond Carver and Flannery O’Connor, a graphic novel by Art Spiegelman, as well as a few thematically related films. Last but not least, as a point of stylistic contrast, we will examine the poetic expressions of violence via poets ancient and modern, from China, the United States and Great Britain. These texts are all produced under specific historical circumstances: they act either as responses, interventions, critiques, signs of remembrance or attempted representations of those forces. Our aim is to think and contextualize these literatures not only in their own period, but also in relation to our current society and daily lives: what can we learn from them? Articles of literary criticism and literary theory will be used as supplementary material throughout our progress.

Responsibilities and Expectations:

To ensure success and a productive learning experience in this course, active participation and regular attendance are mandatory. Though each individual participates in different ways, I encourage you to discuss and raise questions whenever possible. If, for any reason you are unable to attend class, it is your responsibility to inform me beforehand. A total of four unexcused absences will result in an **automatic fail**. As for your written assignments, punctuality is a must: though extensions may be given under very specific circumstances. As a composition class, we will NOT have exams of any sort. Instead, your assignments will require

engagement with the texts and the questions they raise; completing your weekly readings by schedule, though another prerequisite, contributes to this task greatly. You are also expected to visit me at least **twice** throughout the semester to discuss a paper topic, questions about a certain text or about your interests. Feel free to contact me via email anytime.

**As a precautionary measure for this semester, and to prevent a possible outbreak of H1N1, if you have a fever, body aches, cough, and/or sore throat please do not come to class. Please remain at home or in your room and follow instructions from the University's Health Services that will be available on the web.**

#### Grading & Assignments:

Your grades will be determined by three major compartments: your writing portfolio, participation and attendance, and essays due on a semi-regular basis. While demonstrating your understanding and observations of the topics with writing is important, verbal expression is also crucial. However, if you do not feel comfortable speaking in class, this aspect of participation may be compensated by discussing your thoughts with me during office appointments. I will ask you to keep a writing portfolio, which contains:

- a.) all your in-class writing activities
- b.) a personal journal, written on a weekly basis, documenting your reflections, questions and thoughts on the texts, and
- c.) peer-reviews and revisions of your essays.

For article b.), I will also ask you to post your reflections on the discussion board area on Blackboard weekly, before Sunday.

The first half portfolio will be reviewed in mid-October, while its final grade will be determined by the end of the semester. Before each due date, you may apply revisions to your journals and essays. For the first three papers, you will be assigned a series of topics, though alternate topics are possible with my approval. The final paper, due at the end of the semester, should be based on a mutually agreed topic after discussion with me.

#### Grading Rubric:

Participation and Attendance – 20%

Writing Portfolio (Personal Journal/In-class writings/Peer reviews/revisions) – 15%

Paper #1 (2 pages) – 5%

Paper# 2 (4 pages) – 15%  
Paper# 3 (4 pages) – 20%  
Paper# 4 (5-7 pages) – 25%

Excluding the short exploratory paper which is due within the first two weeks of class, the three following essays will be due roughly once per month. I will grade your papers with a focus on content, given that the form is acceptable. However, you will be asked to present your work in a lucid, scholarly manner after revisions. Two to three topics will be given at least two weeks in advance each paper's due date. For the final paper, you may choose to write on anything covered in the course, or any topic related to the texts. As a way to encourage familiarity with literary criticism and theory, one of the papers will focus on more theoretical aspects of literature.

Mandatory Texts:

**Albert Camus** – *The Stranger* (1942), Translated by Matthew Ward, New York: Vintage, 1989.

**Art Spiegelman** – *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1973), New York: Pantheon, 1996.

**Chang-Rae Lee** – *Native Speaker* (1995), New York: Riverhead, 1996.

**Ha Jin** – *War Trash* (2004), New York: Vintage: 2004.

**Hunter S. Thompson** – *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971), New York: Vintage, 1998

**Masuji Ibuse** – *Black Rain* (1965), Translated by John Bester, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1988.

**Mo Yan** – *Red Sorghum* (1987), Translated by Howard Goldblatt, New York: Penguin, 1993.

Short Stories – Selections to be provided (books recommended):

**Flannery O'Connor** – *The Complete Stories*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971.

**Raymond Carver** – *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, New York: Vintage, 1989.

Poetry – Selections to be provided (PDF):

**Du Fu**–*Du Fu: A Life In Poetry*, Translated by David P. Young, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

**Bei Dao** – *The August Sleepwalker*, Translated by Bonnie S. McDougall, New York: New Directions, 2001.

**Emily Dickinson** – *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, New York: Back Bay Books, 1976.

**William Butler Yeats** – *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Edited by Richard J. Finneran, New York: Scribner, 1996.

Films (provided):

*Naussica of The Wind* (1985) – Directed by Hayao Miyazaki, produced by Studio Ghibli.

*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998) – Directed by Terry Gillian, produced by Universal Studios.

Supplementary Criticism & Theory (provided in PDF format):

Provided accordingly on Blackboard.

Recommended Texts & Films for further reading:

**Ha Jin** – *The Writer as Migrant, Waiting*

**Marjane Satrapi** – *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*

**Maxine Hong Kingston** – *Woman Warrior*

**Hunter S. Thompson** – *Hell’s Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*

**Tatsuzo Ishikawa** – *Soldiers Alive*

**Mo Yan** – *The Garlic Ballads*

**Raymond Carver** – *Where I’m Coming From: Collected Stories*

**Hayao Miyazaki** – *Princess Mononoke* (film)

**Du Fu** – *Selected Poems of Tu Du*, Translated by David Hinton

### Detailed Reading Schedule

September 1<sup>st</sup> (T) – Introduction

September 3<sup>rd</sup> (R) – *The Stranger*, p.3~59, exploratory paper topics provided

September 8<sup>th</sup> (T) – *The Stranger*, p.63~123

September 10<sup>th</sup> (R) – *Maus*, p.5-161, **exploratory paper due**

September 15<sup>th</sup> (T) – *Maus*, p.164-296

September 17<sup>th</sup> (R) – *Black Rain*, Ch.1-7 (p.5-114)

September 22<sup>nd</sup> (T) – *Black Rain*, Ch. 8-15 (p.115-219), 2<sup>nd</sup> essay topics announced

September 24<sup>th</sup> (R) – *Black Rain*, Ch. 16-20 (p.220-300)

September 29<sup>th</sup> (T) – *Naussica of The Wind* film viewing

October 1<sup>st</sup> (R) – O'Connor, *The Geranium, The Peeler, Everything that rises must converge*

October 6<sup>th</sup> (T) – O'Connor, *A Good Man is Hard to Find, Good Country People, Parker's Back*, **2<sup>nd</sup> essay due**

October 8<sup>th</sup> (R) – Poetry selection from *Du Fu: A Life in Poetry*

October 13<sup>th</sup> (T) – Poetry selection from by Bei Dao, *The August Sleepwalker*, **Portfolios due**

October 15<sup>th</sup> (R) – *Red Sorghum*, Part 1 (p.1-81)

October 20<sup>th</sup> (T) – *Red Sorghum*, Part 2 (p.85-165), 3<sup>rd</sup> essay topics announced

October 22<sup>nd</sup> (R) – *Red Sorghum*, Parts 3 & 4 (p.169-304)

October 27<sup>th</sup> (T) – *Red Sorghum*, Part 5 (p.307-359)

October 29<sup>th</sup> (R) – *Native Speaker*, p.1~130

November 3<sup>rd</sup> (T) – *Native Speaker*, p.131~249

November 5<sup>th</sup> (R) – *Native Speaker*, p.250~349, **3<sup>rd</sup> essay due**

November 10<sup>th</sup> (T) – Carver, *Viewfinder, I Could See The Smallest Things, Gazebo, Everything Stuck to Him*

November 12<sup>th</sup> (R) – Carver, *Tell the Women We're Going, The Third Thing That Killed My Father Off, What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*

November 17<sup>th</sup> (T) – *Fear and Loathing*, p.3~96

November 19<sup>th</sup> (R) – *Fear and Loathing*, p.99~204

November 24<sup>th</sup> (T) – *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* film viewing

**November 26<sup>th</sup> (R) – Thanksgiving Holiday, no class**

December 1<sup>st</sup> (T) – Poetry selections of Dickinson & Yeats

December 3<sup>rd</sup> (R) – *War Trash*, Prologue-Ch.11 (p.3-128)

December 8<sup>th</sup> (T) – *War Trash*, Ch.12-25 (p.129-250)

December 10<sup>th</sup> (R) – *War Trash*, Ch. 26-36 (p.251-350), Last Class

December 14<sup>th</sup> (M) – **Final papers & Portfolios due in my mailbox**