

Literature and Society
COLI 214B Section 02
Meeting Times: Tues/Thurs 8:30-9:55 am
Meeting Place: Science 1 158
Instructor: Diviani Chaudhuri
Office: LNG 204
Office Hours: Thurs- 3:30-5:30 pm
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Are you really sure that a floor can't also be a ceiling? ~M.C. Escher

This course will seek to study some of the ways in which the lived experience of human society has found expression in literatures preoccupied with the shifting nature of reality. We will begin with Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, a 21st century example of ergodic literature and then approach Calvino and Borges, in reverse chronology. Each of these pieces will enable us to discover the innovative ways in which society has been and continues to be narrativised as the great labyrinths of multiple realities yield to philosophical and literary exploration.

FORMAT & PROCEDURES

- This course will use Blackboard extensively.
- We will have a course blog. Each student will pick a date from the schedule and summarise what s/he learnt in class on that day in at least 350 words. This summary must be free of grammar, spelling and usage errors.
- You are required to come to class having read the sections assigned and prepared with discussion questions. In order to ensure that you receive adequate credit for this work, you must upload your discussion questions and reading commentary on the course blog before each class as well as bring them with you to class in some form. These entries must be at least 100 words and free of grammar, spelling and usage errors. In order to receive full credit you must write at least 20 commentaries. If you fail to do so, you will receive **no** credit.
- You will select a short story of your choice from the syllabus and make a short (three-page) presentation on it on the day it is scheduled to be taught in class. Your presentation will serve to ground our discussion for the day. Handouts are encouraged. Make it fun. At the end of class, each student will vote for the grade the presentation ought to receive. I will take into consideration the largest number of votes for any one grade.
- You will write two 5 page (excluding works cited page) papers for this course. Topics will be announced in class. These papers **must** follow the MLA citation style, be double-spaced, use the Times New Roman 12 pt font, have 1-inch margins all around and bear your surname at the header of each numbered page. There is no need to write the course number and instructor's name on the top of the first page. Please make sure that your paper is stapled/clipped before turning it in.
- More than three absences will result in the lowering of your final letter grade.

GRADING

Class Summary: 10%

Reading commentary: 30%

Presentation: 10%

Paper 1 (draft and rewrite): 25%

Paper 2 (draft and rewrite): 25%

REQUIRED TEXTS:

House of Leaves Mark Z. Danielewski
If on a winter's night a traveller Italo Calvino
Collected Fictions Jorge Luis Borges
Selected Non-Fictions Jorge Luis Borges

FILMS

Memento Christopher Nolan
Pan's Labyrinth

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Jan 27	Review of syllabus. Introductory lecture.
29	<i>House of Leaves</i> : Chapters I-IV, Borges: "The Postulation of Reality"
Feb 3	Ch. V-VIII
5	Ch. IX-XII
10	Ch. XIII-XVI
12	Ch. XVII-XX
17	Ch. XXI-XXIII & Appendices
19	Video: <i>Memento</i>
24	Video: Contd., <i>If on a winter's night a traveller</i> : Introductory class
26	1- Outside the town of Malbork
Mar 3	3-Without fear of wind or vertigo
5	5-In a network of lines that enlase
10	7-On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon
12	9-12
17	Video: <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i> [Paper 1 draft due]
19	Video: Contd.; Borges: "Narrative Art and Magic," "Films"
24	Borges: "Monk Eastman, Purveyor of Iniquities," "Hakim, the Masked Dyer of Merv"
26	"Man on Pink Corner," "Et Cetera" [Paper 1, revised, due]
31	"Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"
Apr 2	"The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim," "Pierre Menard, Author of the <i>Quixote</i> "
	[April 4-13: Spring & Easter Breaks]
14	"The Lottery in Babylon," "Prologues to The Library of Babel," "The Library of Babel"
16	"The Garden of Forking Paths" (Hypertext as well)
21	"Death and the Compass," "The Detective Story" [Paper 2 draft due]
23	"The Zahir," "The House of Asterion"
28	"The Other," "The Mirror and the Mask"
30	"The Book of Sand" (Hypertext as well)
May 5	Discussion about Paper 3 and Writing Practice
7	Conclusions [Paper 2, revised, due]

NOTE: The number of short stories may be reduced/increased, other material may be included in the syllabus, and the schedule may change. Please pay attention to the announcements posted on Bb/emailed to you.