ENG41570 World-Systems, World-Literature: Mapping the Planet
Thursdays: 4-6 (J208)
Dr. Sharae Deckard

Email: sharae.deckard@ucd.ie
Ext: 8156, Office J217
(Office Hours: Mon 4-5, Wed 11-12)

“Today the reinvention of cultural studies in the United States demands the reinvention, in a new situation, of what Goethe long ago theorized as ‘world literature.’”
– Fredric Jameson

“Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change.”
– Bertolt Brecht

“World literature is not an object, but a problem.”
– Franco Moretti

Course Texts
Rana DasGupta, Tokyo Cancelled
Jorge Volpi, Season of Ash
Simon Ings, Dead Water
Robert Newman, The Fountain at the Centre of the World
Karen Tei Yamashita, Through the Arc of the Rainforest
David Mitchell, Cloud Atlas
Jeff Derksen, Transnational Muscle Cars
Roy Miki, Mannequin Rising
Rita Wong, Forage
Kamau Brathwaite, X/Self

Teaching Schedule


[For further background reading on world-systems and world-literary approaches to literature, see on Blackboard: Pascale Casanova, Franco Moretti, Marshall Berman, Wallerstein]

Week Three (06/02): Rana Dasgupta, Tokyo Cancelled

Supplementary Reading: David Harvey, “Time-Space Compression and the Postmodern Condition” + Fredric Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping”
Week Four (13/02): Jorge Volpi, *Season of Ash*


Week Five (20/02): Robert Newman, *The Fountain at the Centre of the World*


Week Seven (6/03): Simon Ings, *Dead Water*


*-TERM BREAK—*

Week Eight (27/03): David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*


*Supplementary Reading:* Jeff Derksen, “Fixing Flows” + “National Literatures in the Shadow of Neoliberalism” + Peter Jaeger, “But Could I Make a Living From It”


**Course Description:**

Throughout the last decade, materialist theories of literary criticism have adopted world-systems frameworks in order to generate new modes of comparative socio-historical analysis of world literature. These modes of critique might be collectively
designated “world-literary criticism,” indicating methods of literary analysis that are comparative in their thrust and attuned to the ways in which literature mediates the structural and geographical divisions of the modern capitalist world-system. Using critical frameworks that draw on world-systems theory, world-ecological criticism, globalization, and “world-bank literature,” this module will explore “global” novels and literary forms that attempt to map the local experiences of globalization and combined and uneven development in relation to the larger world-system and world-ecology of capitalist modernity. In particular, we will attempt to define “world-literature” and ask what kinds of new forms and aesthetics are invented in the attempt to represent the seemingly unrepresentable totalities of the global and planetary. We will read novels and poetry alongside extracts of theory from Jason W. Moore, Immanuel Wallerstein, David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, Robert Tally, Michael Niblett, and others.

**Learning Objectives:**

On completion of this module students will have acquired:

- Knowledge of key concepts in world-systems theory and critical approaches to world literature
- Increased ability to critically evaluate differences in form and aesthetics
- Understanding of uneven development and familiarity with the impact of globalization on literary production

Seminars will comprise mini-lectures, group discussion, and student presentations. You must read the assigned texts in full for the given week and bring it to class; if you do not bring the text to class it will count as an absence. Secondary readings will all be available on Blackboard.

**Paper**

Option essay: **5000 words due 13th May (date tbc).**

I will provide a list of potential topics, but you will develop your own abstract, thesis, and title for the final essay; this must be approved in a discussion with me in Week 11. The abstract and title will count towards the grade of the final paper and must be approved and submitted. The final paper must use at least 10-12 secondary sources. Plagiarism is unacceptable and you must credit all direct quotes and paraphrases from other sources using MLA in-text citations and bibliographies. Only scholarly sources are acceptable (i.e. no Wikipedia, websites, Sparknotes—only academic books and journals.)

**Extensions and Absences:**

Unexcused absences result in the continuous assessment grade be lowered one grade point for each absence. If you think you will miss a class (whether for illness or an extracurricular reason), please email me your excuse. Likewise, if you think you cannot meet a paper deadline, even if it is the day before, please email me requesting an extension and I will do what I can. Otherwise late penalties will be applied.

**Assessment:**
20% Continuous Assessment (based on attendance, class participation, presentations)
80% Essay

Select Bibliography of Further Reading on World Literature and World-Systems

Numerous articles and extra background reading are posted on Blackboard under the weekly folder.

Parry Anderson, “Modernity and Revolution” NLR

Marshall Berman, All That is Solid Melts Away

Nicholas Brown, Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twenty-first Century Literature

Pascale Casanova, The World Republic of Letters

Harry Harootunian, “Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem” boundary 2 32.3 (2005): 23:52

Fredric Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” and A Singular Modernity

Franco Moretti, “Conjectures of World Literature” NLR

Roberto Schwarz, Misplaced Ideas


Patrick Williams, ‘Simultaneous Uncontemporaneities,’: Theorizing Modernism and Empire”