01:013:201 "CROSSROADS"

Classical Literatures of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia

Mon 9:50-11:10AM, Scott Hall 119 CAC
Wed 9:50-11:10AM, Scott Hall 119 CAC

Instructors: Prof. Anjali Nerlekar, Ph.D.; Prof. Charles Häberl, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: Nerlekar: M/W 12M–1PM; Häberl W 2–4PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introductory survey of the "classical" literatures of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, stretching from antiquity to around the 15th century. It examines critical areas of difference and similarity between the literary traditions of the three regions through the study of excerpts of sample "canonical" texts in a variety of ancient and classical languages: Akkadian, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Mandé, Yoruba and Tamil. The course is organized around three major literary genres shared by the three regions: Epic and sacred texts; poetry; folktales and story genres. It also explores the way in which new literary formations and traditions arose out of the historical interchange between peoples of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. In the process, students will also be exposed to the interaction between oral and written literary forms and the different kinds of scripts, both original and improvised, that have been used over the centuries in the written traditions of the societies of these interlocking regions of the world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course students will be able to identify and explain the fundamental differences and similarities between the oral and written classical traditions of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, especially as they are articulated in poetry and imaginative prose. They will also be familiar with the main theoretical issues in the study of literary hybridity and be able to relate them to specific texts studied in the course. Finally, they will be able to demonstrate how discourse analysis enables a reader to reveal constructions of meaning and power relations not only within the text, but also in conjunction with social issues by applying the method to a specific text provided in class.

COURSE READINGS:

(see Resources on Sakai)

COURSE EVALUATION:

Attendance and Course Participation:	20%
Homework:	30%
One 4-page paper:	10%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Paper:	20%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes including guest lectures and film screenings, to complete all assigned readings in a timely fashion (i.e., *before* the scheduled lecture) and to participate in class discussion. It is a requirement of this class to get the text under discussion to each class (not having one will affect your participation grade). There might be surprise pop quizzes in the day's reading once in a while and this will be part of your participation grade. Every unexcused absence will result in a 5-point reduction of your Attendance and Participation grade.

HOMEWORK:

The weekly homework consists of two short assignments, which must be submitted before class on Monday and Wednesday, respectively:

* *Monday HW – Word List*

Students are required to submit (**3**) words or expressions to discuss. The words must be from the week's reading that were new or unfamiliar, and provide a definition for each, on SAKAI > Forums. running list of these words/expressions will be maintained throughout the semester for all students to see and benefit from.

* *Wednesday HW – Question and Comment*

Students are required to post (**1**) question or (**1**) short comment about the assigned readings on the SAKAI forum before coming to class. (The point of this assignment is to focus your ideas for class discussion.)

FIRST PAPER:

This will be a short 4-page paper on prompts based on comparative approaches to literature read in class. Due **Monday, March 9**

MIDTERM EXAM:

The exam will consist of a quiz on names/characters/plot details of texts and short interpretive questions on the texts.

FINAL PAPER:

This will be a 6-page paper on given prompts. Due **Monday, April 30.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

The instructors reserve the right to adjust the schedule during the course of the semester.

Week 1

Wednesday Jan. 17: Introduction and The Scripts of 'Afrasia' [Häberl].

Week 2

Monday, Jan 22: Overview of concepts

I. *Epic*

Wednesday, Jan. 24: The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor [Häberl].

Week 3

Monday, Jan. 29: *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Akkadian) [Häberl].

Wednesday, Jan. 30: *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Cont.) [Häberl].

Week 4

Monday, Feb. 5: *The Ramayana*; (Sanskrit) [Nerlekar].

Wednesday, Feb. 7: *The Ramayana* (Cont.) [Nerlekar].

Week 5

Monday, Feb. 12: *The Mahabharata*; (Sanskrit) [Nerlekar].

Wednesday, Feb. 14: *The Mahabharata* (Cont.) [Nerlekar].

Week 6

Monday, Feb. 19: *The Alexander Romance* (Syriac) [Häberl].

Wednesday, Feb. 21: *The Alexander Romance* (Cont.) [Häberl].

Week 7

Monday, Feb. 26: film screening: *Keita: The Heritage of the Griot* [1995, Dani Kouyaté, Burkina Faso, 94 minutes]. **4-page paper due**

Wednesday, Feb. 28: *The Epic of Sundiata* (Mali) [Guest lecture, Prof. Ousseina Alidou]

II. *Poetry*

Week 8

Monday, March 5: Sangam/Cankam poetry (ancient Tamil) [Nerlekar].

Wednesday, March 7: Sangam/Cankam poetry (Cont.) [Nerlekar].

Week 9 SPRING BREAK (No Class)

Week 10

Monday, March 19: Kabir (Hindi) [Nerlekar].

Wednesday, March 21: Kabir (Cont.) [Nerlekar].

Week 11

Monday, March 26: *The Qur'ān* (Arabic)[Häberl].

Wednesday, March 28: *The Qur'ān* (Cont.) [Häberl].

Week 12

Monday, April 2: *Al-Inkishafi* [Guest Lecture: Prof. Alamin Mazrui]

Wednesday April 4: Midterm Exam.

III. *Folktales and Storytelling Traditions*

Week 13

Monday, April 9: Introduction to Folklore [Häberl].

Wednesday, April 11: Folktales from Africa (from multiple African languages) (Guest Lecture)

Week 14

Monday, April 16: *Folktales from India*—(Oral tales from 22 Indian languages) [Nerlekar]

Wednesday, April 18: *Folktales from India*—(Cont.) [Nerlekar]

Week 15

Monday, April 23: *The Arabian Nights* (Selections) [Häberl].

Wednesday, April 25: *The Arabian Nights* (Cont.) [Häberl].

Week 16

Monday, April 30: Course Conclusion; Final Papers due.