

HUMA 14200: Reading Cultures III

Spring 2021

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Reading Cultures core sequence offers an introduction to critical reading and cultural analysis. This Humanities Course approaches cultures not simply as groups of people but as sets of shared ideas and assumptions that take shape in specific forms of representation. Our goal will be to examine how cultural knowledge is formed and transmitted across space and time via three interconnected processes: collecting, travel and exchange. By focusing on these processes and their representation in art, literature and film, we will consider how cultures are created through the stories they tell and the stories that are told about them.

The spring quarter works toward understanding the relation, in the modern and post-modern periods, between economic development and processes of cultural transformation. We examine literary and cinematic texts that celebrate and criticize modernization and urbanization. We begin in the nineteenth century with Balzac's novel *Old Man Goriot* and Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, and then concentrate on works that address economic, social, and cultural change and exchange in the twentieth century, including Melville's "Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids," Richard Wright's *Native Son*, and Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*.

LEARNING GOALS:

You will gain expertise in a reader-centered approach to writing.

You will understand how to shape your arguments to persuade a target audience.

You will increase the clarity of both your arguments and your prose.

You will gain further practice in comprehending and challenging theoretical positions.

You will gain further practice in close reading and literary analysis.

CORE TEXTS TO PURCHASE:

Honoré de Balzac, *Père Goriot*. Penguin. ISBN-13: 978-0140449723

Xiao Hong, *Field of Life and Death*. Cheng & Tsui. ISBN-13: 978-0887273926

Richard Wright, *Native Son*. Harper ISBN-13: 978-0061148507

CORE TEXTS AVAILABLE ON CANVAS:

Mauss, *The Gift*. Trans. Jane Guyer. UChicago Press. ISBN-13: 978-0990505006

Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker. Norton.

ISBN-13: 978-0393090406

James Baldwin, “Many Thousands Gone,” and “Everybody’s Protest Novel”

Herman Melville, “Paradise of Bachelors”

REQUIRED FILMS (instructor’s choice):

Modern Times (public domain, available on youtube)

The Lunchbox (available on Amazon Prime, itunes, googleplay)

GRADING DISTRIBUTION:

MAUSS REVISION – 6 POINTS

NATIVE SON AND BALDWIN – 10 POINTS

BALZAC BON MOT – 8 POINTS

DISCUSSION POSTS – 24 POINTS

MARX AND MODERN TIMES – 8 POINTS PARTICIPATION - 36 POINTS

XIAO HONG – 8 POINTS

DATE	TEXT/THEME	READING ASSIGNMENT	WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
TU 3/30		Intro, discussion of Baudelaire's "The Eyes of the Poor"	
TH 4/01	Mauss	Mauss Intro and Chapters 1	
TU 4/06	Mauss	Mauss Chapter 4, Introduction to La Comédie Humaine	
TH 4/08	Balzac	1. A Respectable Boarding House, 2. Two Calls are Paid	Mauss revision due Friday 11:59pm

TU 4/13	Balzac	3. An Introduction to Society, 4. Cat-o'-Nine-Lives	
TH 4/15	Balzac	5. The Two Daughters, 6. Death of the Father	
TU 4/20	Melville	"Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids"	Balzac bon mot due Monday 11:59pm
TH 4/22	Marx	Chapter 1, Capital, pp. 302-336	
TU 4/27	Marx	"The Communist Manifesto"	
TH 4/29	Charlie Chaplin	<i>Modern Times</i>	
TU 5/04	<i>Xiao Hong</i>	1-6	Marx and Modern Times due Monday 11:59pm
TH 5/06	<i>Xiao Hong</i>	7/17	
TU 5/11	Richard Wright	<i>Native Son, Sec 1</i>	
TH 5/13	<i>Richard Wright</i>	Sec. 2	Xiao Hong and contemporary relevance due Friday 11:59pm
TU 5/18	<i>Richard Wright</i>	Sec. 3	
TH 5/20	James Baldwin	" <i>How Bigger was Born</i> ," "Everybody's Protest Novel"	
TU 5/27	Ritesh Batra	<i>The Lunchbox</i>	
W 6/02			Native Son and James Baldwin due 11:59pm

DISCUSSION:

Our meetings will follow a general pattern, which I have outlined below:

Week 1: Tuesday and Thursday 80-minute Zoom discussions

Weeks 2-9:

1. Canvas discussion: beginning Friday, finished by Monday
2. Zoom discussion: Tuesday 40 minutes, in half-class groups, during either the 1st or 2nd half of scheduled class time. We will divide into these groups during week 1.
3. In-person class: Thursday 80 minutes, with masks, socially distanced, in-person

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

The success of this discussion-based seminar depends upon your preparation and participation. Please come to Zoom and class having read the material and prepared to share ideas about it. Canvas postings are graded separately, but they provide an opportunity for you to collect your thoughts in advance. I expect you to attend all Zoom sessions, course meetings and writing seminars. If you are absent because of illness, please let me know. If you need to be absent because sports or other planned extra-curricular activities, please let me know in advance. It is possible to make up excused absences either through a short writing assignment or a short conversation with me.

Participation – especially in this hybrid format! – can take multiple forms. If you are a shy person, or work better with time to prepare your thoughts, you might want to take more advantage of the Zoom chat feature to find a way into the conversation. You are also welcomed to schedule a time to talk with me one-on-one, or in small groups, about the ideas you have about our readings. If you think of something you would have liked to say after class is over, please also feel free to share via email.

CANVAS DISCUSSIONS:

Canvas discussions are meant to help you focus your reading, and to warm up for the first synchronous discussion of the week. Because we will only spend 40 minutes together in our Tuesday Zoom discussions in weeks 2-9, I want us all to bring energy and enthusiasm to the Canvas discussion board. To help make Canvas discussion more dynamic, I will ask 2-3 of you to serve as discussion leaders each week. The job of the discussion leader is to work to keep discussion going by asking additional questions, connecting points that classmates have made, asking classmates to clarify their points, etc. Reading through Canvas discussions is a great way to get yourself thinking about an idea for a paper!

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Under assignments on Canvas, you will find a detailed description of each of our 5 short writing assignments, along with a grading rubric.

For all writing assignments, I have asked you to designate a reader. [Designating your reader](#)

Each writing assignment asks you to engage with one or more of our main texts, and is designed to assess your comprehension, your ability to use the text to make claims that have value for particular readers, and your ability to write clearly. I can be flexible about deadlines, but I do think it is best to write each assignment right after you have finished reading the text to which it responds.

DEADLINES:

The due dates for all assignments are listed above. Please be aware of these due dates as well as of dates for writing workshops. Each quarter, I will give each of you a 48-hour bank of additional time that you can use for any course assignment (NOT writing seminar assignments) throughout the quarter.

For example, maybe you only need 5 extra hours to finish something. That leaves you 43 hours of extension time to apply to the final paper if you would like. Once you have used up your bank of time, for each day that an assignment is overdue, I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., A- becomes a B+). Please plan accordingly and do your best to manage your time.

LECTURES/ INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL:

BEFORE you respond to discussion for a particular date, please watch or read any introductory material listed as due prior to the discussion. I'll be recording a number of short lectures, as well as conversations with my colleagues teaching other sections of Reading Cultures. Sometimes I will ask you to use external sources, and respond to a few questions about them. These materials are intended to provide you with background information, to explain difficult concepts, and to alert you to possible interpretations of our texts. I will do my best to make them interesting!

ACCESSIBILITY:

Our goal is to assess you based on your writing and thinking, and not on your ability to access or use certain technologies. Please get in touch with my right away if the set up of our learning environment or activities present any barriers to your full participation, and together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. To this end, I invite you to discuss accessibility measures with me as soon as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions.

FEEDBACK LOOPS:

I will reach out to you via google forms and solicit your anonymous responses to questions about how the course is going for you. I aim to be adaptable!

STUDENT SUPPORT:

College-level analysis and writing pose challenges to all incoming students. To help you meet these challenges, you may find it helpful to utilize some of the services provided FREE OF CHARGE by Student Services of The College. Various professional staff and advanced students are committed to helping you address academic challenges in a variety of ways. Visit their [webpage](#) to learn about tutoring and mentoring options, guidance on study skills and time management, and one-on-one assistance to ensure that you are using the best possible strategies for success in your course work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Obviously, your work should be your own, because the only thing plagiarism teaches is how to plagiarize. I hope we can all agree that that is not what we are here for.

FINALLY:

I am excited about this class, and I hope that you are too. I look forward to working with all of you to create a class environment in which we can all express ourselves freely and respectfully, and hear each other with critical rigor and compassion. I am eager to continue learning with you.