

HL2007 Contemporary Literature and Culture Course Outline



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Death and the Maiden, 2009

Introduction:

This module offers students various texts from which to understand the contemporary world from the mid-twentieth century to the recent present. Through the lens of critical theoretical ideas and debates, we will read works that explore the intersectional as well as individual preoccupations that consistently insist on how the human body is situated both in physical and abstract space, all the while interpellated by forces such as politics, race, gender, class and science/technology. With readings that cover genres of drama, fiction, memoir, literary essays and poetry, as well as non-print materials such as films, art, visual images (photographs, MTVs), students will gain an in-depth and critical appreciation of the contextual and overlapping tensions within our societies.

Seminar Schedule

Week No:	Topics	Texts
1	Introduction to Contemporary Literature and Culture (Part 1)	Handouts: Overview of Course, Contemporary literary and cultural theories (postmodernism, postcolonialism, feminism).
2	Body/Bodies: The Immobilised Body	Samuel Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1953) Jim Jarmusch (dir.), <i>Only Lovers Left Alive</i> (2013)
3	Body/Bodies: The Immobilised Body	Ariel Dorfman, <i>Death and the Maiden</i> (1990) Various visual representations of motif in 20 th century
4	Body/Bodies: Transforming the Body (Part 1)	Margaret Atwood, <i>Oryx and Crake</i> (2003) Performance artist Stelarc's works

5	Body/Bodies: Transforming the Body (Part 2)	Margaret Atwood, <i>Oryx and Crake</i> (2003) Cindy Sherman's photographs
6	Race & Gender: Gazes / Gazing (Part 1)	Elif Shafak, <i>The Gaze</i> (2000) Frida Kahlo's paintings
7	Race & Gender: Gazes / Gazing (Part 2)	Elif Shafak, <i>The Gaze</i> (2000) Greta Gerwig (dir.), <i>Barbie</i> (subject to change)
8	Recess	
9	Race & Gender: Histories / Memories	Michael Ondaatje, <i>Running in the Family</i> (1982) MTV: Beyonce's "Formation" and "Lemonade"
10	Places and Spaces: Reading Spatial Texts	Michael Ondaatje, <i>Running in the Family</i> (1982) Yi-Fu Tuan's essay "Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience" (1977) Royston Tan (dir.), <i>Old Places</i> (2010)
11	Places and Spaces: The City	Selection of poems (local and non-Singaporean) that interrogates the urban lived experience Rebecca Solnit, extracts from <i>The Faraway Nearby</i> (2013) Ken Chen, "City out of Breath" essay (2005)
12	Places and Spaces: (Dis)Locating Capitalism	Bong Joon-ho, <i>Parasite</i> (2019) Tan Pin Pin (dir.), "Walk Walk" (2023) and "Singapore Ga-ga" (2005) Susan Orleans, "The Place to Disappear" (2000)
13	Concluding session	

Core Texts:

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

Ariel Dorfman, *Death and the Maiden*

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

Elif Shafak, *The Gaze*

Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*

Handouts for poetry and essays