

**AY2024-2025 HL2007 Contemporary Literature and Culture Seminar 1**  
**Course Outline and Schedule**



Nicole Eisenman  
***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), students will gain an in-depth and critical appreciation of the contextual and overlapping tensions within our contemporary societies.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, students will

- Identify the key features of major literary-critical forms relevant to the period, namely postmodernism, postcolonialism, feminism and intersectionality
- Discuss meaningfully how the later-half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's literary and cultural forms respond to, echo, challenge, and/or undermine historical, social, and political metanarratives
- Evaluate literary-critical sources, genres, and readings to deepen understanding of relevant theories
- Raise critically-informed questions (in class discussions, presentations, an essay abstract, and research abstracts)

**Assessment:**

10% - Participation (classroom discussions, activities, group work)

10% - Research Essay Abstract (an academic abstract in advance of your chosen major research essay)

40% - Final Essay (argumentative essay of 2000 words, including citations on a subject agreed with tutor)

40% - Final Exam (testing a broad range of literary-critical skills, across a range of materials drawn from the primary readings in the course)

## Seminar Schedule

Week	Topics	Texts
1 15/8	Introduction to Contemporary Literature and Culture (Part 1)	Handouts: Overview of Course, Contemporary literary and cultural theories (postmodernism, postcolonialism, feminism).
2 22/8	Body/Bodies: The Immobilised Body	Samuel Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1953) Jim Jarmusch (dir.), <i>Only Lovers Left Alive</i> (2013)
3 29/8	Body/Bodies: The Immobilised Body	Ariel Dorfman, <i>Death and the Maiden</i> (1990) Various visual representations of motif in 20 <sup>th</sup> century
4 5/9	Body/Bodies: Transforming the Body (Part 1)	Margaret Atwood, <i>Oryx and Crake</i> (2003) Performance artist Stelarc's works
5 12/9	Body/Bodies: Transforming the Body (Part 2)	Margaret Atwood, <i>Oryx and Crake</i> (2003) Cindy Sherman's photographs
6 19/9	Race & Gender: Gazes / Gazing (Part 1) <u>Research Essay Abstract Due</u>	Elif Shafak, <i>The Gaze</i> (2000) Frida Kahlo's paintings
7 26/9	Race & Gender: Gazes / Gazing (Part 2)	Elif Shafak, <i>The Gaze</i> (2000) Greta Gerwig (dir.), <i>Barbie</i> (subject to change)
8	<b>Recess (30/9 – 4/10)</b>	
9 10/10	Race & Gender: Histories / Memories <u>Final Essay Due</u>	Michael Ondaatje, <i>Running in the Family</i> (1982) MTV: Beyonce's "Formation" and "Lemonade"
10 17/10	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 24/10	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 31/10	Deepavali Public Holiday	
13 7/11	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)
14 14/11	Concluding Lesson	Review of literary and cultural theories Review of texts and critical readings

**We meet at LHS-TR+55 (#3, The Hive, Learning Hub South), Thursdays 9.30am-12.20pm.**

Tutor: Dr. Ng Soo Nee ([soonee.ng@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:soonee.ng@ntu.edu.sg))

**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

**Course Policies:**

**Attendance and Participation:** The success of any seminar depends on the active participation of all its members. Barring illness or emergencies, you must attend every seminar. You must arrive on time, having done the required readings and any assigned work, and be ready to participate in the class discussion. Failure to do so will reduce your participation grade significantly. If you need to miss a class, you must get in touch with me *before* that week's meeting.

**Late Work and Extensions:** If your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received an A will receive a A-). No work will be accepted more than three days late without prior permission. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or genuine emergency. You can earn a two-day extension if you work on your paper with a writing coach at the LCC Communication Cube.

**Seeking Help Outside Class:** You are encouraged to use any form of legitimate aid to help you write papers and research topics that interest you. Obvious sources of legitimate assistance include your tutors, the coaches at the LCC Communication Cube, and the subject librarians at the library. If you work on a paper with a writing coach, you are eligible for a two-day extension. Please speak to me if you would like to take advantage of this!

**Generative AI:** Generative AI (such as ChatGPT) is not designed for research and is inclined to make things up. If you intend to use generative AI for your work in *any* capacity, you must get written permission from me first. You must follow the university's prevailing policies about how to acknowledge the use of generative AI in your work. Although it can be a useful tool, you must not use it to replace your own thinking or learning.

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:** Don't do it! If I find that you have misrepresented someone else's work or wording as your own you will fail the assignment and possibly the course. If you are unsure of how or when to cite a source, please ask me or refer to the university's academic integrity resources online.