HL 2024
Approaches to Literature
AY 2023/24 S2

Instructor: Dr Samuel Wee (samuelwee@ntu.edu.sg)

Lectures are on Wednesdays (1130 - 1320) at LT 22.
Tutorials are on Fridays at varied times from 0930 to 1320, with the exception of **T5**, which takes place Wednesdays an hour after lecture (1430 -1520)
Office hours will be on Thursdays 1130- 130pm in-person at SHHK Building #03-79, or by appointment over Zoom.

Overview

This core literary theory module aims to develop a greater self-awareness in the understanding of the reading process and of critical practice. The course introduces fundamental theoretical and critical concepts central to the study of English Literature. By focusing on a specific theoretical context each week, the module aims to develop fluency and confidence towards being critical readers of literature, as well as to develop and awareness of the environments in which literary texts are produced.

Course Readings

To be purchased or taken out from the library:
Peter Barry*, Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*
David Mitchell*, Cloud Atlas*
R.F. Kuang*, Yellowface*

Films to be watched on streaming service, from the library, or on DVD:
Burning (dir. Lee Chang Dong)

Uploaded to NTULearn:
William Faulkner, "Barn Burning"
Haruki Murakami, "Barn Burning"
Selected poems

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) **General:** Do your best to complete the assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar classes punctually, and take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. Importantly, please try your best to read all primary texts prior to the start of the semester (other than the excerpts I will distribute in class). The readings for this class consist for two very readable novels, two short stories, and a two-hour film, and you should have no problems finishing them. It is your responsibility to stay on top of course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions you might have missed. You are expected to make a reasonable effort to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) **Participation:** The format of this class is split between the lecture and the tutorial, the latter of which is heavily peer-driven. The subject matter of this class is challenging, so I encourage you to make the most of the smaller group setting by candidly voicing any difficulties you might face with understanding the readings, testing out potential arguments, and learning to support and be supported by your peers.

(3) **Absence** without a valid reason will not only affect your overall course grade, but also your holistic understanding of the subject matter. NTU's policy for valid absences include falling sick and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies. If there are other intervening factors keeping you from lecture or tutorial, inform me and your tutor prior to the start of class.

(4) **Deadlines** assigned in this class are to be adhered to, especially for group projects and assignments. If extensions are necessary, you may request one from your tutor, to be granted at their discretion.

Assessment Components

The **midterm essay** is worth **20%,** and is due *Week 7, March 1*.
The end of term essay is worth **30%,** and is due *Week 13, April 17*.
The final exam is worth **50%,** and the *date will be confirmed **later on in the semester***.

Essays: You will be asked to formulate two original readings of our course texts that take into account the themes of the class. In the first assignment, I will test your ability to critically analyze the texts, to perform original close readings without the aid of secondary sources, and to advance a coherent and focused thesis. In the second, you will be asked to formulate an original reading of one of our literary texts with the aid of two critical sources that reflect two approaches we have covered in the course. This assignment will test your ability to integrate scholarship from academic sources into your argument. You will also be evaluated on your overall ability to structure a persuasive argument.

Final Exam: You will pick two prompts from several questions given to you, and write two short responses that demonstrate your knowledge of the course material and your mastery of its critical concepts. These responses must correspond to two different theoretical approaches covered in the lectures. This exam is intended to evaluate the degree to which you have internalized the syllabus of this class and synthesize it with your ongoing knowledge of literature.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the academic integrity website for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

 On the use of AI tools, this course will adopt NTU's policy on the use of AI tools for coursework:

1. Give proper citations if you use any AI tool. Extending the practice of correctly citing references in your work under NTU's policies on citation and plagiarism, the University requires students to (i) identify any generative AI tools used and (ii) declare how the tools 11 are used in submitted work. Please note that even with acknowledgement, copying of output generated by AI tools (in part or whole) may still be regarded as plagiarism. If in the doubt, err on the side of caution and talk to me.

2. Do not pass off writing from AI as your own. At the university level, the ability to resourcefully consult and connect your writing to other vetted sources is just as important as your ability to generate original ideas. Passing off AI text as your own is not only easily detectible to a trained reader, it also undermines the entire basis of a humanities education.

3. Check your facts and sources. AI does not give you actual information; it gives you natural sounding language. In other words, it excels at writing nonsense that sounds plausible. If you consult AI at any point, be sure to not only properly cite it, but also to check that the texts it quotes actually exist.

4. Nothing beats your own ideas. AI tools may be good at producing summaries and grammatical sentences, but they cannot replace your original ideas and creativity. A rigorous education will equip you with the ability to express your ideas, process ideas for problem solving and make sound judgements. These capabilities and your unique human experiences are still your most valuable assets.

5. Uphold your pledge to integrity in learning. NTU expects students to uphold the Student Code of Conduct at all times. The act of taking words or ideas from other

sources, including ChatGPT and other AI technologies, and present them as your own without proper citation of the source(s), will be treated as misconduct.

Reading Schedule:

Week	Topic	Readings/ Activities
Week 1	Introduction: How Do We Approach Literature?	*Administrative* Peter Barry, "Liberal Humanism" Donald Hall, "The New Criticism and Formalist Analysis" Selected poems
Week 2	Formalism and Narratology	Peter Barry, "Narratology" H. Porter Abbott, "Narrative and Life" David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*
Week 3	Reader response theory	Peter Barry, "Reader-Response Analysis" Michel Foucault, "What is An Author?" Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author" David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*
Week 4	Structuralism and poststructuralism	Peter Barry, "Structuralism", "Poststructuralism", David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*
Week 5	Marxist Theory	Peter Barry, "Marxist Theory", "New Historicism and Cultural Materialism" William Faulkner, "Barn Burning"
Week 6	Psychoanalysis	Peter Barry, "Psychoanalytic criticism" Haruki Murakami, "Barn Burning"
Week 7	Postmodern theory	Peter Barry, "Postmodern theory" Lee Chang Dong, *Burning* *(Midterm paper due)*

	Recess Week	
Week 8	Feminism, gender, and sexuality	Peter Barry, "Feminist criticism", "Lesbian/gay criticism" Selected poems
Week 9	Feminism, gender, and sexuality	Toni Morrison, *Playing In the Dark* [Excerpts] R.F. Kuang, *Yellowface*
Week 10	Race, postcolonial, and decolonial theory	Peter Barry, "Postcolonial theory" R. F. Kuang, *Yellowface*
Week 11	Critical race and postcolonial theory	Edward Said, *Orientalism* [Excerpts] R. F. Kuang, *Yellowface*
Week 12	Hari Raya Puasa	N/A
Week 13	Exam review	N/A *(End of term paper due)*