



## **ELL 408 – Comparative Literature**

*Asst. Prof. Michael D. Sheridan*

Monday 10<sup>00</sup>–11<sup>00</sup> (H-207)

Thursday 12<sup>00</sup>–14<sup>00</sup> (H-203)

*Office Hours:* Friday 10<sup>00</sup>–13<sup>00</sup> (B-157)\*

*Email:* michael.sheridan@tedu.edu.tr

### **Course Description**

This course aims to familiarize students with some of the fundamental elements, approaches, and problems of the field of comparative literature, primarily via examination of a variety of different primary-source literary texts. The key question to which we will constantly return is how comparative literature differs from so-called “national” literatures, such as English literature, not only in terms of topic but also in terms of methodological approaches. Related to this question will also be the larger conceptual issues of whether there is, can be, or should be a canon of world literature, and indeed what “literature” is and what it might become when considered on a global and world-historical scale.

### **Course Format**

Although there will be occasional lectures or mini-lectures outlining, for example, the historical, sociocultural, and literary background of the material on which we focus, for the most part this course is a reading- and discussion-based course. Therefore, you will be expected and required to come to each class having read/viewed, thought about, taken notes on, and prepared questions and/or comments relating to the assigned material. Each class will then proceed according to your preparation as we discuss, debate, and (hopefully) clarify our thoughts and ideas.

Please note that, in the classroom, I rarely use slides but make frequent and heavy use of the blackboard/whiteboard. As such, it will be to your benefit to come to each class prepared to take notes. While you are of course welcome to take notes in any manner you wish, it is worth noting that numerous neuroscientific studies have shown that taking notes by hand with pen/pencil and paper is more beneficial than typing (or taking pictures of the board) for learning and retaining information, as well as for understanding and synthesizing concepts.

---

\* Please note that, simultaneously with these physical office hours, I will also hold online office hours via Zoom; the Zoom meeting ID and passcode will be shared and pinned on the Moodle announcements page.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ✓ recognize, identify, and understand what comparative literature entails as a discipline, as well as the relation between comparative literature and the study of English literature
- ✓ describe some of the fundamental approaches and problems of the discipline of comparative literature
- ✓ analyze and evaluate works of literature of various types and in various media from a cross-cultural comparative perspective

## Course Materials

All texts for the course will be provided for you via the course Moodle page, mainly but not exclusively in PDF format. I strongly recommend that, whenever possible or feasible, you print out paper versions of the texts and read them that way: this is because reading physical copies of texts allows better annotation and note-taking as compared to electronic versions, and therefore facilitates more active engagement in the classroom and better understanding as a whole.

Any extra-literary materials (*i.e.*, artwork, film clips, etc.) will also be provided for you by way of Internet links or other means, though you are also free to seek out and obtain them on your own.

From Week 4 through Week 12, this course will focus on primary-source material (*i.e.*, literary texts) and not on secondary-source material (*i.e.*, introductory, critical, and/or analytical texts); nevertheless, during those weeks, I may occasionally assign some secondary-source readings as necessary, and any such readings will be announced in class and/or via email or Moodle.

## Grading

Your final grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

*Ongoing (formative) assessment (30%)*

- **Attendance and participation (15%)**

Because, as noted above, this is a reading- and discussion-based course, regular attendance at and active participation in class are expected and required. The attendance portion of your grade counts for 5% of your total grade (determined based directly on the percentage of class-hours attended), while the participation portion of your grade counts for 10% of your total grade.

- **Assignments (15%)**

Over the course of the semester, you will write a total of three (3) short (between approximately 350 and 750 words) short assignments, with each individual assignment worth 5% of your total grade. More details about these assignments will be provided in the first week of class, as well as periodically throughout the semester.

*Summative assessment (70%)*

- **Midterm examination (25%)**

Around Week 9 of the semester, there will be a midterm examination covering the material from Weeks 1 through 8. More information about this exam will be provided in due course.

- **Group presentation (15%)**

In the last two weeks of the semester, you will be expected to make group presentations of approximately 15 minutes in length on a topic of your choice. More information about these presentations will be provided in due course.

- **Final project (30%)**

You will be expected to individually prepare a final project, about which more information will be provided in due course.

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

TED University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. Such a level of ethical behavior and academic integrity will be expected in this course. Participating in behavior that violates academic integrity—*e.g.*, unauthorized collaboration on homework assignments, plagiarism, multiple submissions of the same assignment, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person to cheat, having unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, or any other action deemed as giving an unfair academic advantage—will result in disciplinary action. For more information on what constitutes ethical academic integrity at TED University, please see the following page: <https://student.tedu.edu.tr/en/student/principles-of-academic-integrity>.

Also please note that, in this course, any form of discrimination and/or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, or disability, among other personal characteristics or choices, is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

### **Attendance, Make-up, and Late Submission Policies**

You are required to attend class regularly, and attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class hour. As noted above, simple attendance counts for 5% of your total grade, but please note that more than 12 class-hours of absence will result in failure (FX) of the course.

Except in cases of documented illness or emergency, there will be no make-ups for any of the course assessments listed above. Late submissions (again, with the exception of documented illness or emergency) will generally be accepted, but at a penalty of 10% (*i.e.*, the equivalent of one full letter grade) of the assessment's overall grade per 24-hour period.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

Below you will find a week-by-week schedule of the material, primarily readings, on which we will focus. The exact day-by-day schedule will be announced in class and/or via email or Moodle, and any texts not specified below (*i.e.*, listed as “various texts,” “selected texts,” “excerpts,” etc.) will be clarified in due time in class and/or via email or Moodle. Please note that, as indicated by the word “tentative” above, this material and the schedule may change according to the progress and “flow” of the class; any changes will be announced in class and/or via email or Moodle. Also please note that you are responsible for checking on and keeping up with the assigned material, and that you must come to the first class of each week having read or watched all of the material for that week.

### **UNIT 1: SOME FUNDAMENTALS OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

#### **Week 1 (Feb. 14 + 17): Definitions**

- Discussions: What is “comparative literature”? What is “world literature” [*Weltliteratur*]? What is “English literature”? What is “the/a canon”?
- Reading: Handout, “Johann Wolfgang von Goethe on *Weltliteratur*”

#### **Week 2 (Feb. 21 + 24): Approaches**

- Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature”
- Kate McInturff, “The Uses and Abuses of World Literature”

#### **Week 3 (Feb. 28 + Mar. 3): Comparative Literature in Practice**

- *The Odyssey*, Book 19: lines 384–567
- The King James Bible, *Genesis*, Chapter 22: verses 1–18  
(<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Genesis-Chapter-22/>)
- Erich Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar” from *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*

- Dante Alighieri, the *Convivio*, Book 2, Chapter 1  
(<https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/text/library/the-convivio/book-02/#01>)

#### **Week 4 (Mar. 7 + 10): *Traduttore, Traditore* – The Problem of Translation**

- Various translations of poems by Li Bai and Du Fu
- Xujun Eberlein, “Is There a Good Way to Translate Chinese Poetry?”  
(<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/good-way-translate-chinese-poetry/>)
- Various translations of ghazals by Mirza Ghalib
- Dick Davis, “On Not Translating Hafez”

### **UNIT 2: SOME GENRES ACROSS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**

#### **Weeks 5 and 6 (Mar. 14 + 17, Mar. 21 + 24): Many Varieties of Epic**

- **Beginnings:** *The Iliad*, Book 1: lines 1–12; *The Odyssey*, Book 1: lines 1–24; *The Aeneid*, Virgil, Book 1: lines 1–13; *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, Dante Alighieri, Canto 1; *The Lusads*, Luís Vaz de Camões, Canto 1, stanzas 1–6; *Paradise Lost*, John Milton, Book 1: lines 1–33; *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet 1, lines 1–74; *Ramayana*, Valmiki, Chapter 1, lines 1–21; *The Táin Bó Cúailnge*, from “The Pillow Talk”; *Beowulf*, Prologue: lines 1–104; *The Song of Roland*, stanzas 1–2; *The Book of Travels*, Evliya Çelebi, from Book 1 (pp. 3–7); *Action Comics* No. 1 (June 1938); *Batman* No. 1 (Spring 1940); *Amazing Fantasy* No. 15 (August 1962)
- **Monsters:** *The Odyssey*, Book 9: lines 118–630; *The Book of Dede Korkut*, Chapter 8: “Tells the Story of How Basat Killed Goggle-Eye [Tepegöz]”
- **Heroes in “Conflict”:** *The Iliad*, Book 6: lines 137–282; Scene from *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016), directed by Zack Snyder

#### **Week 7 (Mar. 28 + 31): Two Varieties of “Love Lyric” – Sonnet and Ghazal**

- Sonnets #1 and 3 by Petrarch
- Sonnets #18 and 65 by William Shakespeare
- Selected ghazals by Bâkî, Hayretî, Mihrî Hatun, Neşâtî
- “The Enemy,” Charles Baudelaire
- “Her İki Adımda Bir Uygunsuzluğunu (Yalnızlığını) Algılayan Birisine Gazel,” Turgut Uyar
- Selected sonnets by Metin Altıok
- Selected ghazals by Agha Shahid Ali and Adrienne Rich

#### **Week 8 (Apr. 4 + 7): Exploring the Self – The Essay**

- Excerpts from *The Pillow Book*, Sei Shonagon
- Excerpts from *Essays in Idleness*, Kenko

- “On Idleness,” “On Liars,” and “On the Custom of Wearing Clothes” from *Essays*, Michel de Montaigne
- “Honesty: Be True to Love” from *All About Love: New Visions*, bell hooks

### **UNIT 3: SOME EXAMPLES OF THEMATIC AND ARCHETYPAL APPROACHES**

#### **Weeks 9 and 10 (Apr. 11 + 14, Apr. 18 + 21): Reality and Unreality**

- *The Republic*, Plato, Book 7: 514a–520a (The Allegory of the Cave)
- Excerpts from the *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 2: “Discussion on Making All Things Equal”
- “Du Zichun,” Niu Sengru and “An Account of the Governor of the Southern Branch,” Li Gongzuo
- “The Overcoat,” Nikolai Gogol
- “The Circular Ruins,” Jorge Luis Borges
- Scenes from *The Matrix* (1999), directed by Lana and Lilly Wachowski

#### **Weeks 11 and 12 (Apr. 25 + 28, May 9 + 12): Tricksters and Wise or Holy Fools**

- Selected stories featuring Coyote and Anansi
- The *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 8 (“Webbed Toes”) and Chapter 9 (“Horses’ Hoofs”)
- Excerpts from *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Book 6 (“Diogenes of Sinope”), Diogenes Laertius
- The Qur’an, *Al-Kahf*: verses 65–82 (<https://quran.com/18>)
- Jokes featuring Nasreddin Hodja
- Excerpts from *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, William Shakespeare
- Excerpts from *Don Quixote*, Miguel de Cervantes
- Excerpts from *The Idiot*, Fyodor Dostoevsky
- Scenes from *The Dark Knight* (2008), directed by Christopher Nolan
- **Please note that there will be no class on the week of May 2–6 due to the Eid al-Fitr (Ramazan) holiday.**

\*\*\*

#### **Week 13 (May 16 + 19): Presentations**

- Group presentations and discussion

#### **Week 14 (May 23 + 26): Presentations**

- Group presentations and discussion
- Review of the course