

CROSSROADS:
Classical Literatures of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia
Fall 2020
01:013:201, 01:685:204

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Office Hours (through BigBlueButton on Sakai): Wednesdays 1-2 pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introductory survey of the "classical" literatures of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, stretching from antiquity to around the 15th century. It examines critical areas of difference and similarity between the literary traditions of the three regions through the study of excerpts of sample "canonical" texts in a variety of ancient and classical languages: Akkadian, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Mande, Yoruba and pre-modern dialects of Hindi. The course is organized around three major literary genres shared by the three regions: Epic and sacred texts; poetry; folktales and story genres. It also explores the way in which new literary formations and traditions arose out of the historical interchange between peoples of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. In the process, students will also be exposed to the interaction between oral and written literary forms and the different kinds of scripts, both original and improvised, that have been used over the centuries in the written traditions of the societies of these interlocking regions of the world.

This course fulfills Core Curriculum Arts and Humanities goals AHo or AHp.

COURSE DELIVERY

This course is fully online. To access the course, please visit sakai.rutgers.edu. For more information about course access or support, contact the Sakai Help Desk via email at sakai@rutgers.edu or call 848-445-8721.

All weekly requirements and assignment due dates are indicated on the reading schedule below. There will also be flexible opportunities to meet virtually with the professors throughout the semester.

PREREQUISITES

None.

IMPORTANT DATES

The course begins on 9/1/2020 and ends on 12/18/2020.

LEARNING GOALS MET BY THIS COURSE

Over the course of the semester, students will

- Identify and explain the fundamental differences and similarities between the oral and written classical traditions of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, especially in terms of how they are articulated in poetry and imaginative prose.

- Become familiar with the main theoretical issues in the study of literary hybridity and be able to relate them to specific texts studied in the course.
- Demonstrate the importance of the global humanities to our present moment.

CORE CURRICULUM GOALS MET BY THIS COURSE

Over the course of the semester, students will

- Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.
- Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves in relation to specific histories, values, languages, and technologies.

COURSE READINGS

All course readings will be available as pdfs under SAKAI > Course Readings.

COURSE TOOLS and TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Technology skills necessary for this course:

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Sakai
- Recording, editing, and uploading video and slide presentation with audio narration using VoiceThread

Required equipment:

- Computer: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7 or newer) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam: built-in or external webcam, fully installed
- Microphone: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone

Required software:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft PowerPoint

ASSESSMENT

Below are the assignments required for this course and the value of each assignment to the course grade below as a whole. Please refer to the course schedule (below) for specific due dates.

Comprehension Quizzes:	20%
Reading Responses:	25%
Midterm Presentation:	25%
Final Paper:	30%

Comprehension Quizzes

- 10 points per quiz / weekly
- Each comprehension will be evaluated on accuracy of students' answers to comprehension questions based on the main lecture.

Reading Responses

- 10 points per weekly response / weekly
- For each response, students will choose 2 passages from the unit reading that they find interesting, challenging, or important for understanding the reading in question, or overall goals of the course. A passage can be anything from a single sentence to a paragraph. The students will quote each passage and indicate the page number. Beneath each selection, students will write a brief explanation (3-4 sentences) about why they have chosen it and what it means to them. Each response will be posted as a thread under the correct discussion topic in the “Forums” section of the course Sakai site. Students may also choose to respond to other students’ posts about similar passages in their responses.
- Each passage will be graded based on the following rubric:
 - Response includes a properly quoted passage and its page number (1 point)
 - Response uses correct spelling and grammar and includes at least 3-4 sentences of original analysis (1 point)
 - Response reasonably explains why the passage was chosen (1 point)
 - Response demonstrates an understanding of what the passage expresses (1 point)
 - Response offers an interpretation of why the passage is important for understanding the text (1 point)

Final Paper

- 100 points per paper / due at the end of the semester
- Each student will be required to submit a final paper of 5-6 pages, double-spaced, that responds to one of the 3-4 prompts provided by the instructor.
- The final paper must
 - Develop a coherent argument and defensible thesis
 - Contain direct references to and quotations from the texts discussed
 - Address at least two texts read in the course
 - Address texts from at least two different regions
- The final paper will be graded using the following rubric:
 - Introduction and Thesis Argument: 20 points
 - Length and Organization: 20 points
 - Supporting Statements: 10 points
 - Supporting Analysis: 30 points
 - Mechanics: 20 points

Midterm Presentation

- 10 points per presentation/ due mid-semester
- Each student will give one 10-minute oral presentation in the course based on prompts given by the professors. The student will video record the presentation and post it on Sakai using VoiceThread.
- The presentation will be graded using the following rubric:
 - How accurately the presentation answers the presentation prompt (4 points)
 - Discussion of relevant course text(s) using examples and quotations (4 points)
 - Preparation and organization of the presentation (2 points)

GRADING SCALE

A	90-100
B+	85-89
B	80-84

C+	75-79
C	70-74
D	60-69
F	Below 60

EXTRA CREDIT

Students can receive up to 5 extra credit points for contributing to the “Crossroads of Crisis” commentary, available at amesall.rutgers.edu. Please contact Professor Mazrui or Professor Mani if you are interested.

Students can also receive up to 5 extra credit points for attending the AMESALL Distinguished Lecture on October 9, 2020 and submitting a one-page written reflection following the event. Please contact Professor Mazrui or Professor Mani for more details about the event.

DISCUSSION AND COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

The following are our expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style:** While there is no need to participate in class discussions as if you are writing a research paper, you should remember to write using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Informality (including an occasional emoticon) is fine for non-academic topics. Please refrain from using all CAPITAL LETTERS, as this is often interpreted as shouting.
- **Tone and civility:** Let’s maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Remember that sarcasm doesn’t always come across online. Treat your instructor and fellow students with respect at all times, and in all communications.
- **Citing your sources:** When we have academic discussions, please cite your sources to back up what you say. (For course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.)
- **Backing up your work:** Consider composing your academic posts in a word processor, where you can save your work, and then copying into the Sakai discussion.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The consequences of scholastic dishonesty are very serious. Please review the Rutgers academic policy:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Academic integrity means, among other things:

- Developing and writing all of your own assignments
- Showing in detail where the materials you use in your papers and discussions come from, creating citations whether you are paraphrasing authors or quoting them directly, and always showing the source and page number within the assignment and including a bibliography at the end
- Not fabricating information or citations in your work
- Not facilitating academic dishonesty for another student by allowing your work to be

submitted by others

If you are in doubt about any issue related to plagiarism or scholastic dishonesty, please discuss it with Professor Mazrui or Professor Mani.

READING SCHEDULE

Please note that this reading schedule is subject to change. We will notify you of any changes at least two weeks in advance.

Week 1

9/1 – 9/4: Introduction to the course / The Scripts of Afrasia

Readings: no readings

Assignments: synchronous meeting, video lecture, comprehension quiz

Meeting: We will arrange one synchronous meeting this week to introduce ourselves and go over the course material. For those of you who are unable to attend, this session will be recorded and made available on the course Sakai site afterwards.

Deadline: Friday, 9/4 by 5 pm

Epic Literature

Week 2

9/7 – 9/11: The Shipwrecked Sailor

Readings: The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 9/11 by 5 pm

Week 3

9/14 – 9/18: The Epic of Sundiata Keita in Africa

Readings: Selections from The Epic of Sundiata

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 9/18 by 5 pm

Week 4

9/21 – 9/25: Gilgamesh in the Middle East

Readings: Selections from the Epic of Gilgamesh

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 9/25 by 5 pm

Week 5

9/28 – 10/2: Many Ramayanas in South Asia

Readings: Selections from the Ramayana

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 10/2 by 5 pm

Folktales and Storytelling Traditions

Week 6

10/5 – 10/9: Folktales from India

Readings: Selections of folktales from India

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 10/9 by 5 pm

Week 7

10/12 – 10/16: The Thousand and One Nights

Readings: Selections from the Arabian Nights

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response,

Deadline: Friday, 10/16 by 5 pm

Week 8

10/19 – 10/23: Folktales from Africa

Readings: “Adamu and His Beautiful Wife” and “Cinderella in the Hausa Muslims’ Imagination”

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 10/23 by 5 pm

Week 9

10/26 – 10/30: Midterm Presentation

Readings: No readings

Assignments: Midterm Presentation on VoiceThread

Deadline: Friday 10/30 by 5 pm

Poetry

Week 10

11/2 – 11/6: The Qu’ran

Readings: Selections from the Qu’ran

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 11/6 by 5 pm

Week 11

11/9/- 11/13: Poetic Traditions of Africa

Readings: Al-Inkishafi

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 11/13 by 5 pm

Week 12

11/16 – 11/20: Arabian Poetic Traditions

Readings: Selections from pre-Islamic Arabic poetry

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 11/20 by 5 pm

Week 13

11/23 – 11/27: Sufi Poetry

Readings: Selections of 10-16th century Arabian and Persian poetry

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 11/27 by 5 pm

Week 14

11/30 – 12/4: Medieval Poetry of South Asia

Readings: Selections of the poetry of Kabir

Assignments: video lecture, comprehension quiz, reading response

Deadline: Friday, 12/4 by 5 pm

Week 15

12/7 – 12/11: Course Review

Readings: No readings

Assignments: synchronously meeting time TBD for a class discussion of the final paper and the course's main themes and concepts. (This meeting will be recorded and made available on the course Sakai site for those of you who are unable to attend.)

Final Paper due Friday, 12/8 by 5pm