COURSE TITLE: Twice-told Tales: Contemporary Readings of Classic Texts

Prequisites:

Class Meeting Times: Spring 2012: Tues/Thurs 16:00-17:30
Classroom: 14
Office hours: Tues/Thurs from 17:30, by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
In this course we focus on four contemporary novels in which the world of the character, the narrator, or the author, is read through a literary classic. In each case, the reading and rewriting of the primary text involves temporal and spatial displacements (from the 18th to the 20th century, from Europe to the Caribbean and to the South Pacific) that generate shifting perspectives and a constant reshuffling of centre and periphery. Between a reverential affiliation to the past and a creative misreading and rewriting of it, these intertextual encounters with « great » Western literary works insistently raise the question of identity and originality. The approach being explicitly comparative, standard theoretical reference texts from comparative, translation, and post-colonial studies will also be used.

FORMAT: Discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
* To familiarize oneself with a variety of modes and styles of writing (fictional and non-fictional) and manage a broad range of issues and topics.
* To clarify, examine, and challenge underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values (others’ and one’s own).
* To formulate relevant questions, hold multiple perspectives, think flexibly and deal with ambiguity.
* To develop or refine one’s analytical skills and explore the power of the imagination.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS = Written Assignments (60%) + Attendance and Participation (40%)

Written Assignments (60%)
4 take-home papers (6-8 pages, double-spaced, + outline and abstract)
Papers I-III prepared and discussed in class: Paper I=20%, Papers II and III =25% each
Paper IV = 30%

Marking Scheme:
Grade A: Superior (A-) or Outstanding (A) applies to work that is very well argued and structured; that gives evidence both of close reading and of extensive knowledge; that shows originality, or particular imaginative flair and insight.
Grade B: Very good (B+), Good (B), Adequate or decent (B-): Applies to work which demonstrates an ability to conceptualize the key issues and debates and to formulate relevant points or questions, but which may need to be more thorough, better structured, and/or show more independent thinking and originality.
Grade C: Showing signs of reaching above average (C+), Average (C), Just Below Average (C-)
Applies to work which, though it may raise a couple of interesting points or questions, remains too superficial, or undeveloped, or poorly structured, and/or shows insufficient grasp of the subject or material.
Grade D: Work which is weak (D+), Very Poor Work (D), Unsatisfactory Work (D-)

Presents incorrect or confused information, misunderstandings of the subject or text, lack of coherence, lack of editing and structure or absence of development, an inability to make proper use of references and quotations, serious inadequacies of expression (syntax, grammar, vocabulary).

Grade F: For non- or late submission of work without a valid medical excuse, or for work which is unintelligible, illegible, or wholly irrelevant; for plagiarism or work which uses unattributed material.

Writing Sessions: We will practice synthesizing, summarizing, breaking down and organizing arguments, and close reading. We will also look at ways in which arguments can be broadened and extended beyond the assigned excerpt or prompts -- generalizing, making new connections, working with hypotheses or alternative scenarios, experimenting with the comparative approach of this course.

N.B. Work on the preparation of papers is essential, so missing a session without a valid medical excuse will affect the grade of the corresponding paper.

Late Submission of Work: the semester being short, no late papers can be accepted without a medical excuse. Any written work turned in after due dates will count as a contribution to “Class participation”.

Handwritten papers are OK in case of a computer/printer failure!

Plagiarism Policy: Students using critical material are expected to provide exact references (in footnotes, endnotes, or brackets), and any internet material must be printed out and turned in with the paper.

Revisions: Papers I, II, or III (graded) can be either revised or extended (subject to instructor’s approval).

Attendance and Participation (40%)

* Abiding by NYU Absence Policy and catching up in case of a missed class
* Being up to date with, and showing detailed knowledge of, the assigned reading
* Preparing and engaging in class discussions
* Giving short oral presentations, prepared at home, on either a prompt or an excerpt from the text discussed

(The number of oral presentations given by each student will depend on the size of the class). This class being wholly interactive, attendance and participation make up a significant percentage of the overall grade.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Fiction (read in this order), in any edition available except for Tournier and Flaubert:

- Defoe, Daniel, The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe
- Tournier, Michel, Friday, transl. Norman Denny [Vendredi ou Les Limbes du Pacifique]
- Brontë, Charlotte, Jane Eyre
- Rhys, Jean, Wide Sargasso Sea
- Dickens, Charles, Great Expectations
- Lloyd Jones, Mister Pip
- Flaubert, Gustave, A Simple Heart in Three Tales, transl. AJ Krailsheimer [Un Coeur simple in Trois Contes]
- Barnes, Julian, Flaubert’s Parrot

Non-Fiction (xerox pack available through NYU):

Susan Sontag, « Questions of Travel » and « On Being Translated » in Where The Stress Falls; George Steiner, « Understanding as Translation » in After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation and

**Further Suggested Reading:**
   The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages (Papermac, 1995)
Brooks, Peter, “Repetition, Repression, and Return: Great Expectations and the Study of Plot” in Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative (Oxford University Press, 1984)
Deleuze, Gilles, *Différence et répétition* (PUF, 1968)
Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference* (Routledge, 2001)
Palimpsestes (Seuil, 1982)/Palimpsests : Literature in the Second Degree (University of Nebraska Press, 1997)
Hillis Miller, Joseph, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Harvard UP, 1982)
Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Parody* (Methuen, 1985)
   A Poetics of Postmodernism (Routledge, 1988)

**SCHEDULE**

**JANUARY**
Tuesday 31: Introduction

**FEBRUARY**
Thursday 2: Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (1)

Tuesday 7: Robinson Crusoe (2)
Thursday 9: Robinson Crusoe (3)

Tuesday 14: Tournier, Friday (1)
Thursday 16: Friday (2)

Tuesday 21: Friday (3) + Questions for Paper 1 to prepare for Thurs 23rd
Thursday 23: Session on Paper I (Robinson Crusoe and Friday)

Tuesday 28: Paper I due + Brontë, Jane Eyre (1)

**MARCH**
Thursday 1&: Jane Eyre (2)

Tuesday 6: Jane Eyre (3)
Thursday 8: Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea (1)
© Friday 9: 9:00-10:30: Wide Sargasso Sea (2) + Questions for Paper II to prepare for Tues 13

Tuesday 13: Session on Paper II (Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea)
Thursday 15: Paper II due + Dickens, Great Expectations (1)

Tuesday 20: Great Expectations (2)
Thursday 22: Great Expectations (3)

Tuesday 27: Lloyd Jones, Mister Pip (1)
Thursday 29: Mister Pip (2)

APRIL
Tuesday 3: Mister Pip (3) + Questions for Paper III to prepare for Thurs 5
Thursday 5: Session on Paper III (Great Expectations and Mister Pip)

Tuesday 10: Paper III due + Flaubert, A Simple Heart
Thursday 12: Barnes, Flaubert’s Parrot (1)

Tues 17, Thurs 19, Tues 24, Thurs 26: EASTER HOLIDAY

MAY
Tuesday 1st May: HOLIDAY
Thursday 3: Flaubert’s Parrot (2) + Questions for Paper IV to prepare for Fri 4 May
© Friday 4: 9:00-10:30: Flaubert’s Parrot (3)

Tuesday 8: HOLIDAY
Thursday 10: Paper IV due, + Recapitulations and Conclusions