

## GRADUATE LIBERAL STUDIES AT WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

HUMS 633, World Literature  
Professor Indira Karamcheti

**DESCRIPTION:** The last half of the 20th century has seen the establishment of a canon of literary classics from many places in the world outside of the Europe: Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Americas. Some authors have become not only recognizable to, but indispensable for, the educated first world reader: Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Bharati Mukherjee are certainly a few of these authors. How do these authors shape their worlds and what issues concern them? What in their works and formal methods appeals so much to the reader of the first world? We will consider such questions as how canons come to be, and what criteria determine which books become "classics." We will discuss certain themes central to this genre, such as the problematics of language, the literary as opposed to the oral traditions, cultural identity, and the seeming inescapability of history and politics.

**REQUIREMENTS:** faithful attendance and engaged, thoughtful participation in discussion. You should come to class not only having read the material assigned for that day, but prepared with questions and ideas about it. The written work will consist of three essays of 3-4 pages, double-spaced, and a final paper of 5-7 pages. One in-class presentation.

### TEXTS:

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*  
Chinua Achebe, *Education of a British-Protected Child*  
Chimamanda Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*  
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*  
Arundhati Roy, *God of Small Things*  
Roberto Bolano, *Monsieur Pain*  
Junot Diaz, *The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*  
V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr Biswas*  
Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*  
Keri Hulme, *The Bone People*  
David Damrosch, *How to Read World Literature*

### SCHEDULE:

#### Class session 1: ESTABLISHING THE CANON

Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*: Read Part One  
from *The Education of a British-Protected Child*: "The Education of a British-Protected Child"  
"Teaching *Things Fall Apart*"  
from *How to Read World Literature*: "What Is 'Literature'?"

#### Class session 2: COMBATting AND CONSTRUCTING TRADITIONS

Finish Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*  
from *The Education of a British-Protected Child*: "My Dad and Me"  
"Spelling Our Proper Name"  
from *How to Read World Literature*: "Reading across Time"

Class Session 3: LITERATURE AND THE NATION

Adichie, Half of a Yellow Sun

from The Education of a British-Protected Child: "What Is Nigeria to Me?"

"Africa's Tarnished Name"

ESSAY # 1 DUE IN CLASS

Class Session 4: A LANGUAGE OF ONE'S OWN

Rushdie, Midnight's Children: Read all of Book One and through the chapter titled "All-India Radio" in Book Two

from The Education of a British-Protected Child: "Politics and Politicians of Language in African Literature"

Class Session 5: GENDER, RACE, AND CLASS

Roy, God of Small Things

ESSAY # 2 DUE IN CLASS

Class session 6: ETHNICITY AND THE NATION

V.S. Naipaul, A House for Mr Biswas

Class Session 7: AUTHENTICITY, MULTICULTURALISM, AND HYBRIDITY

Mukherjee, Jasmine

from How to Read World Literature: "Going Global"

Class Session 8: THE QUESTION OF TRANSLATION

Bolano, Monsieur Pain

from How to Read World Literature: "Reading in Translation"

Class session 9: AT HOME IN DIASPORA

Diaz, The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

from How to Read World Literature: "Going Abroad"

ESSAY # 3 DUE IN CLASS

Class Session 10: CLAIMING INDIGENEITY

Hulme, The Bone People

FINAL PAPER DUE Monday, August 1, 5-7 pages