

# HL 4043 Postmodernism

(AY 2021/2022, Semester 2)

Assistant Professor Michelle Wang  
[michelle.wang@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:michelle.wang@ntu.edu.sg)

**Class meets**    **Wednesday**    **9.30am – 12.20pm**    **LHS-TR-55 (The Hive)**

**Office hours**    Monday        5.30pm – 6.30pm    SHHK 03-57 (School of Humanities)  
                          Wednesday    12.30pm – 1.30pm    SHHK 03-57

## Course Description and Objectives

HL 4043 examines the development of twentieth-century literary postmodernism by examining the work of postmodern writers and filmmakers from diverse backgrounds and nationalities. Drawing on the work of key postmodern theorists—including Patricia Waugh, Brian McHale, J. Hillis Miller, Fredric Jameson, and others—we explore the constructions of temporality and spatiality in postmodern literature, attending to issues such as representations of reality, formal fragmentation, metafictionality, narrative, and aesthetics.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Identify key concepts and strategies demonstrated in major literary-critical forms relevant to the period, including postmodernism, intertextuality, metafiction, and self-reflexivity.
2. Explain how specific literary-fictions refer themselves to a demonstration of the key philosophical ideas inherent to postmodernism.
3. Evaluate literary and critical sources in a rigorous and sophisticated manner.
4. Raise critically informed questions that demonstrate original thinking.

<b>Continuous Assessment</b>	<b>100%</b>
Participation	10%
Annotated reading (incl. presentation)	20%
Research essay	40%
Final in-class test	30%

## Academic Integrity Policy

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 <https://ts.ntu.edu.sg/sites/intranet/dept/tlpd/ai/Pages/NTU-Academic-Integrity-Policy.aspx> for more information on [academic integrity](#). Please be reminded that in line with clause 4.1, repeating the work submitted to another course—whether at NTU or another institution—constitutes a violation of the policy and is subject to the relevant penalties. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

### **Attendance Policy**

Your prepared and active participation is crucial to your success in the course.

Should you feel unwell, please ***do not*** attend class and ***seek medical advice*** instead, and follow up with the instructor via email. If a member of your household or family has acute respiratory illness and/or tests positive for COVID-19, you should stay home to reduce the risk of community transmission; the School will accept the medical certificate of your family/household member as valid documentation for missing the class/assessment/test. You may only do a make-up quiz/test/presentation (where applicable) for reasons that relate to an excused absence with proper documentation such as a medical certificate, which needs to be submitted to the school (with a copy via email to the instructor). Please note that it is your responsibility to get in touch with the instructor within five days of the missed session in order to arrange a make-up. In line with university and national public health policies, this may transition to online asynchronous learning and when necessary

### **Late Work Policy**

All graded assignments are due in hard ***and*** soft copy via Turnitin by the start of class on the due dates. Late work will be accepted within twenty-four hours for a reduced grade, but will receive no instructor comments. (In the event that the course unexpectedly transitions to online learning, the hard copy requirement will be waived.)

### **Technology Policy**

Students are welcome to actively use technology to facilitate learning in the classroom, so long as it is being used ***on task*** and with one exception: no audio or video recording is allowed at any point during the lectures, seminars, and/or tutorials. The instructor may use photographs/screen captures for attendance and contact tracing purposes. The classroom is meant to be a space where students feel comfortable to respectfully, critically, and constructively exchange ideas about the texts discussed. All quizzes, tests, and exams (where applicable) are closed-book, unless otherwise stated; please ensure all electronic devices including cellphones, tablets, computers, smart watches, etc. are put away into your bags at that point.

### **University Copyright Statement**

All course materials, including but not limited to, lecture slides, handout and recordings, are for your own educational purposes only. All the contents of the materials are protected by copyright, trademark or other forms of proprietary rights.

All rights, title and interest in the materials are owned by, licensed to or controlled by the University, unless otherwise expressly stated. The materials shall not be uploaded,

reproduced, distributed, republished or transmitted in any form or by any means, in whole or in part, without written approval from the University.

You are also not allowed to take any photograph, film, audio record or other means of capturing images or voice of any contents during seminars/lectures/tutorials, and reproduce, distribute and/or transmit any form or by any means, in whole or in part, without the written permission from the University.

Appropriate action(s) will be taken against you including but not limited to disciplinary proceeding and/or legal action if you are found to have committed any of the above or infringed the University's copyright.

Note: This labus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion

draft

### Texts

Amis, Martin. *Time's Arrow*. Vintage International, 1991.

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. 1972/1974. Vintage, 1997.

García Márquez, Gabriel. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. 1967/1970. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. Penguin, 1972.

O'Brien, Flann. *The Third Policeman*. Dalkey Archive Press, 1967.

*Selection of theory, poetry, and short stories will be available on NTU Learn and NTU Libraries.*

### Films & Miniseries *(available at NTU Library Outpost)*

*Angels in America* (2003). 6 episodes. Written by Tony Kushner. Dir. Mike Nichols. 352 minutes.

*Fight Club* (1999). Dir. David Fincher. 139 minutes.

*Inception* (2010). Dir. Christopher Nolan. 148 minutes.

*Run Lola Run* (also known as *Lola Rennt* [1998]). Dir. Tom Tykwer. 80 minutes.

### Secondary reading list *(cf. annotated reading and presentation)*

—NTU Learn—

Gomel, Elana. "Time Enough for the World." *Postmodern Science Fiction and Temporal Imagination*. Continuum, 2010, pp. 1-26.

—NTU Libraries electronic resources—

Bray, Joe, Alison Gibbons, and Brian McHale. *Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*. Routledge, 2014.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988.

McHale, Brian. "What was Postmodernism." 2007.

<<http://electronicbookreview.com/essay/what-was-postmodernism/>>.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Methuen, 1984.

\*

## Schedule

Week 01 – 12 Jan	Introduction to Postmodernism
Week 02 – 19 Jan	Circularity and the Assault on Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flann O’Brien, <i>The Third Policeman</i> (1939–40/1967) (up to end of chapter VII)</li> </ul>
Week 03 – 26 Jan	From the Epistemological to the Ontological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flann O’Brien, <i>The Third Policeman</i></li> </ul> <i>Assignment prompts</i>
Week 04 – 02 Feb	—PUBLIC HOLIDAY—
Week 05 – 09 Feb	Spatiality and Intangible Realities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italo Calvino, <i>Invisible Cities</i> (1972)</li> </ul>
Week 06 – 16 Feb	Postmodern Poetry and Short Fiction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Selection of poetry and short fiction</i> (NTU Learn)</li> </ul>
Week 07 – 23 Feb	Temporality and Fragmentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Amis, <i>Time’s Arrow</i> (1991)</li> </ul> <i>Annotated readings due</i>
	—02 Mar—RECESS—
Week 08 – 09 Mar	Historical Fiction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gabriel García Márquez, <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i> (1967/1970) (up to chapter that ends with Aureliano Segundo’s marriage)</li> </ul>
Week 09 – 16 Mar	Postmodern Aesthetics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gabriel García Márquez, <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i></li> </ul>
Week 10 – 23 Mar	Postmodern Drama and Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tony Kushner and Mike Nichols, <i>Angels in America</i> (2003)</li> </ul> <i>Research essays due</i>
Week 11 – 30 Mar	Postmodern Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tony Kushner and Mike Nichols, <i>Angels in America</i> (2003)</li> <li>• <i>Run Lola Run</i> (1998)</li> </ul>
Week 12 – 06 Apr	Postmodern Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fight Club</i> (1999)</li> <li>• <i>Inception</i> (2010)</li> </ul>
Week 13 – 13 Apr	Final in-class test