

## HL8026: Women's Literature and the Contemporary

Resourceful mothers, rebellious teenagers, transgressive brides, satirical singletons, vituperative harridans, dark spectres and girls who laugh in the face of wolves...

These are some of the figures that loom large in the stories collected for this module, Women's Literature and the Contemporary. This module offers a selection of fiction and film from the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the present, contained in the following generic categories: personal-political dramas; romance, or 'Chick Lit'; fairy tales and the Gothic. We shall explore the ways in which these stories update traditional narratives and comment upon contemporary social and cultural situations. We shall also identify and explore some of the themes that characterise these stories, such as:

- gender, sexuality and identity;
- family and marriage;
- diaspora and cross-cultural engagement;
- contemporary popular culture
- folklore and the supernatural.

Throughout the module, we shall engage with a range of theorists and the frameworks that they provide for reading text and watching film. Our discussions will consider the ways in which women rewrite and challenge structures of power in their work, reflecting a contemporary world defined by some as postcolonial, postmodern and post feminist. Within this context, we shall explore issues of femininity as they intersect with ethnicity, sexuality, class and national identity.

### Core texts and films

#### Fiction

- Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (London: Vintage, 2006)
- Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (London: Picador, 1996)
- Zoë Heller, *The Believers* (London: Penguin Books, 2009)
- Susan Hill, *The Woman in Black* (London: Vintage, 1998)
- Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (New York: Mariner Books, 2004)
- Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan, *Sarong Party Girls* (New York: William Morrow, 2016)

#### Film

- *Whale Rider*, Dir. Niki Caro (Newmarket Films, 2002)
- *The Company of Wolves*, Dir. Neil Jordan (ITC, 1984)
- *Monsoon Wedding*, Dir. Mira Nair (USA Films, 2001)

### Assessment

Coursework essay: 50%

Examination: 50%

### Lecturer

Dr Kate Wright; email: [KEWright@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:KEWright@ntu.edu.sg)

<b>Week</b>	<b>Class</b>
<b>1</b>	Module introduction
<b>2</b>	Women writing/reading women (material TBA)
<b>Hallucinating Mr Darcy: romance, popular culture, satire</b>	
<b>3</b>	Helen Fielding, <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i> (1996)
<b>4</b>	Mira Nair, <i>Monsoon Wedding</i> (2001)
<b>5</b>	Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan, <i>Sarong Party Girls</i> (2016)
<b>The Personal is political/the individual versus society</b>	
<b>6</b>	Jhumpa Lahiri, <i>The Namesake</i> (2003)
<b>7</b>	Essay workshop
<b>RECESS WEEK</b>	
<b>8</b>	Niki Caro, <i>Whale Rider</i> (2002)
<b>9</b>	Zoë Heller, <i>The Believers</i> (2008)
<b>Wolves, spectres, borderlands: fairy tales and the Gothic</b>	
<b>10</b>	Angela Carter, <i>The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories</i> (1979)
<b>11</b>	Neil Jordan, <i>The Company of Wolves</i> (1984)
<b>12</b>	Susan Hill, <i>The Woman in Black</i> (1983)
<b>13</b>	Module conclusion; exam discussion