

Nanyang Technological University
Division of English
HL 2090 Special Topic in Literature, I: Literature and Economics
Semester 1 (Academic Year 2019-2020)
Course Blog: TBA

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Course Description

Can money buy happiness? What is the meaning of success? How can we alleviate poverty? Literature has dealt with these questions for centuries, if not millennia – from Aesop’s fables through Shakespeare to the present time.

In this course, you will study a series of texts from the English-speaking world dealing with themes of money, success, and consumerism. You will learn about the mechanisms of an urban economy from John Dos Passos’s sprawling *Manhattan Transfer*, deepen your understanding of greed through Frank Norris’s cautionary tale *McTeague*, familiarize yourself with feminist economics through Agnes Smedley’s long-neglected classic *Daughter of Earth*, and analyze the tensions between old and new money through F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* and Kevin Kwan’s *Crazy Rich Asians*. In this way, the course offers an introduction to economic concepts and ideas through their dramatization in literature, while on a deeper level also exploring the timeless and universal questions prompted by this staging.

As part of the course requirements, you will complete one group presentation and one literary essay. In addition, you are expected to actively participate in class discussion. Through the creative project “My Way to Wealth,” you will also reflect on your own attitude to personal success, drawing on both the course content and the wisdom of your peers.

Important Notes:

You must agree to abide by these guidelines to remain registered in this course

- Be sure to arrive on time to class, and if you have to leave early, please let me know ahead of time. As usual, please be respectful to your classmates and be sure to turn off all electronic devices during lectures and tutorials.
- All materials distributed in class and on the course blog are meant to be used for class lectures and discussions only. They are not to be re-distributed outside of class for any other purposes. If you wish to use the materials for your assignments, you must cite them accordingly.
- You are not allowed to record lectures in any form without permission from the instructor.

- If you are unable to attend class, it is your responsibility to check our course blog for updates or announcements that you may have missed.
- Late assignments: written assignments that are submitted late will receive a penalty of half a grade each day (including weekends and holidays); if I do not receive an assignment a week after it is due, you will receive a 0 for the essay.
- Absence in class: if you are absent on the day when an in-class writing assignment is due, you will not be able to make-up for this. Those who are absent for presentations will not have the opportunity to make-up their work in another group's presentation.
- Any attempt at plagiarism will be subjected to university disciplinary action. Please familiarize yourself with NTU's Academic Integrity Guidelines to avoid plagiarism: <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx>

Course Assessment

Participation	10%
Presentation	10%
Creative project	40%
Essay	40%

Required Texts:

Dos Passos, John. *Manhattan Transfer*.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*.

Mohsin, Hamid. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*.

Kwan, Kevin. *Crazy Rich Asians*.

Norris, Frank. *McTeague*. (Signet, Penguin, Dover, or Norton edition)

Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*.

Smedley, Agnes. *Daughter of Earth*.

**All materials on the syllabus that are not listed under "Required Texts" above can be found on the course blog.

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Topic	Deadlines
Week 1 14 Aug.	Course introduction; Benjamin Franklin's essay "The Way to Wealth" and Herman Melville's short story "Bartleby the Scrivener"	
Week 2 The Roaring '20s 21 Aug.	F. Scott Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i>	
Week 3 Old vs. New Money 28 Aug	Kevin Kwan's <i>Crazy Rich Asians</i>	
Week 4 Value 4 Sept.	Short stories	
Week 5 Emerging Markets 11 Sept.	Mohsin Hamid's <i>How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia</i>	
Week 6 Love and Money 18 Sept.	William Shakespeare's <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	
Week 7 25 Sept.	Film screening: <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Creative project due
Week 8 2 Oct.	Recess week (no class)	

Week 9 Greed and Determinism 9 Oct.	Frank Norris's <i>McTeague</i>	
Week 10 Feminist Economics 16 Oct.	Agnes Smedley's <i>Daughter of Earth</i> (Parts 1 – 5)	
Week 11 Feminist Economics 23 Oct.	Agnes Smedley's <i>Daughter of Earth</i> (Part 6 – end)	
Week 12 “The Problem of Rich and Poor” 30 Oct.	Essays by Andrew Carnegie, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Meridel Lesueur	
Week 13 Urban Economics 6 Nov.	John Dos Passos's <i>Manhattan Transfer</i> (“Ferryslip” – “Nine Days' Wonder”)	
Week 14 Urban Economics 13 Nov.	John Dos Passos's <i>Manhattan Transfer</i> #2 (“Fire Engine” – end)	

Essay due 22 Nov.