

# H L2007 Contemporary Literature and Culture



René Magritte. *La Reproduction interdite (Not to Be Reproduced)*. Brussels, 1937

**Introduction:** This module will encourage students to investigate various fictional images of the contemporary world from the mid-twentieth century to the present. The contemporary, as we shall see, is multi-faceted and represents a cosmopolitan series of landscapes; contemporary authors are alert to the strains of contemporary music, influenced by the visual arts, film and television, and the digital. Many contemporary authors engage with the relativisation of various kinds of values and we will closely consider the ways in which this tendency continually resurfaces. Central ideas and themes, like morality, memory, love in its various forms, the meaning of knowledge, and the complexity of human communications, will be revisited in the context of the different works.

At the conclusion of the course, students should have a clear understanding of some of the key patterns of ideas and narrative strategies deployed by contemporary writers and will be able to identify, engage with, and articulate key concepts relevant to the period.

## Formative feedback

Feedback is central to this course. Students will receive both written and verbal feedback from the course coordinator on their research essay. They will also receive both written and verbal feedback in response to their proposals, as each proposal will be returned individually. Extensive feedback on grammar, style and content will be provided.

## Core Texts

Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (Vintage ISBN 9780679744474)

Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Faber & Faber ISBN 9780571135394)

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (Penguin Modern Classics ISBN 0141189207)

John Banville, *The Book of Evidence* (Picador ISBN 0330371878)

Alessandro Baricco, *Silk* (Vintage ISBN 0307277976)

Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* (Faber & Faber ISBN 9780571169344)

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Grove Press ISBN 080214442X)

Selected Poetry, short stories TBA (\*Handouts)

## Method of Instruction

3 Hour Seminar

**Approach:** Contextual presentation by the instructor forms the central focus of the seminar, in which students are encouraged to participate, ask questions, discuss amongst themselves. The class involves some theoretical comments about the author of the text we are working on, the period, and the major theoretical concepts that have significance for the author/text. Students are encouraged to participate freely in this period of the class. Presentation is always supplemented by multi-media resources (audio/visual interviews, supporting material, music, paintings, commentaries, and/or historically-relevant information).

Class discussion can happen at any point during the three-hour period – although in some seminars, specific discussion-linked tasks are set. Presentations, group discussions are used where appropriate.

## Course Assessment

Continuous Assessment:

Research essay abstract: 10%

Final essay: 40%

*Assessment 1 (Abstract due March 6)*

*Assessment 2: (Essay Due March 31)*

Class Participation: 10%

Final Examination: 40 %

---

100%

Course Co-ordinator	Office Room No.	DID	E-mail Address
Neil Murphy	HSS-03-84B	65922410	camurphy@ntu.edu.sg

## Seminar Schedule

Week No.	Topics	Readings
1 11 Jan	Week 1: Introduction to Contemporary Literature	Handouts (Calvino/Borges)
2 18 Jan	Week 2: John Banville and Postmodern Murder	John Banville, <i>The Book of Evidence</i>
3 25 Jan	Week 3: John Banville and Art	John Banville, <i>The Book of Evidence</i>
4 1 Feb	Week 4: Garcia Marquez, loss, memory and imagining love	Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <i>Love in the Time of Cholera</i> (Vintage)
5 8 Feb	Week 5: Garcia Marquez, loss, memory and imagining love	Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <i>Love in the Time of Cholera</i> (Vintage)
6 15 Feb	Week 6: Jeanette Winterson & 'Love'	Jeanette Winterson, <i>Written on the Body</i>
7 22 Feb	Week 7: Passions of the mind	Alessandro Baricco, <i>Silk</i>
8 1 Mar	<i>Week 8: Recess Week</i>	
9 8 Mar	Week 9: Postmodernism and theories of fiction	- Handouts  <i>Selected Essays (handouts)</i>
10 15 Mar	Week 10: Samuel Beckett	Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>
11 22 Mar	Week 11: <i>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</i>	Milan Kundera, <i>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</i>
12 29 Mar	Week 12: Contemporary Poetry (Galway Kinnell)	Handout
13 5 April	Week 13: Stoppard's quest for truth	Tom Stoppard, <i>Arcadia</i>
14 12 April	Week 14: Conclusion	

### Preliminary Bibliography 1: Contemporary Fiction, Postmodernist Fiction – Analysis of Fiction

Alexander, Marguerite. *Flights from realism : themes and strategies in postmodernist British and American fiction*. London ; New York : Edward Arnold : Distributed in the USA by Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1990.

Alter, Robert. *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1975

Attridge, Derek. "Modernism, Formal Innovation, and Affect in some Contemporary Irish Novels." *Affect and Literature*, edited by Alex Houen. Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 249–266.

Baker, Stephen. *The Fiction of Postmodernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000

Chatman, Seymour (Ed.). *Reading Narrative Fiction*. New York: Macmillan, 1993.

Connor, Steven. *The English novel in history, 1950-1995*. London/New York: Routledge, 1996.

D'Haen, Theo, and Hans Bertens, eds. *British Postmodern Fiction*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1993

Hassan, Ihab Habib. *The dismemberment of Orpheus; toward a postmodern literature* New York, Oxford University Press, 1971.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A poetics of postmodernism : history, theory, fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Ledbetter, Mark. *Victims and the Postmodern Narrative, or, Doing Violence to the Body: An Ethic of Reading and Writing*. New York: St. Martin's P, 1996

Lee, Alison. *Realism and power: postmodern British fiction*. London/NewYork: Routledge, 1990.

Marshal, Brenda K. *Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1992

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Routledge 1996

McHale, Brian. *Constructing Postmodernism*. Routledge 1992

Murphy, Neil. *John Banville*. Bucknell University Press, 2018.

Richardson, Brian. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006

Waugh, Patricia. *Practising postmodernism, reading modernism* London ; New York : Edward Arnold, 1992.

Worthington, Kim. *Self as Narrative Subjectivity and Community in Contemporary Fiction*. Oxford University Press, 1996

### **Bibliography 2: Postmodern Theory & Theories of Fiction**

Bloom, Harold.

How to read and why / Harold Bloom.

New York : Scribner, c2000.

Kundera, Milan.

L'Art du roman. English

The art of the novel / Milan Kundera ; translated by Linda Asher.

London : Faber, 1988.

Eagleton, Terry, 1943-

The illusions of postmodernism / Terry Eagleton.

Oxford ; Cambridge, Mass. : Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

From modernism to postmodernism : an anthology / [edited by] Lawrence E. Cahoone.

Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Lyotard, Jean François.

Condition postmoderne. English: The postmodern condition : a report on knowledge / Jean-François Lyotard ; translation from the French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi; foreword by Fredric Jameson.

Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, c1984.

Norris, Christopher, 1947-

The truth about postmodernism / Christopher Norris.

Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA : Blackwell, 1993.

Autobiography & postmodernism / edited by Kathleen Ashley, Leigh Gilmore, Gerald Peters.

Amherst : University of Massachusetts Press, c1994.

Kaufmann, Michael.

Textual bodies : modernism, postmodernism, and print / Michael Kaufmann.

Lewisburg [Pa.] : Bucknell University Press ; London ; Cranbury, N.J. : Associated University Presses, 1994.

Modernism/postmodernism / edited and introduced by Peter Brooker.

London ; New York : Longman, 1992.

Begam, Richard, 1950-

Samuel Beckett and the end of modernity / Richard Begam.

Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, c1996.

**\*\*In addition, there are several book-length studies on each of the primary authors held in the library.**