

Comparative Literature 3MO3
McMaster University
EXILE AND RELIGION IN ASIAN LITERATURES
Term II Winter Jan-April 2005
Lectures: Monday 3.30-5.30, Wednesday 4.30-5.30

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Level: This is a third year course. No prior knowledge of Asian literature or languages is required. The works studied are available in English.

Hours of Instruction: 46 hours over a 12 week period with classes of 3 hours each week. While the 2 hour Monday class is used for lectures, the 1 hour Wednesday class is used for group work and discussion.

Enrolment: It was taught to 16 students in winter 2005, and this was the first season this course was offered at McMaster.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Asian cultures, especially those of India, China and Japan preserve rich and diverse ancient literary traditions. Literature in its diverse forms performed multiple functions in these societies. Therefore, this course aims at examining certain ways of Asian thinking through an analysis of recurring themes from these literatures.

Students will develop competency in comparative techniques while looking at works of major classical as well as modern texts in India, China and Japan. The course will focus on the overall theme of the *identity, exile or travel* as a backdrop to examine the social, religious phenomena and male, female associations. This will shed light on some of the norms of society in the absence of a regular social structure and will lead to an understanding of the changes in the roles of male and female during exile, loss of identity or such extraordinary circumstances. Students will have ample opportunity to work with materials representative of various literary genres in an effort to understand the concept of exile, identity in the context of society and religion in general and male and female roles in particular within the Asian cultures.

This course examines literatures from Asian cultures ranging from different time periods and genres. Students will compare and contrast literature from across the Asian literatures.

Materials covered in this course are available in translation. No prior knowledge is assumed. This course will read primary and secondary sources of selected works, watch relevant films, and engage in class discussions about the materials. Students are expected to take an active part in these activities.

I will place the lecture outlines the week before the lecture on the LearnLink and Lecture notes will be placed on LearnLink after the class. All the students are encouraged to use the McMaster University's LearnLink for discussion and access the weekly lecture outlines and lecture notes. Students are required to bring the lecture outlines to the class with them.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Critically examine Asian literature from historical and cross-cultural perspectives.
2. Identify specific characteristics and key concepts from Asian literature.
3. Formulate and corroborate literary forms and characteristics.
4. Compare and contrast the analysis derived from story literature.
5. Evaluate the socio-religious phenomena and the exile setting in different cultures and periods.

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Midterm exam (20)
2. Group presentation on a selected film/book (15)
3. Review of film or book- Individual project (15).
4. Final Exam (40)
5. Participation (10)

Important dates

Mid term exam: 16. Feb.2005

Approval of group presentation subjects: 3. Feb. 2005

Approval of book review or essay subjects: 10. Feb. 2005

COURSE SCHEDULE

Class I

Introduction to the course and scope of study. what, why and how?

Evaluation procedures.

Critical and creative thinking processes and application to the course.

Morphological method

Note taking method

Group discussion method

Introduction to Indian literature, the purāṇa, itihāsa, kāvya and nātaka traditions and their special characteristics.

Readings:

Iravati Karve, *Yugānta The End of an Epoch*. Deshmukh Prakasan, Poona, 1969, pp. 1-29.

Siegfried Lienhard, *An Introduction to Kāvya Literature. A History of Indian Literature Vol. III*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1984, pp. 1-14, 45-48, 170-222.

Ludo Rocher, *The Purāṇas*, Introduction.

Class 2

Examination of stories from Itihāsa tradition. The Epics

Mahābhārata. Aranyaparva. The book of forest. Exile of Pāndavas

Examination of Kunti and the events in the book of forest.

Readings:

Van Buitenen, J.A. B. *The Mahābhārata*, Vol. I. University of Chicago press, 1973. Pp. 274-313.

Iravati Karve, *Yugānta The End of an Epoch*. Deshmukh Prakasan, Poona, 1969, pp.65-87.

Class 3

The story of Sāvitrī

The story of Nala and Damayanti

Readings:

Van Buitenen, J.A.B. "Sāvitrī." *The Mahābhārata*, Vol. III. pp.761-778; Van Buitenen, J.A.B, "Nala," in *The Mahābhārata*, pp. 320-364.

Vidyut Aklujkar, "Sāvitrī: Old and New." 324-349. in Arvind Sharma. ed. *Essays on the Mahābhārata*. Vol. 1, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991.

Class 4

Analysis of the roles of male and female characters from the epic stories in the exile and effect of exile on the roles of man and woman.

Class 5

Examination of purāṇa traditions

Gajendramokṣa from Bhāgavata purāṇa

Readings:

Shulman, David Dean. "Bhāgavatapurāṇa in Telugu," in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Purāṇa Perennis*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1993, 121-159.

Class 6

The story of Ayyappa from Śivapurāṇa

Examination of differences between Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva traditions

Readings:

Narayana Rao, Velcheru, "Introduction," pp.1-31; also "The story of Udumūri Kannappa," pp. 111-120, in *Siva's Warriors*. Princeton University Press, 1990.

Examination of the theme of forest and religion.

Class 7

Examination of *Kāvya* tradition

Meghasandēśa of Kālidāsa

Readings:

Franklin and Eleanor Edgerton. trans. *The Cloud Messenger*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, The University of Michigan Press 1981, pp. 9-81.

Examination of the exile theme in the juxtaposition of village and town from Meghasandēśa.

Class 8

Gora, Ravindranath Tagore

Question of identity? Is loss of identity similar to exile? How important is sense of belonging to a person or to a society.

Class 9

Introduction to Chinese literature

History of Chinese literature and genres of Chinese literature

Class 10

Chi-Chen Wang. *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Abridged Version. New York: Doubleday, 1958, 211-315.

Deadline to submit proposals for group presentations.

Class 11

The Monkey

Readings: Waley, Arthur. trans. *Monkey*. Reprint. New York: Grove Press, 1958, pp.119-210.

Is travel in a new country similar to exile? Examination of the theme of exile and religion in Chinese literature.

Class12

Lu Xun *Diary of a Madman, in Complete Stories of Lu Xun*. Trans. Yang, Xianyi, Gladis Yang. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1981.

Examination of the sense of Identity and loss of belonging.

Deadline for approval of subjects for book review or essays.

Class 13

Mid-term exam.

Class 14 Reading Week. No Class.

Class 15 Reading Week. No Class

Class 16

Introduction to Japanese Literature

History of Japanese literature

Readings:

Keene, Donald, ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature: From Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. New York: Grove Press, 1955.

Class 17

The Tale of Genji

Readings

Waley, Arthur. *The Tale of Genji*. Reprint, New York: Random House, 1960, 226-328.

Class 18

The Tale of Genji

Examination of the exile of Genji in the context of society and nature motifs.

Class 19

An account of my Hut

“The account of my Hut”, in Keene, Donald, ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature: From Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. New York: Grove Press, 1955.

Examination of loss and assumption of new identity in village and town juxtaposition.

Class 20

Abe Kobo, *The Face of Another*. Trans. Dale Saunders. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966.

The question of identity in the context of family and society as a whole.

Class 21

Comparison of the themes from the three traditions studies in this course. Examination of the themes of Exile for man, woman, religion. Identity losing or obtaining in the personal or social sphere and its repercussions.

Class 22

Group presentations

Class 23

Group presentations

Class 24

Final review, Examination guidelines.

PEDOGOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In this course I tried to use interactive learning procedures leading to independent projects. I used three way approach to achieve this: 1. Online and group discussions and projects, 2. Individual projects, 3. Exams. I discussed the evaluation procedures and projects in the first class and also the creative and critical processes of thinking of human mind and how to use them effectively. The students discussed in class and participated on online discussion on LearnLink about the course content and related material. They prepared and presented their reflections on a chosen text or film working as a group. At the same time they also had an opportunity to work on their individual project on a chosen text either for book review or essay. They have also written midterm and final exams, which tested them on the terminology and critical evaluations concerning the classical literatures of India, China and Japan. In this kind of setting it is important to keep the course content separated and marked for each of the above projects. I asked the students to chose the texts or film for two of the above projects i.e., Group presentation and Individual essay or book review, which is not included in the course content. I clearly marked the course content separately for exams and group discussions in class and online to prevent any overlap. The students enjoyed the variety of texts covered in the course. and the other texts brought to the course by their peers and especially loved the book review project.

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Students must meet with me to discuss the subject of class presentation. A group can have a 4-6 members. Each member should have a share in the work of the group. An oral presentation should contain material that is concise, and to the point. The oral presentation should neither be read from script nor it should be written out in detail as a prompt sheet. The presentation is for a length of 15 minutes. The members should take care that they should not exceed this time limit. A good oral presentation should be devoid of biased information, unresearched evidence or unsupported opinions.

No individual mark is given to the members of the group. The mark represents the group work and is same for all the members.

Last date for approval of group presentation subject: 3.Feb.2005.

GUIDELINES FOR BOOK REPORT OF ESSAY

This is an individual project and the subject must be different from oral presentation.

A. In your book report (5-7 pages) write about a book written by an Indian, Chinese or Japanese author that you have recently read. For the report summerize the basic plot briefly and discuss the outstanding ideas or concepts to analyze how they are similar or different or from the ideas or concepts found in traditional Asian Literature that we discuss in class.

B. If you choose to do write an essay (5-7 pages) the subject must be different from your oral presentation and it must be chosen in consultation with me.

Last day for approval of book review or essay subject: 10. Feb. 2005.

Suggested Readings:

Course Pack of the required readings is available from *Titles*, McMaster University Bookstore.

The following may be consulted as additional background readings.

Van Buitenen, trans. *The Mahabharata*. Vol. III The book of forest. Select sections

Robert P. Goldman, ed. *The Ramayana of Valmiki: An epic of Ancient India* (Princeton, N.J : Princeton University Press, 1990). Select sections.

Giles, Herbert A. *A History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1958)

Keene, Donald, *Japanes Literature: An introduction to Western Readers* (London: J. Murray, 1955).

Hall, John, Whitney. *Twelve doors to Japan* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

Oven, Stephen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996).

Welty, Thomas, *The Asians*, 5th Edition, New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1976.