



Dr. Michel LANTELME
LIT 325 – 3 credits, M-W, 3:30pm-4:55pm, Zola room
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Sem 2 2021/22

THE EUROPEAN NOVEL: TWENTIETH CENTURY PERSPECTIVES

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The twentieth century saw the European novel become the dominant literary genre. It assumed its role as the narrative voice of a turbulent era.

II. PRIMARY BOOKS:

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899)
Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* (1915)
Irmgard Keun, *After Midnight* (1937) ⇨
Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (1942)
Primo Levi, *The Reawakening* (1963)
Nathalie Sarraute, *Do You Hear Them?* (1972) ⇨
Patrick Süskind, *The Pigeon* (1988) ⇨

(NB: ⇨ Reading materials provided by the professor on the IAU electronic platform)

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the course are to better appreciate the evolution of the 20th-century European novel, understand the importance of the selected works in their historical context, recognize the value of literary techniques in novelistic composition, undertake extended literary analysis and fully develop written and oral arguments.

IV. LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will:

- Situate the selected literary works in their historical context
- Conduct close-reading analysis, identify and interpret the most significant literary devices
- Establish meaningful comparisons between the selected works

- Explain what the selected novels teach us about European identity and culture

V. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES:

An interdisciplinary approach will be favoured. A study of the context and background will be incorporated. Close-reading analysis will give the students an opportunity to enhance their analytical skills. This is not a lecture class, and its success very much depends on everyone coming to class prepared and ready to contribute. Questions to focus on are provided in order to facilitate class discussions.

VI. EVALUATION AND GRADING:

- Six 3-page papers 50% of the final mark
- Midterm exam 15% of the final mark
- Two oral presentations in class 10% of the final mark
- Final exam OR term paper 20% of the final mark
- Active and regular participation in class 5% of the final mark

Papers: There will be six 3-page (750-1,000 words) papers to write. I will give you the various topics for these papers as the semester progresses. Those papers are to be submitted electronically before the beginning of class, on the due dates).

Exams: Your midterm will be cumulative and will deal in a comparative manner with some of the major issues we will have studied up to that point. The midterm and final will be essay questions largely based on topics that we will have developed together in our class discussions. The question on the final exam will deal exclusively with the readings of the latter half of the semester. Should you choose to do the term paper instead of the final exam, I will guide you, but you must ultimately develop the topic on your own; you will need to consult with me first regarding the timing, your objective, methodology, and bibliography.

Presentations: Each student is responsible for preparing three 10-minute oral presentation on some aspect of the texts we will be reading. Each presentation will be followed by a discussion, during which you will be expected to answer to your classmates’ questions. Some possible topics: analysis of a particular chapter or episode; analysis of a character; analysis of a stylistic device; analysis of a recurrent motif, etc.

NB: It is essential to cite all quotations and general sources clearly and completely, and to submit only work that is entirely one’s own. Acts as plagiarism, submission of the same work for more than one class, fabrication, forgery, and fraud, as well as attempting to commit such acts or assisting others in doing so, will be sanctioned. Academic integrity means understanding and respecting these basic truths, without which no university can exist. Academic misconduct—“cheating”—is not just “against the rules”. It violates the assumptions at the heart of all learning. It destroys the mutual trust and respect that should exist between student and professor. Finally, it is unfair to students who earn their grades honestly.

Grade distribution:

A 95-100%	B 84-87%	C 74-77%	D 64-67%
A- 90-94%	B- 80-83%	C- 70-73%	D- 60-63%
B+ 89%-88%	C+ 79%-78%	D+ 69%-68%	F 59%-0%

VII. ATTENDANCE:

Unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your final grade. Each unexcused absence above two will lower the final grade by a half-letter grade. IAU College excused absences: absences linked to IAU excursions, sickness (a medical certificate is required), and emergencies.

Semester Schedule

- Jan. 27 Presentation of the course & methodology
Feb. 1 - VS. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (excerpt)
What does the narrator learn about his own native island of Trinidad, as he leaves? What motivates him to move to England? How does Great Britain compare with the views he had formed in his mind prior to actually visiting? What do you think the excerpt teaches us about identity?
- Read the first 30 pages of Joseph's Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Part I: Writing against History

- Feb. 3 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Read at least first half)
Why is the beginning set in London? How do the Thames and the Congo rivers compare? What do you find remarkable in the description of the Natives? Is Chinua Achebe right - is *Heart of Darkness* racist? Does the book present a simple and degrading view of the natives? Or are the views more complex?
- Feb. 8 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Finish book)
What is the effect of having this narration as a framed story told by a nameless narrator? Much of our information of Kurtz comes secondhand or through the grapevine. How does that affect our vision of him when we finally see him in person?
Paper 1 due
- Feb. 10 Irmgard Keun, *After Midnight* (pages 8-49)
What do we learn about life under the nazi regime? How did the nazi regime affect individual/collective psychology as well as the relations between people? What is remarkable about the narrator's female voice?
- Feb. 15 Irmgard Keun, *After Midnight* (pages 50-92)
What is the status of children? Based on the narrator's comments about Algin, what image of the writer emerges from the novel?
Paper 2 due
- Feb. 17 "Exile in Paradise"
Anna Seghers, *Transit* (excerpt)
- Feb. 22 Literature as Testimony
Lion Feuchtwanger, *The Devil in France* (excerpt)
Anna Seghers, *Transit* (excerpt)
- Feb. 24 Primo Levi, *The Reawakening* (pages 1-84)
In what sense can *The Reawakening* be considered an epic? In that respect, why are the Greek and Cesare so important? Can you spot humour in *The Reawakening*? Where does the issue of translation manifest itself? How do the characters respond to linguistic challenges?
- Saturday, Feb. 26** Field trip: "Sanary, capital of German literature"
- March 1 Primo Levi, *The Reawakening* (pages 85-143)
In what sense can *The Reawakening* be considered a linguistic treatise? What does the chapter "The Little Hen" teach us about communication challenges and ways to overcome them?

March 3 Primo Levi, *The Reawakening* (pages 144-208)
What is remarkable about performance and the various entertainment events (movies, dance, performances...) that the narrator witnesses in the chapters "Holidays" and "The Theatre"? What does it teach us?
Paper 3 due

March 8 Review

March 10 **Mid-term Exam**

Part II: Individual and Society

March 15 Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* (Read at least half)
What does the depiction of Gregor's room tell us about the character? What do we know about the family relations prior to Gregor's transformation? How has his transformation changed his professional and family relations?

March 17 Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* (Finish reading)
What do the secondary characters (the 3 men, the maids) bring to the narrative? Who is transforming, and in what ways? What does the ending reveal about family structure and values? What does Gregor's reaction to Grete's violin playing reveal?

March 22 Patrick Süskind, *The Pigeon*
What role do traumas, phobias and anxieties play in the narrative? Two years before the Fall of the Berlin Wall, how does the novel stage division/separation?

March 24 Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* & Patrick Süskind, *The Pigeon*
How does *The Pigeon* relate to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*?
Paper 4 due

March 29 Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (part I)
What is remarkable about the opening lines? How is the funeral portrayed? What do we learn about Meursault in the first 3 chapters? What is the function of the characters he comes into contact with (Raymond, Salamano, Marie, etc.)?

March 31 Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (part I)
What chain of events leads to the murder? What is the function of the sun in part I? What do metaphors and similes teach us at the end of Part I?

April 5 Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (part II)
During the trial, whose voices do we hear? Can you identify examples of free indirect discourse? What is Meursault charged with, and why?

April 7 Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (part II)
What role does the priest play? How do you interpret the end? What is the overall status of the natives?
Paper 5 due

.....Spring break.....

April 19 Nathalie Sarraute, *Do You Hear Them?* (pages 1-33)
What makes this narrative different from traditional narratives? In your view, what

illustrates best the narrative freedom that is characteristic of Modernism and the New Novel/Nouveau Roman? How are the relations between generations portrayed? What stands out from their interaction?

- April 21 - Nathalie Sarraute, *Do You Hear Them?* (pages 34-98)
Sarraute's novel came out in print just four years after the 1968 students uprising and the rebellion against authority; how does the generation gap manifest itself in the text?
- Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author"
How does this 1968 short piece change our relation to literature? How does it relate to the 1968 rebellion?
- April 26 Nathalie Sarraute, *Do You Hear Them?* (Finish reading)
What do you think is remarkable about the speculations on Art? In what sense can it be said that the novel presents us with two very different conceptions of art?
Paper 6 due
- April 28 Nathalie Sarraute, *Do You Hear Them?*
What kind of comments are made about museums? What is the final destination of the sculpture? In what sense can it be said that the novel explores at length the idea of legacy? What does it teach us in this respect?
- May 3 Nathalie Sarraute, *Do You Hear Them?*
Oral presentations
- May 5 Review

Tuesday 4 May - Friday 7 May FINAL EXAMS
