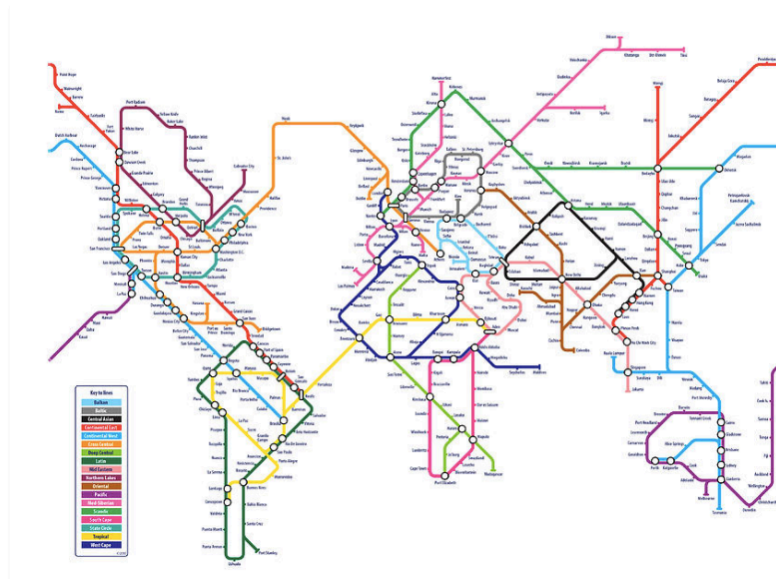


ENGL 121: Literature and Nation



Professor Russell A. Potter
Summer Session II
Gaige Hall 303, 6:30-8:30 p.m. (days vary)

The idea that literature, like food or music or dance, should possess or embody a national culture, is quite a recent one in terms of world history. The older dream was of a universal literature, written in Greek or Latin and readable around the world and for all time. This dream, for better or worse, faded with the collapse of the ancient empires, particularly that of Rome. It wasn't until some centuries later, when nations were beginning to emerge from the medieval checkerboard of duchies and domains, that the idea of writing literature in one's own native language, and expressing the natural and national character of its speakers, began to emerge. It was this vernacular writing with which national literatures were born, and with them the sense that each nation ought to have its own pantheon of literary and artistic giants.

Today, while we can use terms like "American Literature," "Irish Literature," or "Japanese Literature," it's not always easy to separate them off. People emigrate from country to country; most nations contain many languages, ethnicities, and faiths; the most successful literature is translated and read around the world. Still, each country's literary heritage has something of the essence of the nation in it, both as it might be perceived internally, and as it might be seen by others. This summer session, given the limits of time, we'll focus on just four different "national" writers, from each of whom we'll read two or three stories, or a brief novella. In some cases, we'll watch film adaptations of these stories, or look at their influence in popular culture. There will be a weekly posting on our class blog, on which each student is expected to comment, as well as one final paper of 4-6 pages in length on a topic of a student's choosing from among the course's texts and films. This is also a *hybrid* course – we will meet in person regularly over the first three weeks of the course; for the second three weeks the class will be conducted completely online.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week I (June 25th) Introduction to course. Readings, Lafcadio Hearn, “Hoichi the Earless,” “Yuki-Onna (The Woman of the Snows).” In-class film *Kwaidan* (the segments that dramatize the stories “Hoichi the Earless” and “Yuki-Onna”)

Week II (July 2nd) Readings, from *Dubliners*, “Araby,” “Clay,” and “The Dead.” In-class film, *The Dead*, starring Angelica Houston.

Week III (July 9th) Reading: Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Tapster*. In-class listening, “My Life in the Bush of Ghosts.” DRAFT papers due Wednesday.

Week IV (July 16th) Reading: Nikolai Gogol, “The Overcoat” and “The Nose.” Online short film: “The Nose” (1963).

Week V (July 23rd) Reading “Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp” (online), along with the 1992 Disney version (available online from various sites, or on DVD).

Week VI (July 30th) Reading and revision week. FINAL draft of paper due via e-mail on Wednesday August 1st by 5 p.m.