**English 358:363:001**

**Twentieth Century Literature: Buddhism and the Modern Novel**

Fall 2014

T/R 1:10-2:30

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00-5:00 and by appointment

The three nouns of our course – Buddhism, Modern, Novel – are both complex and contested. Is Buddhism, for example, a philosophy or a religion? What is the difference between these two, anyway? Moreover, is how modern writers have understood Buddhism at all consistent with Buddhist history and practice? Endless books and articles, meanwhile, have been written defining and debating what exactly constitutes "the modern," and what the features of a novel are. Our task in this course is made even more difficulty by the conjunction "and" – what is the relationship between these three complex nouns? William Burroughs, for example, frustrated with his experience on a Buddhist meditation retreat, decided to abandon the Buddhist path of his fellow Beats Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Gary Snyder. Buddhism and art, he wrote, are two different things. *"Show me a good Buddhist novelist*," he challenged his contemporaries. This class will take up Burroughs' challenge as we look at a number of novels that both embody and question Buddhist themes and their relation to modernity. In so doing, we will not arrive at final definitions, but hopefully we will have mapped some of the terrain that unites Buddhism and the modern novel.

**Required Readings:**

All books have been ordered to the Rutgers University Bookstore (http://rutgers.bncollege.com/)

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (Penguin)

Jamyang Norbu, *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes* (HarperCollins)

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Norton Critical Edition)

Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*(New Directions)

Yukio Mishima, *Temple of the Golden Pavilion*(Vintage)

Jack Kerouac, *Dharma Bums* (Penguin)

Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*(Penguin)

Several articles will also be made available to you for the first few weeks of class, and we will watch two films at the end of class: The Wachowski's *Cloud Atlas* and Spike Jonze's *Her*

**Requirements:**

1) Attendance and participation. **30% of grade.**

This class will be run as a seminar. I will lecture occasionally to provide background information on authors and topics, but the main focus is on your active engagement. As such, you are expected to attend every class except in cases of illness or emergency. After your third unexcused absence, you will be docked 5% of your grade. All students are also expected to speak in class, and we will do a variety of small discussion groups and activities to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to do so. If you are uncomfortable about speaking in class, please do not hesitate to come speak to me about it. Actually, you all need to come speak to me at some point, since visiting office hours at least once is part of your participation grade.

2) Passages and questions. **10% of grade**

We will read seven novels in this course. For each novel, you will choose a passage that interests you, concerns you, delights you, angers you, or in some other way moves you. When we begin the discussion of each novel, we will choose students to do this for each day that we discuss the novel. They will help get the conversation going. Please e-mail me the passage at least one hour before class. In addition, for the first few classes when we read background material, everyone should choose one passage to discuss, though you don't need to email this to me.

3) Mini-Writing Assignment (1-2 pages): **10% of grade**

This will be a short response paper about Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, due on September 23rd. It's mostly designed to help you start thinking about how to engage in writing about literature. I

will distribute the question when we begin reading the novel.

4) Final paper (10-12 pages). **50% of grade** (broken up into the following components: 10% for paper proposal; 15% for summary paragraphs of three critical sources; 25% for paper itself)

One aim of this course if for you to understand the practice and craft of literary criticism. The goal is to understand the relationship between reading books and writing about them, and, furthermore, to understand yourself as part of a community of readers across the world who are debating the meanings of these novels. To these ends, we will work together on crafting a final research paper. In this paper, you will choose a work or works to write about, and engage with three pieces of criticism about the work(s). I will help you find sources, and we will discuss in depth what a research paper is and how to go about writing one. Deadlines are given on the syllabus, below.

**Please note:** If there is a final assignment that you think is more relevant to you than a paper, you are free to come and discuss that option with me (creative writing, artwork, database-building, community engagement, etc.). Please remember that any alternative project will also be graded according to the rigorous internal standards of the domain you are working in.

**IMPORTANT: ON COMPUTERS, TABLET AND SMART PHONES**

There are many wonderful things about computers and smart phones, and we all use them all the time to very good effect. But electronics are also distracting to ourselves and to others around us, and they fragment the attention in a classroom. Our aim here is to be a community of readers working together to think through a number of difficult books and ideas, and we will need to focus as closely on those texts as possible. If necessary, please advise friends or family ahead of time that, except for emergencies, you will not be reachable during this class period. We will talk more about limited uses of technology in order to access readings and films on the first day of class.

**Schedule of Course Readings:**

Sept 2nd: Introductions.

No reading

Sept 4th: Buddhist Modernisms I

Rupert Gethin, "Four Truths" (pp 59-84)

Donald Lopez, "Buddhism in Practice" (pp 56-87)

Lopez, *A Modern Buddhist Bible* (brief excerpts)

Sept 9th: Buddhist Modernisms II

Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience" (pp 228-270)

Sharf, "Losing Our Religion" (pp 44-49)

Herman Hesse, "The Longing of Our Time for a Worldview (pp 365-368)

Sept 11th: Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* pp 1-79

Optional: Gethin, "The Elaboration and Teaching of Dependent Arising" (pp 149-159)

Sept 16th: *Kim*, pp 80-149

Sept 18th: *Kim*, pp 150-230

Sept 23rd: *Kim*, pp 230-290

Appendix: Introduction to *Kim* by Edward Said pp 308-317; 322-331

**Mini-Writing Assignment on the end of *Kim* due at beginning of class (Sept 23)**

Sept. 25th: Jamyang Norbu, *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes* IX-XXV; 1-82

Norbu, "Trapped by Buddha"

Sept 30th: *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes*, 83-188

Oct 2nd: *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes*, 189-271

Oct. 7th: Joseph Conard, *Heart of Darkness*

Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (brief excerpts)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (brief excerpt)

Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction" (brief excerpt)

Oct. 9th: *Heart of Darkness* discussion continued

Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa"

Oct. 14th: *Heart of Darkness* discussion continued

Oct. 16th: Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*

re-read Hesse's brief piece from the first week

Oct. 21st: *Siddhartha* discussion continued

Bertolt Brecht, "The Buddha's Parable of the Burning House"

Oct. 23rd: *Siddhartha* discussion continued

**Paper proposal and list of sources due (Oct 23)**

Oct. 28th: Yukio Mishima, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion,* pp 1-80

Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (brief excerpts)

Oct. 30th: *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion,* pp 81-154

Nov. 4th: *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, pp 155-262

Nov. 6th: Jack Kerouac, *Dharma Bums,* pp 3-60

D.T. Suzuki "Introduction" to *Essays in Zen Buddhism,* pp 13-38

Willliam Burroughs, *Retreat Diaries* (brief excerpts)

Nov. 11th: *Dharma Bums,* pp 61-161

Nov. 13th: *Dharma Bums*, pp 161-244

Nov. 18th: Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*, pp 11-70

Rita Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy* (excepts, about 20 pages)

Nov. 20th: Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*, pp 70-136

Nov. 25th: Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*, pp 136-206

**Summary of 3 critical sources due (Nov 25)**

Dec. 2nd: The Wachowski's *Cloud Atlas*

William Edelglass and Thich Nhat Hanh: *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged*

*Buddhism*, pp 419-427

Dec. 4th: Spike Jonze, *Her*

Nam June Paik, *Zen for Film* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z1sOsIrshU)

Alan Watts, *Death* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0mdOvNEUiA)

Dec. 9th: Wrap-up

**Final paper due 12/15**