

English 475  
Fall 2019  
TTH 11:30am – 12:50pm, Mason 2336  
Office number: (734) 647-2843

Prof. Ben Mangrum  
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Office: Angell Hall 4200  
Office hours: T 1:30pm-2:30pm  
(and by appointment)

## World as Mystery

This course examines how contemporary novelists use genres of detection and mystery to represent the “world” for a global marketplace of readers. These writers write *for* the world, but they also use genres of detection and mystery to imagine “the world” itself.

Yet we’ll discover in this course that the “world” is not a self-evident or uncomplicated concept. In fact, this course will interrogate notions of a single “world” or “world literature.” Literary techniques of depicting the “world as mystery” often ask readers to imagine networks of global or international connection that make “the world” an intelligible idea. But what does it mean to stitch the world together through narratives of intrigue and crime? How could the truth be discovered when narrative worlds are shrouded in mystery? And how can we determine that what we know is the truth?

By pursuing these questions about contemporary literary writing, students will examine the paradox of a “world literature” that depicts its constitutive term as a fundamental mystery. We will consider the literary form and philosophy of this paradox, alongside “systems theory” and other scholarly attempts to categorize contemporary world literature.

### Course texts:

- Andrea Camilleri, *The Terracotta Dog* (ISBN 978-0330492911)
- Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (ISBN 978-0062065254)
- Haruki Murakami, *The Strange Library* (ISBN 978-0385354301)
- Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being* (ISBN 978-0143124870)
- Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red* (ISBN 9780375706851)
- Ahmed Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (ISBN 978-0143128793)
- Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, *House of Stone* (ISBN 978-0393635423)

(Kindle or other electronic versions of these texts are not allowed in the classroom. I strongly discourage you from buying digital copies of the course texts.)

Course Assignments	%
8 short essays (3% each)	24
Conference Presentation	5
Conference Feedback	1
Scholarly article summary and presentation	15
Course Participation	25
Final Paper	30

### **Note on Late Assignments:**

Assignments submitted late on the due date will be penalized by 5 points. Assignments submitted the day after the due date will be penalized 10 points, and submissions 48 hours after

the due date will not be accepted. Of course, if there is a health-related emergency, please discuss your situation with me.

**Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory. If you must miss class, let me know in advance. With few exceptions, I will deduct the following from your Participation grade for every absence after the second: if you miss three classes, the highest you could earn for your Participation grade would be 95%, four classes would be 85%, and ten percentage points for every absence thereafter. You should attend every class from the beginning of the semester in case emergencies arise. Also, arriving late is disruptive to everyone in the class and can frustrate discussion and lectures. As a result, every three “late arrivals” counts as one absence.

**Participation:**

Your grade for “Participation” will be determined according to the following criteria:

- Attendance (per Attendance Policy)
- Quality and quantity of contributions to class discussion. I want you to contribute each class meeting.
- Active listening during lectures, presentations, and class-wide discussion.

The following will negatively affect your participation grade:

- Using a laptop, computer, phone, iPod, iPad, or any other electronic technology, unless allowed by the Learning Disability Act
- Habitually interrupting the instructor or one of your peers
- Showing disrespect or indifference toward your peers
- Not reading an assignment in its entirety

**Religious Accommodations for Students:**

Please look carefully at the syllabus during the first week of class. If any of the assignments or course meetings conflict with a major religious holiday for your faith, please let me know. I will make every effort to make the necessary accommodations.

**Other Accommodations:**

If you have a disability and need an accommodation to participate in this class or to complete course requirements, please ask Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to provide documentation of the accommodations that you need. Then, please share this documentation with me as soon as possible, preferably within the first few weeks of class.

**Electronic technology:**

Laptops, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, and all other electronic devices should not be used during regular class meetings. On occasion, I will ask you to bring in digital technology for in-class activities, but otherwise computers and cell phones should be stored away. There should be no reason to read the course texts on a tablet or laptop during class. If this policy creates hardship, please speak with me.

**Short Essays**

You will write eight low-stakes essays throughout the semester. For each essay, you will offer a close reading of a passage from the week’s assigned reading. Do not summarize the book or

passage; write a “close reading” of it. You should write between one and two pages (double-spaced). For each essay, you should (a) unpack the language of a specific passage from the week’s assigned reading and (b) connect your close reading to a larger issue of interpretation.

These essays are “low-stakes” in the sense that you are not required to advance a thesis, nor does your prose need to be spotless. I want you to exhibit your understanding of the reading and practice the skill of close textual analysis. You’re welcome to take interpretive risks, as long as you write clearly and support your view with textual evidence. You should also use these short writing assignments as a chance to float ideas for your final essay. In fact, you should think about these short essays as early drafts or short “trial runs” for the final essay.

Each essay should be submitted to Canvas by 5pm on Friday. You are not required to submit a hard copy. There are eleven weeks of reading this semester, and you must submit essays for eight of these eleven weeks. In other words, **you may select three weeks in the semester not to submit short essays.** Essays are due on the following dates: September 6, 13, 20, and 27, October 4, 11, and 25, November 1, 8, 15 and 22.

### **Scholarly Article Summary and Presentation**

For this assignment, you will (a) summarize a scholarly article in ~250 words and (b) write an analytical response to the article in another ~250 words. You will also (c) present a summary of “take-aways” from the article. This in-class presentation should be approximately ten minutes. You will circulate a brief handout with the article’s citation and any other material that may be relevant to your peers (e.g., quotes of main claims and passages). I have included a list of scholarly articles and book chapters at the end of the syllabus. These readings are keyed to relevant class meetings. On September 5, students will sign-up for their articles and due dates.

I have two goals in mind for this assignment. First, this assignment will be one of the ways we’ll encounter key terms of genre criticism and theories of “world literature.” As presenters, you’ll be responsible for giving us frames of reference for how scholars understand contemporary literature. Second, I want to introduce you to the scholarly practices of reading academic articles and grappling with their (sometimes difficult) content. In these articles and book chapters, scholars present new methods and theories of interpretation, raise problems with established ways of thinking, and offer readings of particular texts or cultural artifacts. The prose of the essays will not always be easy, but part of your job is to “translate” the argument for your peers.

### **Final Paper**

Choose at least two of the novels from the course schedule and write a thesis-driven research paper that is ~3500 words in length. You must engage with a minimum of five theoretical or peer-reviewed sources. The goals of this assignment include (a) formulating a clear thesis about the novels, (b) supporting that thesis through close reading of salient ideas, images, language, and the artistic form of the texts, and (c) situating your thesis and close reading in peer-reviewed scholarship and/or wider conversations (e.g., philosophy, media studies, or literary theory).

You will present a short early draft of this final paper during the conference presentations (see below). If there are major problems with your conference paper, you may elect to write about a

different topic or pair of novels. In addition to conference presentations, there will also be a draft workshop for the complete draft on Dec. 10. The final papers are due on Dec. 17 at 4pm.

You must meet with me to discuss your progress on the final paper during week 14. In addition, I'll be happy to serve as a sounding board, recommend secondary sources, and read drafts of your papers during office hours or a scheduled meeting.

### **Conference Presentations**

Each student will present a partial draft of the final essay during an in-class academic conference. These presentations should be no more than ten minutes. Presenters should (1) summarize their thesis or main argument, (2) briefly discuss some textual evidence from one of the novels, and (3) present a working bibliography for the final paper. Students will present their papers during the conference days on November 26 or December 3.

For this portion of your course grade, I will evaluate (a) whether you have a cogent thesis and tenable paper idea and (b) how you respond to your peers during the time for Questions and Answers (Q&A). I will also evaluate (c) the questions and feedback you offer during the Q&A for your peers' presentations. Students not presenting are required to offer suggestions and criticisms to each paper during the Q&A.

I have several goals for this assignment. First, I want you to receive feedback on the major assignment of the semester before it is due. Second, I want you to practice presenting your work in a formal, academic setting. Third, I want you to practice discussing and defending your ideas in a public setting. As we prepare for this assignment, we will also talk about academic conferences and the conventions for giving a "conference paper" in the humanities.

### **How to Format Your Essays:**

In addition to the specific parameters for the short essays and final paper, your submissions should conform to the following formatting (violation of which will be penalized at my discretion):

- Double-spaced
- Times or Times New Roman font only – 12-point in size
- 1-inch margins on all sides
- Last name and page number in the upper-right hand "Header" of every page
- For the final paper, please staple your submission in the upper left-hand corner
- To save paper, you may print on the front and back of the page
- In addition to your name, my name, and the course number, please also include **a word count at the top of the first page**

**Day-by-Day Schedule:**

	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
Week 1	<b>September 3</b> Syllabus, introductions, etc.	<b>September 5</b> Haruki Murakami, <i>The Strange Library</i> (Read this short book in its entirety.)
Week 2	<b>September 10</b> Ahmed Saadawi, <i>Frankenstein in Baghdad</i> , “Final Report”-ch.6 (pp.1-89); King, “Crime Fiction as World Literature” (Canvas)	<b>September 12</b> Saadawi, <i>Frankenstein in Baghdad</i> , chs.7-11 (pp.90-181)
Week 3	<b>September 17</b> Saadawi, <i>Frankenstein in Baghdad</i> , chs.12-19 (pp.182-281)	<b>September 19</b> Andrea Camilleri, <i>Terra-Cotta Dog</i> , chs. 1-8 (pp.1-102)
Week 4	<b>September 24</b> <u>Visit by Prof. May Hawas</u> Camilleri, <i>Terra-Cotta Dog</i> , chs. 9-17 (pp.103-219)	<b>September 26</b> <u>Visit by Prof. May Hawas</u> Camilleri, <i>Terra-Cotta Dog</i> , chs. 18-25 (pp.167-331)
Week 5	<b>October 1</b> Pamuk, <i>My Name Is Red</i> , chs. 1-22 (pp.3-119)	<b>October 3</b> Pamuk, <i>My Name Is Red</i> , chs. 23-35 (pp.120-219)
Week 6	<b>October 8</b> Pamuk, <i>My Name Is Red</i> , chs. 36-52 (pp.219-339)	<b>October 10</b> Pamuk, <i>My Name Is Red</i> , chs. 53-59 (pp.339-413)
Week 7	<b>October 15</b> <i>No class – Fall Break</i>	<b>October 17</b> <i>No class – Prof. Mangrum will be in Toronto for a conference.</i>
Week 8	<b>October 22</b> Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, <i>House of Stone</i> , Prologue and Book One (pp. 1-178)	<b>October 24</b> Tshuma, <i>House of Stone</i> , Book Two (pp. 179-316)
Week 9	<b>October 29</b> Tshuma, <i>House of Stone</i> , Book III (pp. 317-372)	<b>October 31</b> Erdrich, <i>The Round House</i> , chs. 1-4 (pp.1-83).
Week 10	<b>November 5</b> Erdrich, <i>The Round House</i> , chs. 5-8 (pp.85-199)	<b>November 7</b> Erdrich, <i>The Round House</i> , chs. 9-11 (pp.201-317)
Week 11	<b>November 12</b> Ruth Ozeki, <i>A Tale for the Time Being</i> , Part I (pp.1-108)	<b>November 14</b> Ozeki, <i>A Tale for the Time Being</i> , Part II (pp.109-258)
Week 12	<b>November 19</b> Ozeki, <i>A Tale for the Time Being</i> , Part III (pp.259-355)	<b>November 21</b> Ozeki, <i>A Tale for the Time Being</i> , Part IV-Appendix F (pp.357-418)
Week 13	<b>November 26</b> <b>Conference Presentations</b>	<b>November 28</b> <i>No class – Thanksgiving Break</i>
Week 14	<b>December 3</b> <b>Conference Presentations</b>	<b>December 5</b> How to write an academic article
Week 15	<b>December 10</b> <u>Writing workshop</u> Drafts of final articles due by the start of class. Please submit drafts to the forum on Canvas.	

**Scholarly Article Write-up**

September 12: David Damrosch, "What Is Literature?"

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September 17: Aamir Mufti, "Erich Auerbach and the Death and Life of World Lit"

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September 19: May Hawas, "The Crises of World Literature"

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September 24: Introduction to Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born Translated*

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September 26: Introduction to Pheng Cheah, *What Is a World?*

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October 1: Franco Moretti, "World-Systems Analysis, Evolutionary Theory, *Weltliteratur*"

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October 3: Nirvana Tanoukhi, "The Scale of World Literature"

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October 8: Introduction to Debjani Ganguly, *This Thing Called a World*

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October 10: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Planetary," *Death of a Discipline*

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October 22: Yogita Goyal, "Africa and the Black Atlantic"

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October 24: Emily Apter, "Paranoid Globalism," from *Against World Literature*

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