

Course Outline: Contemporary Literature

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Note for students: This short course outline is provided for planning purposes only. Course information is tentative and subject to change; the final course syllabus will be available by the first day of classes.

Course Code

EN 3440 6.0A (Y): Contemporary Literature

Course Description

What is literature today, at a moment when writing increasingly happens through digital technologies — and when those technologies are reshaping reality itself? This course explores the relationship between contemporary literature and digital culture, tracing the forms of life and writing that have emerged around new technologies since World War II.

In the first semester, we will read Kafka, Orwell, Adichie and Lockwood alongside thinkers of surveillance, enshittification, the attention economy, and capitalist realism, in order to explore the ways literature both anticipated and now reflects the world we inhabit. We will then turn to the forms of writing that we find on the internet today — blogging, fan fiction, text messages, social media, product reviews, AI-generated writing, and consider how we can understand them as part of the history of literature.

The second semester expands these ideas by approaching contemporary literature as a response to a culture saturated with imitations, fakes, doubles and copies. We will read Naomi Klein's *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World* and Solvej Balle's *On the Calculation of Volume* as guides to our moment, then examine robots and AI as simulations of the human (Dick, Ishiguro); colonialism as a culture of the white copy (Orange); K-Pop and hockey fan fiction as a creative practice of imitation (Yi, Reid); and the zombie apocalypse novel (Ma) as a meditation on escaping the brutal repetitions of contemporary life.

Throughout both semesters, we will read literary works for clues about the strange realities we inhabit today. Film and television will also feature: *Squid Game*, *Severance*, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once* all have something to tell us here. Assignments will encourage both critical and creative writing.

Course Delivery

Delivery Mode: ONCA

EN 3440 is a full year asynchronous online class that will be hosted on eClass, with a weekly recorded lecture, weekly discussion forums, and an in person end of semester exam. You can choose when you engage with course materials and content, week by week.

Course Materials

Selections from:

Solvej Balle, *On The Calculation of Volume*

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Cory Doctorow, *Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What to Do About It*

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun*

Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis"

Naomi Klein, *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World.*

Patricia Lockwood, *No One is Talking about This*

Ling Ma, *Severance*

Jenny Odell, *How to do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*

Tommy Orange, *There There*

George Orwell, *1984*

Rachel Reid, *Heated Rivalry*

Tentative Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Assessment	Weight	Mode	Tentative Deadline
Weekly forum comments	2 x 20%	Asynchronous online	end of semester
1500 word research paper or creative writing assignment	2 x 10%	Online	mid semester
End of semester exam	2 x 20%	In person	exam period
	100%		

Category:	C
Historical Requirement:	N/A
Open To:	Yr 3, 4 (EN, ENPR, CRWR students only)