**World Literature: Comparative Cosmologies (Com 373 / Eng 384)**

Tuesdays, 1:30-4:20 / *meeting place TBA*

Professor Eric Hayot

*Office location* | ehayot@psu.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays, before and after class

Course information:

We normally imagine that the cosmological impulse to describe a total world (of the kind that appears in Plato’s *Timaeus*) disappears as the field of knowledge is split up, via modern life, into its new parts (religion divided from astronomy, philosophy from physics, biology from history). But what happens when the impulse to cosmology, which we think of as pre-modern, crosses over the modern divide? Are we still world-makers and world-thinkers (about, for instance, “globalization”)? This course begins with a quick overview of premodern cosmological thought; develops tools for thinking cosmologically in the modern age; and then pivots to a series of modern literary works, asking what kinds of worlds they build. We will do cosmological analysis, more or less, on texts that live in a world “beyond” cosmology, asking what they tell us about literature in general, and about the concept of “world literature.” Novels from England, Germany, Sweden, Japan, Argentina, India, and Hong Kong; all readings in English translation.

Texts:

Plato, *Timaeus*

Austen, *Sanditon* (England)

Buchner, *Danton’s Death* (Germany)

Lagerlöf, *The Saga of Gosta Berling* (Sweden)

Yokomitsu, *Shanghai* (Japan)

Saer, *The Witness* (Argentina)

Chughtai, *The Crooked Line* (India)

Han, *A Dictionary of Maqiao* (China)

In addition we’ll do a good deal of secondary reading, especially at the beginning of the course, on material that will be made available either over email or through Blackboard, in PDF format.

Assignments/grading:

* Weekly response papers, 400-600 words (30 percent)

These are to be posted on Blackboard by Monday at 9pm. Response papers should not be plot summary but should discuss points of interest in the text and raise questions for class discussion. Response papers will not receive written feedback, but I will gladly discuss them with you over office hours; students will receive a written evaluation of their performance in the class after the midterm.

* Take-home midterm (30 percent)
* Final paper, 8-10pp, due during reading period (40 percent)

Class participation can change your final grade, upward or downward, by up to one-third of a letter grade.

Policies:

You get one class off free. Every absence beginning with your second absence will seriously hurt your final grade (by 1/3). There are no excused absences unless you need to represent the university in some official way (as an athlete, for instance) or it is a religious holiday for you. Please don’t be late to class. We will be taking a short (10-minute) break around the halfway mark each time.

I don’t accept late work unless you talk about it with me in advance. Unexcused late work will receive a grade of 0. If you are not in class when something is due, you will receive a grade of 0, unless you have an excused absence.

Eating and drinking in class is ok by me, as long as it’s not a meal.

Plagiarism and academic honesty:

If you use someone else’s ideas, whether through direct quotation or paraphrase, you need to say so. Use parenthetical references and a works cited list (as explained in the MLA Style Guide, or ask me) to show your reader where your ideas are coming from.

Dishonesty of any other kind will not be tolerated. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Acts of dishonesty will result in academic sanctions and will be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Equal access:

Students must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (ods@princeton.edu; 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests for academic accommodations for this course need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, and again at least two weeks in advance of any needed accommodations in order to make arrangements to implement the accommodations. Please make an appointment to meet with me in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs. No accommodations will be given without authorization from ODS, or without advance notice.

Daily syllabus. Have everything read before coming to class.

Feb 5 *What is the cosmological imagination?*

Eliade, Campion, and Kragh on religion and cosmology; Aït-Touati on science and literature; Teiser on China (PDFs)

Feb 12 *The classical tradition and beyond*

Plato, *Timaeus*

Waldseemüller, Fontenelle, and Huygens on the end of the Ptolemaic era (PDF), Kadir on Giordano Bruno; Cohen on religion in a state society (PDF)

Feb 19 *Cosmologies today, cosmologies in history and literature*

Nancy on globalization (PDF), Koyré on the open universe (PDF), Auerbach on the representation of reality (PDF), Sachsenmeier on global history (PDF)

Feb 26 Austen, *Sanditon* (England)

Hayot on literary worlds (PDF)

Mar 5 Buchner, *Danton’s Death* (Germany)

Nelson on ways of worldmaking (PDF)

**Take-home midterm assigned**

Mar 12 Lagerlöf, *The Saga of Gosta Berling* (Sweden)

**Take-home midterm due in class**

*Spring break*

Mar 26 Yokomitsu, *Shanghai* (Japan)

Cosgrove on geography and vision (PDF)

Apr 2 Saer, *The Witness* (Argentina)

Apr 9 Chughtai, *The Crooked Line* (India)

Apr 16 Han, *Dictionary of Maqiao* (Hong Kong)

Yong Ren on cosmogony and fictionality / Or Plaks (PDF)

Rohrer, *Chain World* (US; PDF)

Apr 16-17 individual meetings to discuss final paper ideas

May 13 **Final paper due via email to ehayot@psu.edu**