

ENG 228: The City in Literature

Fall 2020

Instructor Information

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Class:

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Office Hours:

Course Description: Students in the course will learn to identify, interpret, analyze, and evaluate the literary imagination of the city in its individual, social, and cultural dimensions. What forms or genres, narrative strategies, and tropes and motifs do literary texts employ to represent the history, geography, and sensorial experience of the city? How do literary texts understand the fraught relationships between the city, nation, region, and the world? The course will examine not only the representations of the city in literature but also how these literary texts might inform our own experience of urban places. Students will use research and scholarly writing to challenge simplistic narratives of urban capitalist transformation or urban decay and instead produce new knowledge that synthesizes the many contradictions that the city represents: between freedom and alienation, anonymity and entangled lives, feelings of strangeness and fleeting intimacies. Literature will provide us a unique vantage point for understanding the messy and complex realities of race, gender, nation, class, and sexuality in the city in a way that cannot be grasped through the big data approaches to the urban sphere.

Learning outcomes:

- 1) Students will learn and identify how literary texts represent human experience in its individual, social, and cultural dimensions
- 2) Students will interpret and analyze how literary texts represent human experience in its individual, social, and cultural dimensions
- 3) Students will evaluate the vision of human experience in its individual, social, and cultural aspects, as expressed by several significant literary texts

Fit to Core and Mission: Integrating a global approach to the city in literature, the course strongly supports the Magis Core outcomes of helping students “think critically” about “citizenship in a global world” (Magis CCAS Core Plan, 4). The city is a valuable analytical site for the formation of Ignation researchers because to produce knowledge about the city is to reckon with its contradictory and complex experiences that bring both the necessity and difficulty of social justice sharply into focus. The study of urban juxtapositions of glitz and grit will require students to “[r]each out to those other gritty realities of... the world we inhabit” in order to understand how racial, class, and gender hierarchies are reconfigured in a globalized world and to imagine the intersections between American and British racial formations and the postcolonial structures of India and other nations (Fr. Hendrickson’s address). The course, therefore, promotes a “deep tolerance for others” and raises our consciousness about the ethics of engagement with

difference (Magis CCAS Core Plan, 4). Taking an interdisciplinary approach to read the city simultaneously as history, sociology, narrative, and poetry, this course explores how “by integrating disciplines in new ways, new insights become possible” (Magis CCAS Core Plan, 8). The Magis Core outcomes enhance the Ignation research paradigms by emphasizing a more holistic and capacious view and the need to examine the individual, social, and cultural dimensions in conjunction rather than in isolation. Students will use writing to synthesize knowledge from various disciplines and learn to make elegant and precise arguments. This education in the Jesuit ideal of *eloquentia perfecta* will develop students’ ability to persuade their audience and advocate for change (Magis CCAS Core Plan, 86).

Required Texts:

Vikram Chandra, *Love and Longing in Bombay*

Anita Desai, *Baumgartner’s Bombay*

Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album*

Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*

Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*

Course Requirements

Close reading analysis	20%
Blog Writing	15%
Midterm (Research Inquiry and Annotated Bibliography)	10%
Class Participation (including pop quizzes and community outreach)	15%
Final Research Project (Group zine and individual paper)	40%

Grade Scale:

A: 94-100%	A-: 90-93.99%	B+: 87-89.99%	B: 84-86.99%	B-: 80-83.99%
C+: 77-79.99	C: 74-76.99%	C-:70-73.99%	D: 60-69.99%	F: 0-59.99%

Citation: Follow MLA citation for all work. If you do not own the *MLA Handbook*, I strongly suggest you purchase it. Please see the section on academic honesty and plagiarism in this syllabus for further discussion of responsible citation. All written assignment submissions in this course must adhere to the following specifications: double-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman font, 1” margins, should have numbered pages, and should be in the MLA format.

Close Reading analysis: Students will be assigned two short papers of 500-words each, one before and one after the midterm break, which will require them to write an argumentative analysis based on a close reading of a passage from a text. The close reading entails careful interpretation that makes an argument based on the evidence of syntax, diction, imagery, metaphor, context etc. in the assigned passage.

Blog Writing: The course will emphasize research and scholarly writing as interlinked processes practiced on a daily basis. Students will maintain a blog to practice daily writing. They will do freewriting on close readings of the primary text or on research analysis of how a given source helps interpret the primary text. The blog will be assessed not for grammatically correct writing but for consistency of research and writing (even if it is for ten minutes every day), embracing the messy process of generating ideas, and staying focused and free on the page.

Midterm: The midterm will establish the foundation for your research process by teaching you how to come up with a research inquiry/question and develop an annotated bibliography that will provide you with a critical framework for answering your research question. The research inquiry must articulate what you find strange, weird, anomalous, and counterintuitive in your thoughts/ research on the city in literature so as to clearly establish why that question is warranted or requires research. Students must develop an annotated bibliography for at least three scholarly/ peer reviewed sources. The annotation for each source should consist of the MLA citation, a 2-3 sentence summary of the argument (these 2-3 sentences must include both one quote from the text that most accurately reflects the argument and your own original articulation of this argument), and 2-3 sentences on how this argument addresses or relates to your own stance/claim. For example, is the text's claim a counterargument that you will critique or does it constitute an entry point that you will extend or build on?

Class Participation: You should come to class prepared to discuss the material in the readings and your own independent ideas. Bringing a printout of the reading so that you can provide concrete evidence for your points is a part of preparation for class participation. You should also be prepared to participate in pop quizzes, informal writing assignments, or small group discussions and then share the findings of the group with the entire class. It is important to remember that your participation and engagement will not only build your own knowledge and confidence but also shape the learning experience of your classmates. Therefore, our learning experience in this class will be greatly enhanced by the commitment of all participants to do their own work as well as provide constructive insights to others. Class participation includes both speaking and active listening, and that includes listening to the instructor as well as your peers. Attentive listening can help us build on each other's arguments and create a collaborative learning environment. We will be discussing potentially sensitive and difficult ideas in the class. Active listening will ensure a respectful and open discussion.

Final Research Project: The final research will consist of a group zine project and a conference length 7-9 page individual research paper. Based on their research interests/topics, students will work in groups to write, design, and produce a zine. The zine will combine visual images (we will have a camera to take pictures) and words, research and personal experience as a way to capture those complexities of the city that cannot be captured by data alone. For example, a zine on the figure of the flâneur in literature might include students' own experiences of wandering around the city combined with producing knowledge about how representations of that figure have changed in literature over time and what the millennial flâneur experience might be like.

Or a group that wants to focus on literary representations of alienation and mental health in the city might produce a zine that combines interdisciplinary research on, say, depictions of how the urban experience changes various characters' psyches with sociological data on mental health issues in urban populations and their own experiences of disorientation or loneliness in the city. Finally, a good zine, like a good paper, has a narrative and argumentative arc. But unlike a research paper, this arc needs to be represented in a compelling visual format, which prompts audience interaction with the genre. The zine must include all elements of the Point-Illustration-Explanation format but these elements need to take on more creative forms. You must, however, as always, follow the proper citation methods in presenting your research.

Students will use this group project as a springboard to develop and sharpen their individual arguments. Your paper must be based on the research done for the group component but must present your own individual, original argument. Argumentation is a social activity; working in a group will help you define the conversation on the topic, sharpen your arguments, distinguish your work from those of others, provide you feedback, and hold you accountable.

Grading Criteria for Writing:

A Grade: An "A" grade is awarded to work of exceptional quality. "A" work addresses the assignment prompt in meaningful ways and presents a clear argument supported by ample evidence and thorough, fully-developed analysis. The writing reflects a clear and purposeful organization and makes effective use of the form, genre conventions, language, and style. The writer engages with the complexity and nuances of the rhetorical context and generates content and style appropriate for the audience.

B Grade: A "B" grade is awarded to work of above-average quality. A "B" paper demonstrates all the characteristics of "A" work but does not do so consistently throughout the writing. The paper is reliable in giving concrete evidence and details but lacks the specificity and complexity of the "A" work. The writing addresses the rhetorical context and proceeds with a clear plan but lacks both accuracy and precision.

C Grade: A "C" paper presents useful and relevant ideas and opinions, but it does not support or develop these ideas with evidence from the text or class discussions. The thesis is too obvious, and the paper depends on clichés or unimaginative use of language and voice. A "C" paper often reads like a first draft that lacks a coherent structure.

D Grade: Writing is completed in a timely fashion but lacks direction and organization.

F Grade: Writing is not submitted in a timely manner and/or it is extremely incoherent.

Grading Criteria for Participation:

A Grade: An "A" grade is awarded to students who contribute consistently, regularly, and enthusiastically to class discussion but do not dominate discussion. Simply talking a lot does not guarantee an "A." A-level students develop the conversation, build on the comments of others, and provide evidence from the text (point to relevant passages and provide concrete details).

B Grade: Students participate actively in discussions but not daily. The B-level students have much in common with the A-level students; what differentiates the two is consistency of performance. The students reliably give concrete evidence and details but lack specificity.

C Grade: Students give useful and relevant ideas and opinions; however, they may not support their ideas with evidence from the text or they may not contribute frequently. These students rarely engage others in the class by asking questions or furthering points. Their performance is average and simply meets, rather than exceeds, the basic requirements.

D Grade: Students are physically present and actively listen, but do not contribute regularly. Their infrequent contributions may not be coherent or related to topic under discussion.

F Grade: Students are often absent. If they attend regularly, they are obviously and frequently unprepared and inattentive. Students who make insulting and unproductive comments, rudely interrupt others, or engage in other disruptive or disrespectful behavior will receive a failing grade.

If at any time during the semester you have questions about the grading criteria or any concerns about your progress in this class, please come see me during office hours or make an appointment.

Class Policies:

Attendance: You are allowed three absences without being penalized. **I do not make any distinctions between excused and unexcused absences.** That is, these three absences will include absences for reasons of illness, family obligations, and games for student athletes. If you are absent four times, your grade will be lowered one letter grade. If you are absent five times, your grade will be lowered two letter grades, and for six times, three letter grades. If you have seven absences, you will fail the course. Arriving more than ten minutes late twice will count as an absence. Regular attendance is crucial to your success in this class. If there are any compelling circumstances around issues of attendance and late work, such as chronic health issues etc., please make an appointment to see me as early in the semester as possible.

Late Work: You will submit your assignments by the beginning of the class on the date specified in the prompt/ syllabus in two formats: on BlueLine and as a hard copy/printout. I will not accept any late assignments. Last minute technology mishaps are not valid excuses for delayed submissions. Prepare to finish your work well in time with extra time built into your schedule for technology and other crises that might hinder your ability to work.

Special Submission Instructions: Please remember to staple or clip your assignment before submitting it. I will **NOT** accept any assignments with loose pages that are not stapled or clipped.

Communication with the Instructor: Your success is important to me. Therefore, please do not hesitate to reach out to me to ask or clarify things. The best way to reach me is through email. Please note that I might not be able to respond to your email right

away. You must factor in a minimum response time of 24 hours when making requests for feedback and/ or appointments. While I have scheduled office hours, I highly encourage you to make an appointment if you are going to stop by my office during those hours so that we can avoid conflict with other student appointments. I invite you to stop by my office not only for help on an assignment but to discuss and clarify any aspect of the class or your academic career at Creighton and beyond.

Collaborative Work: Group work is a required component of this course. Almost all writing in professional situations requires collaborative work, and this aspect of the course prepares you to be a successful writer-member of the work team. Successful groups are inclusive and responsive to individual members but also strategize and plan as a group to meet writing deadlines. We will discuss guidelines for effective collaboration in the class, share our experiences, and brainstorm solutions to challenges.

Technology: Please turn off all electronic devices before coming to class, including laptops and cell phones, so that you can concentrate on the teacher's words and instructions and take accurate notes. Bring a pen and paper to class every day for in-class writing and taking notes; use of laptop to take notes or to read drafts is not allowed (You are required to bring printouts of drafts for peer review). Technology research has repeatedly shown that multitasking is a myth, and that you cannot simultaneously follow what is going on in the class and check messages that are flashing on screen. Ringing and buzzing distract and waste class time. Text messaging during class is unacceptable. Writing is like meditation. It requires us to center ourselves and concentrate with a clear, calm mind. Therefore, we owe it to our writing and to ourselves to forego the use of technology during class time.

Class Cancellations: In case of bad weather or other catastrophic events, check the university's weather line at 402-280-5800 to see if school is open. If I have to cancel class for any other reason, I will post the notice to course website as well as send an email announcement via Blueline.

Academic Dishonesty: Creighton University is committed to academic honesty in all intellectual endeavors. Plagiarism is defined as passing off somebody else's words or ideas as your own. It includes submitting work which in whole or part has been written by someone else, or which contains passages quoted or paraphrased from another's work without proper citation. That is, if you have copied and pasted the text from internet or another source but failed to place it within quotation marks, or if you have paraphrased something taken from another source but have failed to indicate via parenthetical citation that the idea was taken from somewhere else, it will be considered plagiarism. In this case, asserting that you simply forgot to quote it or that it was not your intention to plagiarize will not be considered valid excuses. Other instances of plagiarism are cheating, fabrication, bribes/favors/threats, examination by proxy, grade tampering, or non-original works, including projects that are produced fully or in part by others. An act of academic dishonesty and plagiarism will earn you a failing grade in the assignment. As a matter of college policy, every plagiarism charge also necessitates a notification to the Head of the Department. A second plagiarism offense will result in a failing grade for the

course. For more information on the college policy, please see:

https://www.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/CCAS/curriculum/CCAS_Academic_Honesty_Policy.pdf

Campus Resources

Please speak with the instructor if you have specific questions or needs regarding any of the below:

Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course must provide an academic accommodation form from the Office of Disability Accommodations within the first two weeks of the semester. If you have a disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please make an appointment to see me during office hours. If you have a disability, please contact the Disability Support Services to determine what documentation you need in order to qualify for services. You may call the office at 402-280-2166 or stop by the Old Gym, Room 437, to make an appointment.

The Writing Center: Located in Room 136 of Creighton Hall, the Writing Center offers one-on-one consultation with student writers who need help developing ideas, need advice, or guidance and additional instruction on any aspects of writing. The Writing Center serves *all* student writers, not just “beginners.” Each session lasts 25 minutes and you can schedule up to two consecutive sessions. There is no limit to the number of tutoring sessions you can have each semester. If you make an appointment, be on time! Bring the paper you are working on, any related drafts, journal entries, and information about the assignment. For an appointment, call the Writing Center at 402-280-4707 or stop by in person.

Creighton Intercultural Center: Located in Brandeis Hall, CIC serves as a campus resource to provide education for and about intercultural initiatives, building inclusive communities, and multicultural student organizations. The Office sponsors regular events, programs, activities, and initiatives to educate the campus about racial history, culture, and contemporary issues. Please call 402-280-2459 for more information.

Creighton Center for Service and Justice: CCSJ is an educational and advocacy resource on campus for equality and justice, values that are central to the Creighton mission. The office provides great opportunities for students to explore what social justice might mean for them and how to get involved in service activities. You can access the Center’s website at <http://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj/> or call 402-280-1290 for more information.

Weekly Schedule

Note: (i) I reserve the right to make changes in the schedule as I see appropriate; (ii) Come to class prepared to discuss the readings scheduled for that day; (iii) Students are required to bring a printout of the Blueline articles and/or the assigned books scheduled for that day. In case of open-book quizzes, you will be permitted to consult with the printouts of the readings and/ or the textbooks, but you will not be permitted to open your electronic devices.

Week 1
Introductions

Week 2:
Simmel
Benjamin

Week 3
Boo
Prakash

Week 4
Chandra

Week 5:
Chandra
Desai

Week 6
Desai
Kureishi

Week 7
Kuresih

Week 8
Kureishi

Week 9
Ali

Week 10
Ali

Week 11
Hamid

Week 12

Rough Draft due: Zine
Peer Review
Hamid

Week 13
Desai

Week 14
Final Draft Zine
Final Research Paper--Very Mad Draft
Desai

Week 15
Final Paper—Peer Review