

W – 4:00-6:45 p.m. – WRI C-209

This course is designed primarily for creative writers but will be open to all graduate students. Our major focus will be on three very different literatures from three language-group origins: Chinese, German, and Spanish-Latin America. Each language group will then be complemented by a new book written in English by a 21st century American author (or in one case, a Pan American author) strongly influenced by the literature of this language group. Primary studies will focus on writing techniques; also, varying literary histories and traditions will be presented and discussed. Language issues raised by kinds and qualities of literary translations also will be considered then compared to the fluidity and style of the selected novels written in English. A wide-ranging recommended reading list will be encouraged—the book list below should be viewed as a platform from which to launch our discussion. Even though we will be reading a great many pages for this course, hopefully, some students in the class will begin a much more enthusiastic pursuit of other work by the featured authors and the writers who influenced them.

Required writing for the class will be: for creative writers, at least 6 “imitations” of a stylistic innovation, character reading, or structural or other invention discovered in our readings. These imitations should be approached as a chance to follow in a free a selected writer’s style or voice in a writing exercise; OR: you may choose instead to write a “technical annotation” that explores and describes the writing technique you learn from another writer; OR more research-minded scholars may choose to write two short essays that explore one or more critical approaches to an author or a text, or to a theory of comparative literature. The length of these annotations or short essays should be in the range of 1000 words as a minimum and 2000 words as a maximum (use this length recommendation as a guide); or about 3 to 6 double-spaced, typewritten pages. Steady attendance and active participation in class discussions will be expected of all students. Absence from more than two classes without a medical or other approved excuse may result in an administrative drop from the course. Keeping up with the assignments and contributing thoughts, questions and discussion points about them is an important requirement for the well-being of the classroom community, also, for our sense of fun and play with each other and what we learn.

Books Required:

Xun, Lu, *Diary of a Madman & Other Stories* (as modernist foundation text); U. Hawaii

Yan, Mo, *Life And Death Are Wearing Me Out*, Arcade Publishing

Hua, Yu, *Brothers*, Anchor

Li, Yiyun, *Kinder Than Solitude*, Random House

Grass, Günter, *The Tin Drum* (as foundation text, Mitchell translation); Mariner Books

Bernhard, Thomas: *Correction* (if available); or *Concrete* (if not): Vintage Contemporaries

Sebald, W. G., *Austerlitz*, Modern Library

Irving, John, *In One Person*, Simon & Schuster

Márquez, Gabriel García, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (as foundation text): Harper Perennial
 Bolaño, Roberto, *The Savage Detectives*, Picador
 Castellanos Moya, Horacio, *The She Devil In The Mirror*, New Directions
 Alarcón, Daniel, *At Night We Walk In Circles*, Riverhead

Doug Unger contact information:

Office: FDH 619 General office hours: W – 1:30-3:30; Th 1:30-3:30; (and by appointment:
 usually Monday or Tuesday afternoons)

E-mail: douglas.unger@unlv.edu

Ph: 702-895-3405

Expected learning outcomes for this course

- ** Students will demonstrate active engagement with literature in translation and an expanded knowledge of global cultures of the 20th and 21st century, and of comparative literature;
- ** Students will demonstrate a capability for critical thinking and effective writing, and will expand their knowledge of creative writing techniques; and/or of critical reading and scholarly research as writers, teachers, and persons of letters;
- ** Students will build on their knowledge of the art of translation, and will improve their capacities to appreciate and judge the quality of a literary translation;
- ** Students will improve on their capacities for informed discourse and discussion in a literary community and take from this experience ideas and techniques useful to their professional lives.

As copied from the UNLV Provost's Website, please note the following policies:

Academic Misconduct—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Copyright—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject

you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

Final Examinations—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

Incomplete Grades—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Library Resources—Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. Subject librarians for various classes can be found here: https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject. UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

Rebelmail—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

Religious Holidays Policy—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Transparency in Learning and Teaching—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information: <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

Tutoring and Coaching—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TBE second floor.

UNLV Writing Center—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

ENG 729.1001 Forms of Fiction: Comparative Literature for Writers – Prof. Doug Unger

**** Assignments for the course ****

- 8/27: Introduction to the course. Round table introductions from the classroom community. Lecture on critical approach generally based on structuralist theories drawn from Frye, Denham, Scholes, Jakobson and Barthes. After break: talk about Chinese literature and the development and evolution of Chinese fiction.
- 9/3: Due: Xun, Lu, *Diary of a Madman & Other Stories*, with emphasis on the title story, on “Ah Q – The Real Story”; and on “New Year’s Sacrifice”, “The Venerable Schoolmaster Gao,” and “Brothers”. Talk on Lu Xun as a foundational Chinese Modernist; and on new Chinese fiction in response to political upheaval in the early 20th century. After break: class discussion.
- 9/10: Due: Yan, Mo, *Life And Death Are Wearing Me Out*. Talk on Mo Yan and his influences by Latin American Magic Realism; in-depth look at the structure of the novel and its stylistic approach; some focus on Mo Yan as an officially approved writer by the Chinese government and the controversy of his Nobel Prize award, with reactions by the Chinese dissident community and other commentaries. After break: class discussion.

*** first imitation or annotation or short essay due in class ***

- 9/17: Due: Hua, Yu, *Brothers*. Talk on Yu Hua’s fiction as exploring several different stylistic approaches; its unity as a body of social critique; styles and structures of his previous novels, *To Live* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*; figure of Yu Hua as an unusual “bridge” artist between officially approved writers and dissidents; possible discussion of his forthcoming book, *The Seventh Day* (if advance copy available), and his non-fiction work, *China In Ten Words*, banned in the mainland. After break: class discussion.
- 9/24: Due: Li, Yiyun, *Kinder Than Solitude*. Informal talk on Yiyun Li’s unusual place in American literature as a Chinese immigrant writing in English as a second language; also, Li’s scarce readership in China (no doubt excluded deliberately); review and summary of

her first novel, *The Vagrants*; a look at structures and genres of both novels. After break: class discussion.

*** second imitation or annotation or short essay due in class ***

10/1: Due: Grass, Günter, *The Tin Drum*. Talk about Grass as post-war foundation writer for German literature, and his extensive influence; his other writing, including political, as exemplified by *From The Diary of a Snail*, and *The Rats*; his existential comedy as a form of social critique. In-depth look at the voice and structure of the novel as a satire of the *Einbildungsroman*, and at specific problems of translation. After break: class discussion.

10/8: Due: Bernhard, Thomas, *Correction*. Talk on the development of the absurdist novel of eccentric voice, following his contemporary European writers; some review of Bernhard as an influential Austrian dramatist, and a close look at dramatic monologue techniques in his fiction; summary and review of other novels, *Concrete*, *Gargoyles*, and *Woodcutters*. Talk on the fiction of eccentric voice and “the genius of madness.” After break: class discussion.

*** third imitation or annotation or short essay due in class ***

10/15: Due: Sebald, W. G., *Austerlitz*. Talk on Sebald’s experimental style that uses images cross-communicating with text; summary and review of earlier novels, *The Emigrants* and *Rings of Saturn*, and of the direct influences of Bernhard and Borges on the development of his writing. Close analysis of the structure of the novel and its qualities as both literal and existential mystery. After break: class discussion.

10/22: Due: Irving, John, *In One Person*. Talk on Irving and his influences by post-war German writing, including Grass and Heinrich Böll; and by Latin American fiction; Irving’s study under José Donoso and the early development of stylistic elements in his work from *Setting Free The Bears* through *The World According To Garp*, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, *The Cider House Rules*, *Son of the Circus*, and to *In One Person*. Also: John Irving’s approach to teaching creative writing. After break: class discussion.

*** fourth imitation or annotation or short essay due in class ***

10/29: **No class this day. Catch-up week. Make-up class will be during final exam period.**

11/5: Due: Márquez, Gabriel García, *One Hundred Years Of Solitude*. Lecture: the origins of Magic Realism in Latin American fiction, from literature of the conquest through the generation of “the boom”; influence of William Faulkner on García Márquez, in both style and structures of his fiction, and his movement beyond them; summary and review of other books: *Leafstorms*, *Autumn of the Patriarch*, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, and *The General in his Labyrinth*; his influences on world writing. In depth analysis of language and style and the translation. After break: class discussion.

11/12: Due: Castellanos Moya, Horacio, *The She-Devil In The Mirror* (note this book is out of the natural chronological ordering of the assignments, as relief from the longer novels).

Talk on the career and exile of Castellanos Moya, his early experience with the Bolaño group and *infrarealismo* in Mexico; Moya's exile because of his writing; his introduction to American readers in *Senselessness*; reference also to *El asco*; *Thomas Bernhard in El Salvador* and the fully assimilated literary influence of Bernhard on Moya's writing; close analysis of voice and structure of the novels, with paranoia as narrative technique. After break: class discussion.

*** fifth imitation or annotation or short essay due in class ***

- 11/19: Due: Bolaño, Roberto, *The Savage Detectives*. Talk on Bolaño and the emergence of a Pan American literary movement; his rejection of Magic Realism and the “boom” writers; his strong influences from Spanish and French surrealism and existentialism, including Sartre and Celá; and American “beat generation” writing, including Kerouac, Burroughs and Ginsberg; political subversion and leftist ideology in his writing, with references to *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, *By Night in Chile*, and the multi-volume, posthumous novel, *2666*; and continuing Bolaño influences on contemporary writing. Close examination of detective novel structure and innovations in *The Savage Detectives*; also, its unusual qualities in Spanish difficult to translate into English. After break: class discussion.

Note: for the pre-Thanksgiving class, please turn in at least *two questions* for discussion on 11/26 (see class plan below).

- 11/26: **Note: we will meet as required by university policies. But this will be a “catch-up” day for issues not covered enough or to continue discussions left hanging by the class, and to talk over specific questions raised by our reading and writing.**
- 12/3: Due: Alarcón, Daniel, *At Night We Walk In Circles*. Talk on the development of Alarcón as a Pan American-U.S. writer, writing in English as his primary language almost simultaneous with Spanish translations; his contributions to new Latino writing as editor and advocate; and summary and review of his first novel, *Lost City Radio*, his graphic novel, and some of his short stories. Speculations and conjectures about his writing, and a close analysis of the structure and language of his second novel. After break: class discussion.

*** sixth imitation or annotation or short essay due ***

Note: for our final class session, please be ready with at least *two questions* to bring to the 12/10 class, written on index cards handed out in class.

- 12/10: **Class meets from 6:00-8:00 p.m.;** group review and recap of topics and issues covered in class; continuation and synthesis of what we have learned together. Questions brought to class will be drawn randomly to facilitate our session. Other fun ideas.