

Critical Consciousness and Global Collectivities: Using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in  
Secondary World Literature Courses

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## Introduction

World literature courses have much to offer in the form of developing American high school students' ability to read critically and consider what it means to dwell in our contemporary space characterized by plurality and multiplicity, including the difficulty of creating a sense of selfhood within the capacious and fraught context of the global. Literature courses must move beyond the imaginative experience of reading literature, beyond texts that students can easily project themselves into, beyond reading literature in a vacuum (Zancanella 25). Neal Resnikoff, in his 1971 essay "Aims in Teaching Literature," suggests that to foster this type of engagement with literature at the secondary and undergraduate level, teachers must demonstrate an inductive method that models an analytical process, eventually leading students to be successful independent readers (34). By developing critically conscious readers, teachers of secondary literature can offer students methods to critically analyze content from a culturally responsive perspective, an alternative to the cultural sampling approach currently being used. To properly demonstrate critical methods for teaching world literature, secondary courses need to reframe their approach by adopting a critically conscious perspective—one that analyzes the historicized impact of globalization on the study of world literature and connects the students' lives to the texts they read in and out of the classroom.

World literature survey courses at the undergraduate level have progressed from the way secondary classrooms use this particular category of literature—as a way to create "global citizens" tolerant of other cultures and comfortable with totalizing, universalizing themes that the literature can convey. Undergraduate courses currently address cultural dissonance and facilitate

generative conflict<sup>1</sup> that provide students with strategies for approaching world literature self-reflectively, not just by noticing the similarities with their own American thinking, but by actively engaging with the differences. The world literature survey at the undergraduate level, too, has a long historical trajectory, and the following provides a helpful juxtaposition of the current state of undergraduate world literature courses and subsequently the state of secondary world literature courses as a means of comparison.

Rather than standardizing content into reading lists that reinforce a sense of shared national identity like that supported by Hirsch and Bloom<sup>2</sup> in the late 1980s, world literature survey courses at the undergraduate level currently aim to challenge Western moral authority and conceptions of a singular, totalized geographical identity (K. Smith 594). In her essay “What Good Is World Literature?: World Literature Pedagogy and the Rhetoric of Moral Crisis,” Karen Smith argues that in the face of the moral crisis of “national vulnerability and international distress,” world literature surveys must contend with the previous rhetoric of totality implied by the terms “national,” “world,” and “global” by reading ethically moments of cultural dissonance like that observed by Pratt in “Arts of the Contact Zone” in which spheres of power unequally intersect (K. Smith 600). In acknowledging the fluctuations of our global system, world literature survey courses avoid what Karen Smith identifies as three tropes of world literature’s response to moral crisis: a humanist answer to war technology in the 1950s (Boyd Guest 1949; Philo M. Buck), a way to use cross-cultural reading to eliminate misunderstanding between

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<sup>1</sup> Pratt, Mary Louise. “Arts of the Contact Zone.” *Profession*, 1991, pp. 33–40., [www.jstor.org/stable/25595469](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469).

<sup>2</sup> Cultural literacy, what every American needs to know by E. D. Hirsch, Jr, Houghton & Mifflin, Boston, 1987, 251 pp.; Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987. Print.

nations (Damrosch 2009), and an assumption that an “exclusively Western perspective can encompass all global cultures” (Buck, Alberson, Goodrich) (587-588). This final trope often responds to the need for universities to reflect the diversity now apparent in their classrooms as well the responsibility of teachers to create these “global citizens” prepared to enter into a world defined by its repositioning of international relations (590). This trope also reflects the current state of world literature courses at the secondary level, which I explore with a few essays in greater detail in the next section, and what is severely limiting in the current approach. To bridge the gap between world literature courses at the secondary level and the undergraduate survey level, we must ask students to actively challenge their conceptions of totality, universality, nation, heritage, and culture in order to responsibly engage with literature from all parts of the world. The following approach offers a means for entering into that space of generative conflict in an upper-level, English elective, world literature course at the secondary level.

### **Secondary World Literature Courses**

At present, world literature courses in the secondary classroom fail to incorporate critically conscious strategies for approaching the plurality of our contemporary world beyond superficial interaction with cultures through non-Western texts. For example, Mark J. Bingen, a high school English teacher at Waukesha South High School in Wisconsin, has his students respond to world literature texts in journal entries with a goal of enhancing cultural awareness by asking universalizing, humanist questions. However, he admits that while “no activity can replicate a culture or historical epoch,” the activities he assigns attempt to “make the world a smaller place and enable students to learn more about themselves” (43). Similarly, Karen Downing, a language arts teacher at Valley High School in West Des Moines, Iowa, likens her

study of world literature at the secondary level to traveling,<sup>3</sup> though not as a tourist, but still with the aim to reflect on the students' experience relating to other cultures through thematic similarities in the texts. Both of these courses present world literature as a way of entering into conversation with other cultures via literature; yet, the conversation becomes one-sided as this approach constantly returns to an American perspective as its touchstone. These courses both seek to enrich students' understanding of other cultures but insufficiently investigate how the students' have come to understand their own position in the world, which is where secondary world literature courses and undergraduate survey courses are most at odds.

By integrating the cross-cultural experiences of students in a secondary world literature course, one that considers the global level of engagement available in our contemporary moment, teachers can develop students' critical consciousness. A course of this nature would ideally investigate spaces of inequity resulting from globalization in addition to spaces of commonality enriched by transnational cosmopolitanism. Enhancing students' recognition of their global ecology could be approached in many ways, but I will explore how a selection of global novels can offer both efferent and aesthetic<sup>4</sup> readings as a means of developing a critical consciousness that encourages sympathetic recognition of difference. Creating such a course would be especially appropriate for high school English to prepare these young adults for negotiating circumstances of the world that require them to assess social structures and institutional practices

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<sup>3</sup> Downing, Karen. "Travelers, Not Tourists: A World Literature Curriculum" *The English Journal*, Vol. 91, No. 5, *The World of Literature* (May, 2002), pp. 46-51.

<sup>4</sup> Zancanella (1991) uses Rosenblatt's (1985) description of two types of reading: efferent, in which "attention is focused on 'actions to be performed, information to be retained, conclusions to be drawn'...aimed at proving students have read the work and 'understood' it," and aesthetic reading (28-29). Aesthetic reading is the process by which "the reader evokes a story world from the text, enjoying the ongoing creative process of evocation, and at the same time, she is responding to what she is evocating. In this stream of accompanying response, the reader may experience ideological and moral conflicts with what is called forth from the text" (Cai 215).

that contribute to their own identities as global citizens. The challenges of implementing this pedagogy may include students resistant to critiquing assumptions or expressing cultural material, but by constantly reinforcing the openness and respectfulness of our classroom dialogue, students may begin to accept the strategies for introspection that this pedagogy asks of them. A recent pedagogical summit<sup>5</sup> for the National Council of Teachers of English asks teachers of literature to enable students to “think critically and globally” in response to the changes economic globalization has brought forth. If the goal of the humanities, then, is to facilitate students’ capabilities as global citizens, the first step we can take is to introduce them to literature that offers insight into different cultures not as separate worlds that exist within their own boundaries, but as mobile and permeating instead. By approaching literature from a culturally responsive perspective, students will authentically engage with the multiplicity of their world and their own global identities.

### **Defining Critical Consciousness**

First, I must identify the heuristic that encourages students to approach literature critically. To avoid teachers falling on either end of the spectrum—indoctrinating students in social resistance or the appearance of apathy in attempted neutrality—teachers can use culturally responsive pedagogy to bridge the academic abstractions students gather by analyzing and discussing literature and the experiential realities that students bring with them into the classroom (Gay 66). This particular pedagogy mediates this spectrum by giving students the ability to learn about different cultures, and all that the term includes, from a self-conscious position. The responsibility of the teacher, then, is to facilitate the development of the students’

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<sup>5</sup> Abt-Perkins, Dawn and Don Zancanella, chairs. Conference on English Education Leadership and Policy Summit, 2007.

self-consciousness by “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students” as a “means for improving achievement by teaching diverse students through their own cultural filters,” according to Geneva Gay in her essay “Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity” (49-50). Although Gay’s use of the term “diverse” as a determinant of a student’s capacity for relevant cultural material is problematic for its limited application to African American students<sup>6</sup>, the pedagogy can be equally beneficial to other minority groups as well as Caucasian students. Culturally responsive pedagogy provides the structure that will bring students in contact with diversity relating to their own lives into the classroom. However, it would be insufficient for an English course to simply select masterworks of world literature most often anthologized and read for surface interaction with another culture, geography, or perspective. In an attempt to create a more authentic interaction with literature from around the world, Mark J. Bingen focused on student-centered activities with the objective to “provide a surface understanding of what is a complex, perhaps indefinable, evolution of a people in a place. However, erstwhile attempts can make students more familiar, more comfortable with the ideas, times, and people” (42). This is exactly the type of interaction that creates more distance between students and the worlds of the texts they read because it fails to critically investigate beyond a comfortable sense of familiarity. What students need is a method to engage with world literatures beyond the role of reader-consumer-tourist, one that challenges their comfortable distance from the world in the literature.

Similar to Gay’s culturally responsive pedagogy, Gloria Ladson-Billings utilizes the term “culturally relevant pedagogy,” a critical method that teachers can employ to address the

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<sup>6</sup> Gay’s case studies on African American students focus only on this population of minority students, thus limiting the cultural material to a small representative population. I would like to apply her pedagogy to all students in the classroom to improve critical awareness and cultural appreciation.



discontinuity of students' "academic achievement and cultural competence" (161). Ladson-Billings provides the terminology I will be using to discuss a critical engagement with global identity. She describes the following foundational criteria for culturally relevant pedagogy:

(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. 160

Ladson-Billings's case studies (1990, 1992, 1994) determined that teachers who incorporated students' cultural knowledge into the curriculum had more successful academic performance from African American students in particular as well as those she classifies as underserved by public education (Ladson-Billings 159). The final component—the development of a critical consciousness—comes from Freire's concept of conscientization<sup>7</sup> in which students engage with the world from a critical perspective. Paulo Freire's legacy as a foundational critical pedagogue has been inherited and adapted by numerous disciplines, and his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has become a touchstone for many education programs in the United States. Ladson-Billings's culturally relevant pedagogy borrows Freire's concept of conscientization and applies it to the education of underachieving minority students as a means of empowerment. This tenant of critical pedagogy allowed the students in Ladson-Billings's case studies to "critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities." She continues, "If school is about preparing students for active citizenship, what better citizenship tool than the ability to critically analyze the society" (162). The combination of incorporating students' experiences outside of the classroom and the deep, critical assessment of the content

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<sup>7</sup> The term conscientization refers to learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.

provides students with a foundation for engaging with their education from a place of individual and collective empowerment.

Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay suggest that culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy, respectively, are necessary for cultivating a classroom dialogue of difference, inequity, and commonality that will prepare students to meet challenges both academically and socially. Gay's pedagogy "incorporates high-status, cultural knowledge about different ethnic groups in all subjects and skills taught;" thus it "validates, facilitates, liberates and empowers ethnically diverse students by...cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success" (45-46). As I mentioned before, the study of this particular pedagogy has been limited to what Ladson-Billings and Gay call ethnically diverse, disenfranchised, marginalized, and under-performing students. This aspect limits the applicability of the pedagogy because the studies make it seem as if only students of "diversity" have anything to gain from incorporating culture and a critical perspective into their education. The pedagogy may also limit white students from considering their own culture valuable or even discourage them from considering their own culture worth engaging and critiquing; additionally, this pedagogy runs the risk of seeing "brown" students as objects of knowledge against which white students should compare their own American perspective.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the limitations of how the pedagogy has been applied previously, the terms critical consciousness and culturally responsive pedagogy guide my heuristic for the study of global novels. I have chosen Gay's term, culturally responsive pedagogy, because it frames the development of a critical consciousness as a conversation, a dialogue between the students and

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<sup>8</sup> Spivak suggests minority students may protest the racial profiling of area/ethnic studies. Students who oppose studying cultures or ethnicities as collectivities could benefit from critically assessing methods of identity formation (26).

the content. This critical engagement requires students to respond to the literature they read instead of passively absorbing it, fostering an engaged readership prepared to benefit from the transferable skills English studies has to offer. Deirdre M. Kelly and Gabriella Minnes Brandes studied how essential it is for teachers, especially those new to teaching for social justice,<sup>9</sup> to represent multiple perspectives without advocating for one in particular or showing bias (446). To accomplish this task of representation, teachers must model critical assessment of their own conceptual framework by considering what works they include, and in return, what is excluded, what situates the students in their perspective of the world, and what methods teachers can use to model a critique of their own views for students to use in their own inquiry and action (Kelly and Brandes 451-452). In order to sufficiently employ these aspects of critical analysis from a culturally responsive position within the context of an English literature course, we can use global literature to enter into the conversation.

### **Global Collectivities in World Literature**

Responding to their collection of sources for teaching global literature, Hadaway and McKenna describe the benefits of using global literature to:

- (1) explore literary elements and at the same time develop students' global awareness; (2) illustrate the diversity as well as the commonality at the heart of all stories and people; (3) promote students' critical thinking about society, diversity, and their place in the global community; and (4) extend students' connections with literature to constructive activism and service learning.

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<sup>9</sup> “The three common themes emerging from these perspectives that relate most directly to our inquiry into beginning teachers' understandings of what it means to teach for social justice can be summarized as: (a) critical analysis of social and institutional inequities; (b) commitment to "principled action to achieve social justice, not only for those around but for strangers" (Greene, 1998, p. xxxiii); and (c) willingness to question one's own understanding of social justice, in part through listening to alternative perspectives” (Kelly and Brandes 439).

Through a study of global novels, shorts stories, poems, and secondary material, the following English course designed for high school students as an English elective would foreground the above objectives by way of culturally responsive pedagogy; furthermore, the course would emphasis critical reflection about the social, cultural, political, and historical implications of the texts to address the effects of globalization and the improved cross-cultural understanding resulting from transnationalism.

Although the course would include a variety of genres, this paper will focus on the novel component because of its capacity for extended analysis and the association of the novel with nation, self, and the transgression of those categories in our contemporary world. In her conversation, “Is there a global literature?” on Yale Insights (a blog by the Yale School of Management), Shemeem Black discusses the drastic change from the association of novel and nationhood to globalization’s impact on the novel form. She explains, “To a large extent, people are trained to think about literature in terms of the nation. Almost from the outset of the modern novel, it’s been associated with a sense of nationhood...To even think about literature and globalization is to push against deeply held traditions” (Black). Today, we encounter the difficulty of defining the nation when globalization enables such mobility and transgression of national boundaries. Now, novels must contend with writing within, across, and on either side of borders that intend to contain a sense of nationhood, and thus, a sense of selfhood. With that identification complicated by globalization, for better or worse, novelists have to reframe literature with hybridity, multiplicity, and plurality in mind. Yet, “while there is a globalized literature, it’s not all-encompassing,” meaning novels still contend with retaining a sense of distinctness in their nation of origin while acknowledging their place in the outside world (Black).

This sense of distinction comes from the modern, Enlightenment concept of identification based on representations of a national culture (Hall et al 612). Instead of the imagined communities created by nationhood (Anderson 1983), we now have to contend with disjunctive global flows of imagined worlds.<sup>10</sup> A sense of collectivity still drives these imagined worlds, but as the distinction of each individual nation's boundary blurs with the movement of texts transnationally in the global market, the epistemology of collectivity has changed in hopes of accommodating the movement of globalization. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Death of a Discipline* suggests that our collective sense of belonging has become a symptomatic response to globalization. We have moved to demographic collectives that were once territorial because of large-scale migration and post-colonial displacement (Spivak 15). She asserts that the "West brought individualism to the rest of the world by pulling it into state formations; then come fresh compromises to account for every exception to this rule, circling back to the initial assumption that the rest is collectivist whereas the West is individualist. A vicious circle" (51). This vicious circle—West : individual :: rest : collective—can be broken by transgressive readings in what Spivak calls "peripheral literature" toward a global collectivity (56). In a movement toward collectivity, peripheral literature challenges the boundaries of collectivities and acts as a decentering force.

One way of thinking through the decentering of global collectivities includes Spivak's concept of "planetary," which she created as a way of depoliticizing the space of the global. As an ethical alternative to globalization, Spivak offers planetary as an "undivided natural space" in which humans inhabit a shared ecological space, as opposed to the homogenized political

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<sup>10</sup> "*imagined worlds*, that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (Appadurai 33).

space of the globe created by globalization (72). Spivak's alternative to globalization encourages a sense of collective responsibility for that shared ecological space; however, by depoliticizing the space created by globalization, we lose the grounds for true critical engagement with the effects of globalization. Spivak acknowledges that in order to responsibly navigate the planetary collective space, we have to read transgressively across and between the constructed boundaries of center and periphery, effectively decentering the Eurocentric or Western map created by globalization. That implies that there still exists a center and periphery model, like Casanova's,<sup>11</sup> that we must acknowledge in order to actively push against those boundaries. Thus, though planetarity ideally creates a responsible collective, to achieve that type of collectivity, we have to address the constructs of globalization and the "restricted permeability"<sup>12</sup> that its politicized spaces endure (Spivak 16).

Instead of absolving the effects of globalization by thinking through literature as it operates within a collective planetarity, we can think of the collectivities created by the action of world making as transactions between those former national literatures now playing out on the global stage. Pheng Cheah offers a helpful interpretation of world making as an activity:

The world in the higher sense is spiritual intercourse, transaction, and exchange aimed at bringing out universal humanity. It does not abolish national differences but takes place and is to be found in the intervals, mediations, passages, and crossings between national borders. The world is a form of relating or being-with. 30

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<sup>11</sup> See *Modernism in a Global Context* by Peter Kalliney for an in-depth comparison of modernist theories.

<sup>12</sup> Spivak uses the term "restricted permeability" to describe the unequal flow of border crossing: movement from the metropol out is easier than movement from the periphery in; thus, globalization restricts the movement of those on the periphery in Casanova's model. Students can relate to this term as a sort-of opposite osmosis: materials, people, literature, etc. move more easily from a high concentrated area to a less concentrated area.

Thinking of world literature relationally in this way creates that sense of universality that Spivak aimed to produce with planetarity but still acknowledges the function of national borders as a set of relations rather than differentiated and distinct geographical or regional spaces. This latter type of world making is often replicated in anthologies in which literature is divided up nationally or regionally as “an established body of classics, as an evolving canon of masterpieces, or as multiple windows on the world” (Damrosch, “What Is World Literature”). These categories fail to address the relationality of worlds created by those in-between movements Cheah describes. In order for anthologies to adequately represent the irreducible diversity of world spaces, we must read world literature in a way that sufficiently approaches the power dynamics of globalization, resists cultural imperialism created by the world formed by globalization, and constantly approaches difference self-consciously and vigilantly.<sup>13</sup> To facilitate student access to these difficult concepts, we will define the terminology I am borrowing from Spivak and others—“restricted permeability,” “collectivity,” “hybridity,” “transnational,” and “cosmopolitan”—and continually revisit these definitions as a way to introduce students to challenging theory in a more attainable way. A secondary world literature course would ideally use this challenging theory to prepare students to investigate globalization’s affiliations with power dynamics and to empathize with representations of difference enriched by the collective space of the global created by transnational world making.

### **Thematic Organization of World Literature Elective**

I will now suggest an effective way to approach world literature as a set of global relations by explaining the thematic organization of this course and assignments that aim to

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<sup>13</sup> “There are, however, other non-hegemonic conceptions of difference that self-consciously historicize their understanding of world cultures and literatures while maintaining “critical vigilance” (to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s term) toward their own affiliations with power” (Hassan 40).

develop students' critical consciousness. I have chosen a thematic organization for this world literature course—one that investigates the world created by globalization—as an alternative to the geographical or regional representations of world literature that limit the sense of global collectivity. The thematic units will address aspects of globalization that students are likely to encounter in their daily lives. The framework of culturally responsive pedagogy will further enrich these thematic units in that students will incorporate their own perspectives in the classroom dialogue with the content and their peers and then reflect on those perspectives from a critically conscious angle. The following thematic units frame the investigation of the world created by globalization:

1. Borders and Movement
2. Language
3. Crisis
4. Identity

The breakdown of each thematic unit will interrogate these aspects of globalization in smaller contexts, using the texts in the unit to particularize the aspect under analysis. The first unit introduces concepts of mobility because, as Peter Kalliney argues, “modernism is an aesthetics of motion,” and a global perspective should challenge our conceptions of movement in and around the margins (1, 24). The first unit will consider several key aspects of mobility such as immigration, diaspora, and the restricted permeability of this global movement. With the understanding of global movement as the foundation for students' understanding of world literature, we will then move on to Unit 2, which considers how language is affected by disorderly and disjunctive global flows. The second unit will consider how language functions as a source of power and a linkage to community as we analyze texts in translation, code-switching,



multilingualism, and writing within a Western rhetoric. Given that language empowers some and disenfranchises others, we will transition to the third unit, Crisis, to see how the rhetoric of universal humanitarianism has influenced global responses to suffering and crisis. The third unit will look at how different parts of the world deal with global crises like climate change, war, refugees, and the humanitarian response to crisis as it relates to issues of nationhood and power. The upward progression of the units draws the course to the final unit, Identity, which synthesizes the previously analyzed aspects of globalization to help students understand how those same aspects influence their conceptions of self. The final unit will investigate identity-making in a global context. This paper will expand on this final unit as it deals with notions of double consciousness, inequity and marginalization, hegemony and normative conceptions of identity, and the students' own perception of their identity formation as it has changed over the course of the semester. The course will ask students to assess this change from the beginning of the course to the end after constantly approaching the concept of global relations from a critically conscious perspective.

The ultimate goal of the course is to provide students with a method for approaching world literature from a critically conscious perspective, one that enables the students to understand how literature presents and interprets aspects of globalization, like those thematized in the units, and how their own perspective is formed by the same discursive elements that shape their identities as global citizens. To accomplish this, students will evaluate the content to determine how various authors approach particular topics within each unit as a means of comparison. In individual and group assignments, students will identify what assumptions and predispositions they have coming into each text and reflect on how their own cultural material affects their transactions with literature. To this end, students will analyze the authors' rhetorical

strategies in complex works of fiction and non-fiction to strengthen their abilities as critical readers through various writing exercises, in-class discussions, and journaling activities (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6).<sup>14</sup> The assignments in the course will ask students to constantly reflect on cultural assumptions and affiliations, to evaluate the impact of globalization on the topic, to investigate the way they form their perspectives, and to understand the value of reading critically through a culturally responsive lens as a means to increase an ethic of global collectivity that acknowledges difference for its valuable contribution to the diversity of our world rather than its distance from ourselves. When we frame a course this way—enabling students’ introspection in the face of different opinions and perspectives—we can create a space for an engagement with literature that leads us toward a sense of universal humanity: a transnational cosmopolitanism that does not ignore globalization’s power structures, but instead acknowledges the dynamics of globalization that allow us to interact with other parts of the world and experience a sense of global collectivity or disjuncture from a more conscientious position.

To reach these objectives, students will read a variety of genres within each thematic unit addressing the topic in different ways and at different levels of complexity to challenge the students’ analytical skills. The following introduces possible texts and rationales for a fifteen-week, upper-level, English elective given the aforementioned thematic unit framework. In the introductory week, we will begin with a discussion of the historical progression of the study of world literature via the framework provided by Karen R. Smith in her essay, “What is Good

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<sup>14</sup> This Common Core State Standard asks students to: “Evaluate authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors’ claims, reasoning, and evidence.” These standards are helpful guidelines for meeting key objectives in the secondary classroom, public and private.

World Literature?: World Literature Pedagogy and the Rhetoric of Moral Crisis.” Smith explains the progression of world literature as a series of responses to moral crises, the first wave of world literature responding to World War II up to world literature pedagogy responding to the post-Cold War era and present international concerns. This historical narrative will hopefully prompt students to approach world literature as a literature that reacts to the world about and within which it is written. Additionally, this particular genre deals with global interactions that may differ from students’ previous literary studies of nation-specific literature like in a British or American literature course. To introduce these global interactions, the class will examine various anthologies such as the third edition of *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, which arranges texts chronologically, geographically, and in small thematic clusters. By examining anthologies and comparing the way texts are grouped to how texts will be grouped in this course, students will have the opportunity to critique how world literature anthologies historically have what Wail S. Hassan calls a “Eurocentric bias” that often presents a “strategic remapping of global relations, sometimes in subtle ways that tend to mask its affiliations with power” (40,38). The rest of the course is dependent on the students’ understanding of how the study of world literature began and where it can take them if they approach the literature by engaging a critical consciousness.

The first unit, Borders and Movement, introduces students to aspects of mobility made possible by globalization. The movement may be disordering or reinforcing of typical cartographical boundaries like nation or state, and as such, students will need to reflect on their conceptualizing of spatial relations that challenge static and closed concepts of boundaries. Students will focus on key terminology like “diaspora,” “immigration,” and “restricted permeability” to engage with several text selections that orient the world spatially. This

particular focus on mobility will enable students to “imagine the movement of the novels’ characters across a specific landscape” or landscapes in genres beyond the novel, as well (Raja 36).

The first text in Unit 1 will be Langston Hughes’s “Cubes.” Langston Hughes’s multigeneric works reflect on the collective rather than individual experiences of black Americans from the 1920s to 1960s and turn outward toward that specific community when others at the time turned increasingly inward in a modernist fashion.<sup>15</sup> We will read this poem aloud, in class, to engage students sonically and visually, as this particular poem lends itself well to both modes of learning. The poem’s fragmentary structure juxtaposes disparate images like an “African from Senegal” (line 7) “on the boulevards of Paris” (line 6) and “cubes of black and white” (line 18), creating a sense of disjuncture and implying that movement itself may be a jarring operation. The class will examine the poem’s concerns about African diaspora through Hughes’s use of modernist aesthetics, like the fragmentation, as a metaphorical representation of systemic exploitation of Africans within systems of imperialism (Moglen). The class will discuss possible cultural entry points that allow students to understand references in the poem, like the recognition of Picasso and cubism or the imagery of imperialism coded as disease, reinforcing the culturally responsive pedagogical approach by incorporating students’ own points of access for a particular text. Students will be asked to define “diaspora” and react to how that term is thematized in the poem, inquiring what types of movement take place visually and metaphorically throughout “Cubes” and how Hughes problematizes modernist art in the context of diaspora. Beginning the Borders and Movement unit with this poem provides students with

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<sup>15</sup> Jahan Ramazani in “A Transnational Poetics” suggests we read Hughes globally: “Yet in this instance, a transnational approach helps illuminate—across enormous differences of geography, politics, and aesthetics—their [Hughes and D.H. Lawrence] mutual debt to, and distinct uses of, a shared progenitor [Walt Whitman]” (340).

the groundwork for how to approach texts critically modeled on a smaller scale but with challenging depth.

We will then move on to Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, excerpting the titular short story in which the crossing of national borders and a return to India force the characters to recognize the fantasy of a singular nationality (Katrak). Ketu H. Katrak suggests Lahiri creates a "national identity via ethnicized codes of communication" that Mr. Kapasi—the interpreter of maladies—misinterprets due the Das family's privilege of mobility, which Katrak describes as "a kind of global entitlement" on behalf of the Das family's US citizenship (6). This short story applies the themes of borders and movement in Mrs. Das's desire to identify with national boundaries in the form of a shared ethnicity which ultimately fails because privilege divides her and Mr. Kapasi, who is unable to cross national borders as freely as Mrs. Das. The students will be assigned the short story as homework, and we will discuss the students' observations in class in addition to reading Katrak's article, "Aesthetics of Dislocation." The genre of short story, like poetry, offers students the opportunity to practice critically conscious reading strategies with the benefit of brevity, as short stories compress larger thematic issues into a more manageable reading load. This particular short story allows students to critique their own privileged mobility as US citizens and critically analyze the notion of national identity, something that is seemingly bound by national borders but yet easily transgressed by those privileged by globalization. The students will think about the mapping of nationhood and selfhood and how globalization has changed that cartography. In an in-class discussion, students will prepare talking points that investigate their understanding of national boundaries, cross-cultural heritage, and assumptions of mobility that may have been changed by this story.

We will continue the investigation of privileged movement by finishing Unit 1 with the 2009 documentary by Rebecca Camissa, *Which Way Home*. This documentary follows the harrowing journey of several children attempting to emigrate from Mexico and Central America to the United States in search of a better quality of life. As students watch the documentary in class, we will frequently pause to discuss the thematizing of borders, movement, and restricted permeability as they relate to the experience of immigrant populations, making the act of watching visual media more interactive. This documentary will prompt students to think about immigration and the policies that determine its restrictions, the people who make those policies, and how globalization has impacted the global flow of people.

The second unit, Language, explores the impact of globalization on literature in the form of translation for mass circulation, the complicity of American-based study of world literature perpetuating the production of translated texts<sup>16</sup> to suit Western ideology, and the frequent use of code-switching in contemporary literary genres. This unit will ask students to reflect on the benefits and challenges of reading texts in translation or those written specifically for an Anglophone audience. Peter Kalliney in his essential modernist guide, “Modernism in a Global Context,” suggests that the “aesthetic dimension of literature is most readily perceived in the effects of translations,” meaning world literature can either gain or lose its aesthetic properties in the act of translation (8). Because idiomatic phrases may not translate equivalently from one language to another, some of the original aesthetic dimensions are re-conscripted for the new

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<sup>16</sup> While a world literature course would benefit most from a comparative literature approach—reading texts in the original language as a mode of comparison to Anglophone texts—that would require students to be proficient in multiple languages which is an unrealistic requirement for a high school level English elective.

reading audience, in most cases the Anglophone audience. Damrosch,<sup>17</sup> however, asserts that the new contextual appropriation of the text in translation poses a more generative approach than worrying about how poorly or well the text is translated (Kalliney 11). Kalliney also asserts, “Novels emanating from the periphery tend to import plots but employ local characters and local narrative voices; writers from the center, by contrast, systematically ignore the developments on the periphery” (10). Students will consider what impact a center-periphery model has on texts in translation as well as on the production of texts from non-Western nations. To understand the spatial ordering of the center-periphery model, we will look at a map of the world where the “West” is the metaphorical epicenter of culture and see what countries lay within this boundary and without. Through a visual representation of Casanova’s center-periphery theory, students will be able to determine how each text uses language to address power relations and a connection to a community (Cheney 208).

We will begin Unit 2 with Azar Nafisi’s memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, followed by Ní Dhomhnaill’s poem “The Language Issue” translated by Paul Muldoon, and end the unit with Leslie Marmon Silko’s “Yellow Woman” supplemented with a spoken-word poetry video that considers the aesthetics of code-switching, multilingualism, and the nature of orality in literature. Under the historical context of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s regime of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Nafisi writes her memoir after she and her family leave Iran for the United States in the 1990s. The totalitarian regime increasingly alienated those like Nafisi who felt disillusioned with the regime’s strict family laws and oppression of women’s rights, which led to greater gender consciousness on behalf of Islamic feminists seeking just empowerment of

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<sup>17</sup> “The question is not whether or not Kafka has been translated badly or well, but how the movement of his texts into different reading contexts has generated interesting readings of his work” (Kalliney 11).

women through Islamic religious practices. However, as Anne Donadey and Huma Ahmed-Ghosh note in the essay, “Why Americans Love Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran*,” Nafisi fails to acknowledge Iranian feminism’s progress towards empowerment of Iranian women under Islam, which “feeds into western stereotypes of Iranian women as passive and helpless” and “further reinforces the west’s rhetoric that such oppression of women and backwardness are rooted in Islam” (629). Students will need to understand the difference between Islamic feminism and western concepts of feminism to see how the discourse of gendered oppression is coded in Nafisi’s memoir. Because this course aims to actively engage with students’ assumptions and cultural material with which they enter into these kinds of textual transactions, utilizing “students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” even, or especially, if that culture is actively challenged or problematized (Ladson-Billings 161). We will frequently reflect on the narrative voices and genre of memoir that Nafisi uses to connect to Western rather than Middle Eastern audiences and how the rhetoric of feminism makes this memoir so well received. During our assigned reading of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* outside of class, we will read Ní Dhomhnaill’s poem “The Language Issue” in class, both the translation and the original Gaelic version of the poem, to highlight the effects of re-conscripting non-Western texts for Anglophone audiences and to analyze the use of language in poetry as a genre. We will use this poem to compare Paul Muldoon’s fidelity to the Gaelic version visually and rhythmically, using audio recordings of Ní Dhomhnaill reading the poem for comparison. When we finish Nafisi’s memoir and our in-class analysis of “The Language Issue,” students will hold a second discussion, preparing statements and inquiries regarding the power of language and translation and the pressure of writing for a global market dominated by Anglophone audiences. The unit will culminate with a lesson on orality in literary genres through an analysis of Leslie Marmon Silko’s narrative techniques in



“Yellow Woman” and Jamila Lyiscott’s TED Talk, “3 Ways to Speak English.” Cynthia Carsten describes Silko’s narrative techniques as faithful to the “experiential qualities of her community’s oral tradition and its reflection of Pueblo orientation in time and space” while simultaneously rejecting “the literary conventions of Euro-American genres because they are inherently un-suited to the inscription of Pueblo worldview and lived experience” (107). Similarly, Jamila Lyiscott presents a spoken-word poem that equates code-switching to multilingualism in a humorous but powerful evocation of language’s influence on intersectional identity as a lived experience. This final lesson in our second unit synthesizes the impact of globalization on language and transitions us to our third unit, Crisis, by addressing the rhetoric of humanitarianism bound in American or Westernized (if we can use those terms synonymously) perspectives on responsibility and propriety.

The third unit, Crisis, investigates Western humanitarianism and witnessing with particular emphasis on the atrocities of state-sponsored violence and refugee situations resulting from the internal conflict of civil wars. This unit will be informed by a contextual lesson that discusses what Raja calls “an ethic of global solidarity” which aims to “encourage our students to look at their own everyday practices in a critical manner, and if needed, change their practices to facilitate a greater degree of good for the rest of humanity” (33). We will problematize this ethic of global solidarity by critically investigating international humanitarian organizations like the United Nations; furthermore, we will consider how this cosmopolitan concept of humanitarian unity often commoditizes the local through its privileged Western lens (Rogers 48).

The anchoring text<sup>18</sup> for this unit will be Michael Ondaatje’s novel *Anil’s Ghost* supplemented by readings from the United Nations, a blog collective that presents digital

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<sup>18</sup> “We knew finding an anchor or fulcrum text—a complex text that may be lengthier than other

activism in the form of personal refugee stories, and an essay on climate change literature, or lack thereof, in contemporary fiction. These texts contextualize what Dipesh Chakrabarty, in her essay “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” describes as “a universal that arises from a shared sense of a catastrophe,” one that approaches a mythologized global identity with an acknowledgement of the particularism within universalism (222). Ondaatje’s novel *Anil’s Ghost* follows Anil Tissera, a forensic pathologist, on assignment to her homeland, Sri Lanka, for a United Nations Human Rights Investigation, which leads to the discovery of state-sponsored violence that challenges the Enlightenment sense of nation-state predicated on the protection of its citizens. In chapter two of Arjun Appadurai’s book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, he asserts: “One man’s imagined community is another man’s political prison” (32). *Anil’s Ghost* challenges the Enlightenment sense of nation-state as the ideal protector of its citizens because the Sri Lankan civil war leads to state-sponsored violence that essentially turns the imagined community of nation into the main perpetrator of violence against its citizens. Thus, the United Nation’s reaction to state-sponsored violence in the novel can be read ironically as Anil, in her investigation for a universally humanizing organization, bears witness to a fracturing of a mythologized, imagined collective. Students will consider the symbolic aspects of the novel—the numerical information and the restructured head of the victim, Sailor—along with the anecdotal approach that humanizes nameless victims of war.

Alongside our in-class discussions of sections of the text students read at home, we will read non-fiction selections that address issues like the refugee crisis that will challenge students to consider how humanitarian efforts can often stem from capitalist self-interest, which one UN

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ancillary texts or considered a classic, traditional whole-class text—could provide the framework to create a conversation among texts (Wessling 24)” (Mills and Moon 86).

article<sup>19</sup> clearly lays out: “Simply put: we have a moral obligation to act, and it is in our enlightened self-interest to do so. Business cannot succeed in failed societies.” The connection between capitalism, globalization, universal humanitarianism, and crisis on a global scale will be further analyzed in a blog called Global Voices, which empowers the voices of marginalized or misrepresented communities around the world, and an article that asks, “What kind of literature can accurately convey the urgency and implications of our actions on our environment without allegorizing climate change in unrealistic abstractions?” Students will read these articles in class to connect the realities of global interaction to the world of the classroom, making real the challenges they will face as global citizens and the implications of that role. The third unit, Crisis, transitions us to a culmination of our investigation of world literature from culturally responsive lens, as we end the course truly analyzing what it means to recognize our “reciprocal responsibility to other world citizens” in our identification as part of a global collective (Raja 37).

Because of the ubiquitous emphasis on active, engaged citizenship fostered by the humanities and English education,<sup>20</sup> I want to end our course with the final unit, Identity, in which students will discover what it means to actively participate in a global collective, what discursive elements shape that collectivity, and what it means to negotiate a sense of self within the context of the global. In this unit, we will look at various texts that thematize global identity making and its challenges, allowing the students to reflect on their own notions of identity politics. Students will consider the difference between citizen and inhabitant<sup>21</sup> and the implied

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<sup>19</sup> <https://blogs.un.org/blog/2016/09/27/each-of-us-have-a-role-to-play-in-creating-a-sustainable-and-healthy-future-for-the-worlds-refugees/>

<sup>20</sup> See Ladson-Billings 1995, Raja 2008, Levander and Mignolo 2011, Miller 2006, Cochran-Smith et al. 2009, Hadaway and McKenna 2007.

<sup>21</sup> See Levandar and Mignolo 2011.

agency that the term citizen suggests, and with that, who actually has the agency required for collective problem solving and critically aware participation in our global world. Additionally, students will consider the necessary historicizing of identity that moves beyond universal cosmopolitanism to an engaged, transnational global collectivity. Rather than summarize the texts and their applications in this unit, I will now flesh out a model unit lesson plan with Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* and the accompanying poems and short stories in our final unit for this critically responsive world literature course.

### **Model Unit Lesson: Identity**

Of course, the most difficult part of creating courses is turning pedagogy into praxis. Freire defines praxis as the dialogic relationship between reflection and action, a relationship that moves beyond dialogue in order to transform the world (101). Thus, in order for the students in this course to truly develop their critical consciousness, they must first reflect on the cultural-social-historical contexts from which they derive meaning and then use the knowledge they gain from that reflection to participate as active global citizens. To accomplish such a feat, students will participate in a variety of activities and assignments that challenge their perceptions of self from a critical lens, understanding the historicity and temporality of identity making in a global space. As we are all naturally historical, social beings (Freire 101), we will approach this unit with an emphasis on historicizing our identity: what it means to live in the past, present, or future and what happens when we restrict ourselves to one temporality of history like the various characters in Zadie Smith's novel.

To introduce the unit, students will begin with an activity that engages their own understanding of identity by writing down five adjectives that describe them. After students share their adjectives, we will try to categorize their descriptions—ethnicity, age, hometown,

personality, physical traits, and so on. We will then expand the adjective lists to include ancestry and future ambitions, again reconvening to categorize the students' descriptions. What I hope to elicit from this introductory activity is the variety of factors that influence our perceptions of self and the difficulty of reducing ourselves to hard and fast categories. This intentional opening of self-definition will ideally make students more comfortable with challenging and analyzing the way they've come to understand identity and prompt them to analyze the texts in this unit with a similar openness. Following the activity, the class will read two poems: Pablo Neruda's "We Are Many" and John Hewitt's "Once Alien Here." Both poems demonstrate the difficulty of articulating the self and will be helpful for introducing the intangibility of identity to the students. Students will hopefully find comfort in reading texts by authors who face similar difficulty of articulation, relating to their own attempts to categorize themselves earlier in the class. By considering identity fluid and transmutable, students will be able to examine how characters in *White Teeth* deal with their perceptions of self when the categories they have put themselves into are challenged and transformed.

Because this course takes place over a semester, this unit will take place within the three weeks before our final week together. As such, students will need to read the novel at home to prepare for in-class discussions and assignments but will ideally spend little time on other assignments outside of the classroom to allow for sufficient reading time. Each week will cover around one hundred and fifty pages, and students will respond to what they've read for the week in reflection journals (see attached materials) as a way to guide their inquiry as they read and prepare them for in-class prompts and discussions.

In the first week of this unit, students will pay particular attention to how Zadie Smith introduces her characters, the categories within which the characters are placed, and the way the

characters view themselves. We will look at the characters Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal who revel in their glory days of World War II, or what they've concocted as their glory days in the stories they tell themselves, in addition to Clara Bowden. Smith opens the novel with Archie at the moment of his attempted suicide: "He had flipped a coin and stood staunchly by the results. This was a decided-upon suicide" (3). Archie's coin flipping continues throughout the novel, leaving his fate to the object that proves to be his downfall by the end. Overwhelmed by his negligibility within the vast universe, Archie considers himself "tiny and rootless," impotent like his divorced wife's Hoover vacuum tube (9). He identifies himself by his friendship with Samad Iqbal, whom he considers a mentor and with whom he served in the war. This friendship, allegorized in the setting of O'Connell's pub, survives by its reliance on history—the history Archie and Samad have from the war, the history of secrets they've kept from each other, the kind of history that Archie and Samad's families constantly roll their eyes about. Yet, Archie's perception of history and its impact on how he defines himself differs from that of his wife, Clara. Clara was born with history: "Clara was from somewhere. She had roots" (25). Whereas Archie feels rootless, Clara feels submerged in a history that she struggles to embrace, eventually extracting herself from her roots with her marriage to Archie and distancing from her mother. When the two marry, they fill out the license with the appropriate categories—name, nationality, age, occupation—marking the differences between Archie and Clara clearly on paper. At this moment in the text, students will reflect on these categories society asks us to identify and compare the categories with those we discussed at the beginning of the unit. Students will frequently write in their reflection journals as they come across topics we introduce in class, like categorizing identity, to facilitate a deeper engagement between work we do as a group and engaged reading students do on their own. We will continue this thread of categorization, asking

students to consider what labels society asks us to determine of ourselves and how that impacts the way we perceive our place in the world. Race, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic status are all categories that Archie, Clara, and Samad contend with, and we will discuss the adversity that this type of categorization creates.

At the end of this section of the novel, students will apply the extended metaphor of “root canals” to their own personal histories. This assignment will be a combination of family interviews, ancestry research, and personal anecdotes that constitute the historicity of identity. Students will create an oral history with a podcast, synthesizing these sources and considering how their history impacts the categories with which they identify. We will use the root canal metaphor to address the deep complexities of identities stemming from a place like London, in which the book is set, which is characteristically hybrid and global. The podcast medium enhances students’ auditory engagement, requires them to creatively synthesize multiple sources of information, and allows students to use a technological mode of storytelling.<sup>22</sup> Students may find telling their personal history challenging because of varying definitions of family, cultural or ethnic stereotypes they encounter, or an unwillingness to connect themselves with a history. In response to these challenges, I will ask students to consider a critically conscious perspective, one that values the cultural, social, and historical material they bring with them to the classroom as a way to empower their historicized identity for the larger goal of collective empowerment.

In the second week of the unit, we will move from categorical identity to collective identity, introducing the term collectivities and considering the impact of colonial inheritance, legacy, religion, and nationhood on our identities, especially when those collectivities are not neat and tidy. The second-generation characters in the novel, Magid, Millat, and Irie, struggle

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-benefits-of-podcasts-in-class/473925/>

with a sense of belonging and navigate the hybridity of their identities. For the Iqbal family, Western influence poses the greatest challenge to their religious and national collectivities. Mickey, the philosophical owner of O'Connell's, says to Samad, "We're all English now, mate" (160); yet, Samad vehemently resists this sentiment. In response to his wife, Alsana, wearing Clara's African headscarf, he cries, "You do not even know what you are, where you come from," to which Alsana replies with a look of disdain at Samad's jogging suit and LA Raiders baseball hat (166). While Samad retreats from Western influence, tormented by sexual and material desires, into hypocritical religious fervor, Alsana raises concerns for her two sons, both influenced by Western capitalism in different ways.

Students will perform a close reading exercise in class to analyze Millat's struggle with double consciousness and hybridity, defining those terms as we review the close reading passage. We will consider what it means to straddle two worlds, in Millat's case his father's homeland of Bengal and his home nation of England, but not really fit into either world: "Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name, Zulfikar, the clashing of two swords..." (291). Millat constantly measures himself against others' perceptions of him within his collectivities (192), be it nation, religion, family, school gang, or the fundamental Islamic group, KEVIN, but his clashing collectivities put a strain on his identity. Students will work to define hybridity and consider whether hybridity is a similarly in-between place of identity, and if so, what the implications are for forming collectivities that connect these middle spaces.

Whereas Millat embraces the intermediary space of identity, Irie feels ashamed. She resists her hybridity, vying for the perfect English version of beauty: "oh, you know her—she's a slender, delicate thing not made for the hot sun, a surfboard rippled by the wave..." (222).



Students will read Shakespeare's Sonnet 127, just as Irie reads in her class, to supplement their journal reflections, considering the influence collectivities have on our perceptions of beauty. In addition to Irie's internal conflict about beauty, she struggles against her inherited colonial past, her Jamaican legacy that she does not quite understand at this point in the novel. The narrator notes that the second generation "were English now, more English than the English," but tied to their colonial past by the legacy of their immigrant history (255). The narrator, whom we might think of as the inner narration of the character focused on at present, asserts, "A legacy is not something you can give or take by choice, and there are no certainties in the sticky business of inheritance" (255). While Irie inherits a Jamaican colonial past that inhibits her sense of belonging to an English collectivity, Millat inherits the Indian colonial past, both being legacies neither character chooses to possess but nonetheless influence the characters' collectivities.

Though there is much to unpack in this section of the novel, students will focus primarily on the formation of collectivities. They will consider how religion, nation, legacy, and hybridity affect one's ability to define identity in a short essay, giving students a chance to explore Millat and Irie's different associations with collectivity. The essay will compare and contrast the types of collectivities Irie and Millat try to identify with, what happens when each character tries to participate in religious or national collectivities, and what it means for second-generation individuals to balance their cultural identities. Is there a gradual loss of one identity in place of another or an active rejection of a kind? We will carry this consideration of collectivity to the end of novel, revisiting this prompt with a further analysis of the character's development, deciding if assimilating into one collectivity is sufficient for either character. If time allows, we would also consider the historical implications of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and the fall of the

Berlin Wall, for the contemporary period of globalization borne out of this time in history is helpful for understanding globalization's modern beginning.

In the final week of the unit, students will focus on Smith's rhetorical play on temporality and the impossibility of neutral spaces in our globalized world. Each family, and consequently each character, negotiates temporality differently in the novel. The Bowden family, Hortense particularly, lives in an eternal present: "This was living in the eternal instant, ceaselessly teetering on the precipice of total annihilation" (327). Irie, by contrast to her grandmother, wishes to exist in past moments that she has fictionalized into memory, yet "her lives...were stranger than fiction, funnier than fiction, crueller than fiction, and with consequences fiction can never have...Past tense, future imperfect" (379). This fictionalization of the past is revisited at the end of the novel: "But surely to tell these tall tales and others like them would be to speed the myth, the wicked lie, that the past is always tense and the future perfect. And as Archie knows, it's not like that. It's never been like that" (448).

The mythologizing of the past and fictionalizing of the future factor into all of the characters' lives throughout the novel, and to challenge this concept of living only in the past, present, or future, students will write a poem in one verb tense of their choosing: past, present, future, including imperfect, perfect, and conditional to indicate duration or possible action respectively. The topic of the poem can be anything relating to our novel study of identity but must stick to one specific temporality in the same way that certain characters try, but often fail, to live in one temporality in the novel. Students will share the poetry with the class and discuss the challenges or benefits of the temporality they picked and then relate that to the characters' challenges. While writing poetry may be difficult for those who feel they lack creative sensibility, I will construct a rubric that evaluates their proper use of the chosen verb tense and

the explication of the challenges they encounter rather than subjective creativity or quality of poetry.

In preparation for our final group discussion,<sup>23</sup> students will finish out this last week of *White Teeth* by focusing on the spatial dimension in the text—finding neutral spaces that eliminate the messy history that imbues contemporary England with meaning. Irie envisions the space of “homeland” to be a neutral space, the “beginningest of beginnings. Like the first morning of Eden and the day after apocalypse. A blank page” (332). However, Alsana knows that as participants in the global space of the world, no place is uninvolved: “Involved is neither good nor bad. It is just a consequence of living, a consequence of occupation and immigration, of empires and expansion, of living in each other’s pockets” (363). This kind of involvement, involuntary as it is, makes the Edenic homeland Irie dreams of unattainable. Even if we convince ourselves that immigrants enter their new residence “as blank people, free of any kind of baggage, happy and willing to leave their difference at the docks and take their chances in this new place, merging with the oneness of this greenandpleasantlibertarianlandofthefree,” they can never escape the history they carry with them within their identity and history, and thus, the impossibility of neutral space (384). The extended metaphor of history as excrement emphasizes just how messy and complicated spatial history actually is, and we will note the several passages in which characters use this metaphor to “cover this neutral room in themselves” (383).

The only character who truly believes in neutral spaces is the fervently cosmopolitan, in the fundamental sense of the word, horticulturalist Joyce Chalfen. Students will analyze the

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<sup>23</sup> “If there is a single term that captures CC practice, it is group discussion. To be successful according to Montero, there must be listening, dialog, humility, respect, and critique. The aim is to come close to consensus on the problematization of recurring aspects of everyday experience. From there, young people begin to consider solutions aimed at the sociopolitical roots of the problem” (Watts et al. 54).

Chalfenisms in the novel and how that version of cosmopolitanism naively assumes neutral places exist. Students will also have to factor in the Chalfen's socioeconomic status as a contributing factor to their ability to imagine neutral spaces. The awareness of their middle-class agency comes across sardonically in a parenthetical aside by the narrator: "In the Chalfen lexicon the middle classes were the inheritors of the enlightenment, the creators of the welfare state, the intellectual elite, and the source of all culture. Where they got this idea, it's hard to say" (359). This kind of enlightenment cosmopolitanism is only available to the Chalfens because of their socioeconomic status, and this perspective initially brings Irie, Millat, and then Magid in contact with the Chalfens when the headmaster assigns the children to the family for a cultural exchange of sorts—the Chalfens bringing the culture and the others bringing street and sport knowledge (256). We will use the reflection journals and in-class discussions to analyze the faults of a fundamental cosmopolitanism for its ignorance of history.

Marcus Chalfen similarly assumes spaces of neutrality exist, but for him, science and its rationality and its elimination of the random thrive in neutrality. The Perret Institute, where Marcus's FutureMouse experiment is displayed at the end of the novel, is considered "The final space" (429). However, unbeknownst to Marcus, this institute designed as the prime example of neutrality ("a new British room, a space for Britain, Britishness, space of Britain, British industrial space cultural space space)...renamed, rebranded, the answer to every questionnaire nothing nothing space please just space nothing please nothing space") acts as a final space for all of the messy history to implode (429). When students reflect on the end of the novel, I hope they see this final space as a cataclysmic collision of all of the dialogic factors that impact the space of the global, and moreover, the dialogic factors that make identity formation in the global age so difficult. *White Teeth* fictionalizes nearly everything this course covers, from immigration

to nationhood, language to image, religion to cosmopolitanism, and ultimately globalization's impact on our identity. The final group discussion will synthesize the aspects of globalization that we have covered in the space of a novel and allow for an open discourse about identity making in a global context.

All of the assignments for this particular unit ask students to consider character identity making in the novel and reflect on the necessary historicizing of identity if we are to truly become conscious beings prepared for global citizenship. Freire asserts, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry, human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (72). I have attempted to replicate this pursuit of inquiry through weekly reflection journals, creative and argumentative writing exercises, poetry writing, and a continuous open dialogue about the text and its implications for our understanding of the world. The justification for these assignments comes from tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy addressed at the beginning of this paper: the academic engagement of students' own cultural material within the classroom to facilitate a greater social consciousness that empowers not only the individual but the collectivity of critically aware global citizens. Though the brevity of the course limits the depth into which students can fully understand some of the more difficult terminology and theoretical concepts this course will introduce, the exposure to this difficult content will prepare these upper-level high school students to enter college or the workforce with an ability to tap into that critical consciousness to take the final step toward true praxis: action.

## **Conclusion**

I have chosen culturally responsive pedagogy, and the critical consciousness it aims to develop, to approach global collectivities in world literature by teaching students to read the

world in a certain way. Though this pedagogy has been applied to a variety of teaching strategies for the purpose of addressing social inequity and the empowerment of the marginalized through action against that inequity, I find that reading world literature from this specific lens offers the most effective application of the pedagogy if we are to teach students how to be responsible participants as global citizens.

In a 2011 study for *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, Watts, Diemer, and Voight found three components to critical consciousness consistent in all recent research that examines developments of Freire's pedagogical theory for teaching for social justice. They noticed that three components—critical reflection, political efficacy, and political action—have been taken into account in studies that hope to quantify critical consciousness into measurable scales. These scales determined that though critical reflection may take place in school programs for advancing youth, the perceived political efficacy—the ability to actually enact change in the community—determined whether or not critical action actually followed the development of a critical consciousness. This is where culturally responsive pedagogy can do the most work. We can use the analytical strategies like reflection, dialogue, and guided inquiry to supplement the students' cultural material that they bring into the classroom with literary competency that helps them read the world in a new way. An awareness of the social, historical, and political mechanisms at work in the world is the first step toward true praxis. The critical action, then, comes in their ability to go out into world as conscious and responsible beings.

Of course, we have no way of measuring students' critical action when they leave the classroom. Do we ask all of them to enter public policy or humanitarian non-profit organizations? Do we tell them to become teachers to continue this dialogue of empowerment? That, I think, is the most challenging part of this pedagogical approach. We could, however,

offer students opportunities within the classroom and at school to develop critical action projects by engaging with the school and local community. Even a small scale of critical engagement would materialize the critically conscious approach to literature out in the real world.

Reports from UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education<sup>24</sup> program tell us there's more work to do if we are to prepare our students to proactively contribute to a more just, peaceful world. While I do not claim teaching world literature with a culturally responsive lens automatically ensures that students understand their responsibility in global collectivities, I do hope that it moves the study of world literature to address the multiple, varied, diverse networks of collectivities that globalization has permitted us to share, and with that, the challenging inequalities that prevent equal interaction to occur. The irreducible diversity our world has to offer deserves far more than buffets of cultural sampling that simply reinforce our differences; instead, we should teach students to read the world critically, ethically, and responsibly to facilitate an emergent, empowered generation of global citizens prepared to thrive in their multiplicity.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://en.unesco.org/news/teachers-capacity-deliver-global-citizenship-education-gced-could-be-strengthened>

## **World Literature: Global Collectivities**

Instructor  
Email, Phone  
Office Hours

### **Syllabus**

English 12 Honors Elective

Pre-Requisites: English 11 Honors, Standard

M: 50 min

T: 90 min

TH: 90 min

### **Course Description**

This world literature elective will challenge students to read critically poems, short stories, and novels from around the world. The course is organized into four thematic units—Borders and Movement, Language, Crisis, and Identity—and each unit explores how different authors approach globalization's effect on these categories. Students will analyze their own encounters with these themes to become more aware of their role as global citizens and what it means to belong in the world created by globalization. In individual and group assignments, students will identify what assumptions and knowledge they have coming into each text and reflect on how their own cultural material empowers their transactions with literature. We will engage in an open classroom dialogue that acknowledges spaces of inequity and the interactions of people around the world from a responsible and ethical position. Ultimately, we will critically engage with literature that explores the experience of belonging to a global collectivity and the cultural, social, historical, and political contexts from which we derive meaning.

### **Course Objectives**

Students will analyze authors' rhetorical strategies through various creative and argumentative writing exercises.

Students will engage in discussions, both small group and whole class, supporting their opinions with evidence and listening respectfully to others' perspectives, in turn, reflecting on their own understanding.

Students will develop a critical consciousness: an approach that critiques social, historical, and political elements of society for greater social awareness.

### **Course Materials**

Required Texts:

- *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri
- *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi
- *Anil's Ghost* by Michael Ondaatje
- *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith
- Short stories, poetry, and excerpts provided

Spiral notebook (2)

Writing Utensils

Post-it Notes

5x7 Index Cards



## Assignments

**Reflection Journals:** Students will write in their journals as an extension of their marginalia, meaning as you read, use your Post-It Notes to mark spots in the text you find interesting, confusing, challenging, or enlightening and expand on those thoughts in your journal. Each week we will address different inquiries that will help focus your reflections. Journals will be collected at the end of each unit for completion; however, completion implies a sustained effort to answer inquiry. Unrelated or insufficient journal entries will not count.

**Writing Exercises:** Students will respond to prompts that relate to the guided inquiry on a deeper level. These may be done in class or at home and will be three parts: brainstorming, rough draft, and peer edit. The final assignment will be typed (Times New Roman, Size 12, Double Spaced).

**Mini Research Projects:** These multimodal projects will require some aspect of research, which may be sourced online or in interviews, and will be presented in a multimodal presentation for the class.

**Group Discussion:** There will be four major group discussions at the end of each unit synthesizing the topics covered in your reflection journals guided by our class inquiry. We will frequently have smaller group discussions throughout each unit. To participate, you must bring in an index card with three talking points and one question that relate to the content.

## Grading

A= 90+      B= 80-89      C=70-79      D=60-69      F=Below 60

Reflection Journals	15%
Writing Exercises	30%
Research Projects	20%
Group Discussion	25%
Participation	10%

## Tentative Schedule

Week	Content
1	Introduction
2	Langston Hughes, "Cubes"
UNIT 1	Jhumpa Lahiri, <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i>
	Katrak, "Aesthetics of Dislocation"
3	<i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> cont.
	<b>UNIT 1 Group Discussion</b>
4	Documentary: <i>Which Way Home</i>
	<b>Journal Check 1</b>
5	Azar Nafisi, <i>Reading Lolita in Tehran</i>

UNIT 2

- 6            *Reading Lolita in Tehran* cont.  
Ní Dhonnghaill, “The Language Issue”
- 7            *Reading Lolita in Tehran* cont.  
Donadey and Ahmed-Ghosh, “Why Americans Love Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran*”  
**UNIT 2 Group Discussion**
- 8            Leslie Marmon Silko, “Yellow Woman”  
Jamila Lyiscott, “3 Ways to Speak English”  
**Journal Check 2**
- 9            Michael Ondaatje, *Anil’s Ghost*  
UNIT 3      Stanley M. Bergman, UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants:  
<https://blogs.un.org/blog/2016/09/27/each-of-us-have-a-role-to-play-in-creating-a-sustainable-and-healthy-future-for-the-worlds-refugees/>
- 10           *Anil’s Ghost* cont.  
Marcell Shehwaro’s Dispatches on Syria:  
<https://globalvoices.org/specialcoverage/dispatches-from-syriamarcell-shehwaro-on-life-in-aleppo/>
- 11           *Anil’s Ghost* cont.  
Benjamin Kunkel, “Inventing Climate Change Literature”:  
<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/problem-climate-change-novel>  
**Journal Check 3**
- 12           Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*  
UNIT 4      Pablo Neruda, “We Are Many”  
John Hewitt, “Once Alien Here”
- 13           *White Teeth* cont.
  - History Podcast Due
- 14           *White Teeth* cont.  
**Journal Check 4**
  - Compare and Contrast Essay Due
- 15           **Final Group Discussion**
  - Temporality Poem Due

## Unit 4 Assignments

### Research Project: History Podcast

Archie, Clara, and Samad historicize their identity in different ways. Archie feels rootless, untethered by any substantial personal history, and thus, he clings to his war stories with Samad, his one-time Olympic involvement, and his relationship with Clara. Samad, however, deeply relies on the legacy created by his great-great-grandfather, the Bengali rebel Mangal Pande, to the point of obsession. His reliance on his grandfather's legacy determines his actions in the present, and his tumultuous relationship with Islam impacts his responsibility to his faith and his family. Clara, by contrast, has a similar immigrant history—one of former colonialism—that she completely disavows to escape her mother's religious zeal and Jamaican heritage. Each character interprets history in his/her own way, shaping the actions and identity of the characters in the present. For this assignment, you will perform your own root canal: through two family interviews, ancestry research, and personal anecdotes, construct an oral history podcast that you will share with the class. Consider the categories that society asks us to identify with, and use your oral history podcast to challenge and support your root canal. Then, pick one character whose historicized identity you relate to or differ from and explain why.

### Writing Exercise: Compare and Contrast Essay

In two to three pages, consider how religion, nation, legacy, and hybridity affect one's ability to define identity. Explore Millat and Irie's different associations with collectivity at this point in the novel, comparing and contrasting the types of collectivities either character tries to identify with, what happens when either character tries to insert into religious or national collectivities, and what it means for second-generation individuals to balance their cultural identities. Is there a gradual loss of one identity in place of another or an active rejection of a kind? Using quotes from the text to support your points, consider the similarities and differences of how Millat and Irie deal with their collectivities. What are their reactions when faced with their hybridity? This essay is not meant to be conclusive but exploratory, and we will revisit these collectivities at the end of the novel.

### Writing Exercise: Temporality Poem

The mythologizing of the past and fictionalizing of the future factor into all of the characters' lives throughout the novel, and to challenge this concept of living only in the past, present, or future, write a poem in one verb tense of your choosing: past, present, future, including imperfect, perfect, and conditional to indicate duration or possible action respectively. The topic of the poem can be anything relating to our novel study of identity but must stick to one specific temporality in the same way that certain characters try, but often fail, to live in one temporality in the novel. You will share the poetry with the class and discuss the challenges or benefits of the temporality you picked in relation to the challenges a specific character faces. Your poem can follow any rhyme and meter and can make use of literary techniques like those we analyzed in the two poems at the beginning of the unit. You may even model your poem off of one of those poems if you like. Rather than assessing your skills as a master poet, I will evaluate the poems for their consistency of verb tense and the subsequent reflection on the limits of one tense in relation to a specific character in the text.

### Group Discussion: Identity in a Global Collectivity

The final group discussion will synthesize the aspects of globalization that we have covered in the space of a novel and allow for an open discourse of identity making in a global context. We will use your reflection journals and your discussion index card to first work in small groups divided by our unit topics—Borders and Movement, Language, Crisis, and Identity—as they are played out in the novel. On your index card, include three discussion points and one inquiry about the topic of your choice and prepare to discuss your cards with the group. Then, each group will present their small group discussion to the class. One person in each small group will write down the discussion points and inquiry, and then the group will present those points to the class in addition to a larger inquiry that the group felt the whole class should consider. The purpose of this discussion is to reflect on your assumptions and perceptions of the topics at hand and listen respectfully to your classmates' opinions. Though these discussions will not lead to finite answers, they should help strengthen your understanding of the novel's ability to reflect on identity formation given the discursive elements of globalization that impact how we maneuver the space of the global.

### Annotated Bibliography

Cheah, Pheng. "What Is a World? On World Literature as World-Making Activity." *Daedalus*, vol. 137, no. 3, 2008, pp. 26-38.

Pheng Cheah examines various methods of world making, from Goethe and Kant to Marx and Appadurai. He suggests that the world "is a form of relating or being-with" rather than a bound aesthetic object. For world literature to process this concept of world making, Cheah suggests it must meet three requirements: self-conscious thematizing of the worlding process, reconsideration of the world as mediated through the nation, and an acknowledgement of the dynamic, contesting forces that have been brought into the world by globalization. Cheah sees this type of world literature as imminent, and emergent worlds are always to come. Cheah's synthesis of various world-making theories provides a helpful context for teaching world literature as relationality rather than territoriality.

Damrosch, David. "What is World Literature?" 2003. *The Free Library*, [www.thefreelibrary.com/What is World Literature?-a0107397351](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/What+is+World+Literature?-a0107397351).

David Damrosch describes three conceptions of world literature: an established body of classics, as an evolving canon of masterpieces, or as multiple windows on the world. He suggests that as the study of world literature often tends to modernize, it simultaneously ignores historical implications. To avoid this type of narrowing, Damrosch recommends a deeper analysis of the nuanced, complex aspects, such as cultural information, that go into a work of world literature. However, he expresses concerns about globalization's impact on the movement of world literature around the world, advocating for reflection on the new cultural contexts that change as texts negotiate their global, contextual

movement. Damrosch's analysis of world literature as a negotiation of transcultural movement provides a helpful theoretical application of critically conscious reading for teachers of world literature, asking teachers to read the implications of globalization in the movement of texts around the world.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 1921. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005.

Paulo Freire proposes a pedagogy that changes the relationship between student and teacher and empowers those oppressed in society. Through the development of a conscientization, the oppressed can liberate themselves from the oppressors first with an awareness of their oppression and second by acting to liberate society from oppression rather than simply replacing the old oppressive regime. Instead of a dehumanizing relationship between teacher and student in the form of banking education, liberation can be achieved through shared knowledge made possible by conscientization. Through cooperation and dialogue, true praxis and thus liberation can be achieved. Freire's foundational pedagogical method influences culturally responsive pedagogy, and therefore, it is essential to understand Freire's claims to properly apply culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom.

Gay, Geneva. "Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity." *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2013, pp. 48-70.

Geneva Gay discusses her conceptual framework for culturally responsive pedagogy and proceeds to suggest strategies for the application of the pedagogy in an actual classroom. These include reconsidering attitudes about diversity, countering its opposition, centering culture in teaching practices, and connecting the pedagogy to the students' lives. To

facilitate the application of the pedagogy, Gay recommends examining our understanding of diversity and including students' cultural material in the classroom to improve student achievement and foster a level of ownership on behalf of the students' knowledge development. She reflects on the progression of her engagement with the pedagogy and the challenges she encountered in helping other teachers apply the pedagogy, which introduces challenges that my application of the pedagogy may encounter in order to strategize ways of overcoming those possible challenges.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." *Culturally Relevant Teaching*, special issue of *Theory Into Practice*, vol 34, no. 2, 1995, pp. 150-165.

Gloria Ladson-Billings defines culturally relevant pedagogy as a pedagogy of opposition dedicated to collective empowerment. This pedagogy aims to foster academic success and cultural competence through the development of sociopolitical awareness that allows students to critique social inequities. She provides examples from her three-year study of teachers who increased African American students' educational success and specific activities these teachers implemented, such as the use of rap songs for poetry and parent seminars to support cultural competence. She suggests that researchers continue to examine the practices of successful teachers and encourage students to learn collaboratively. Although Ladson-Billings studied a focus group of teachers of African American students, her application of culturally relevant pedagogy provides a paradigm for replicating similar strategies for teaching through students' cultural filters as a way to access critical consciousness.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. Columbia University Press, 2003.

In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reflects on the role of Comparative Literature studies as a transformative discipline that can be used to enter textual transactions responsibly with an ethical model for the study of global cultures. She advocates for planetarity, rather than a global space, as a way of inscribing collective responsibility in which the purposeful crossing of boundaries displaces the politicized space of the globe. Though I argue her planetarity dehistoricizes the globe, I borrow the terms “restricted permeability” and “collectivity” to describe global movement and global belonging as they apply to this world literature course.



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