

Salman Rushdie

SALMAN
RUSHDIE

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& by appt.

LIT 331: STUDIES IN A MAJOR AUTHOR
M W 3:30 – 4:50 NAC 201

ABOUT THE COURSE

Indian? Pakistani? Englishman? American? That Salman Rushdie defies any simple national categories makes him one of contemporary fiction's most international writers, and explains his own sense of himself as a "cultural mongrel" and a "bastard child of history." Not only has he obviously made the category of British fiction more capacious, but his work has in fact come to represent the new novel: postcolonial, decentered, transnational, interlingual, cross-cultural. It has also been celebrated for its historical understanding, its intellectual and linguistic playfulness, and its promotion of border crossings, both literal and figurative.

In this course, we'll read a quartet of Rushdie's major novels as well as a selection of his short stories and essays; we'll also consider some of his primary influences, such as *The Arabian Nights* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Especially when the West and militant Islam are at war, it is an opportune time to reexamine the issues surrounding Rushdie's most troubling claim to fame: the controversy and death sentence (*fatwa*) that followed the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. More broadly, though, our goal will be to consider such notions, metaphors, and tropes as hybridity, the figure of the migrant, borders and frontiers, sectarianism, history as story, the idea of Islam, multiculturalism, the global village, etc. And we must be sure to take time to relish Rushdie's novels for the endlessly inventive, brilliant page-turners that they are!

TEXTS

REQUIRED:

East, West (1994)
Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990)
Midnight's Children (1980)
The Moor's Last Sigh (1995)
The Satanic Verses (1988)

OPTIONAL:

India: A History, John Keay

** There will be additional required course texts available via the course Moodle site.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Two inquiry papers (3-4 pp. each)	30%	Quiz	10%
Final analytical paper (8-10 pp.)	30%	Class participation	30%

The inquiry papers will find you investigating a specific aspect/angle on a text (or two) of your choosing; you may turn in an inquiry paper on any two of the three “receiving dates” (marked “IP” on the schedule); to succeed you will necessarily need to be specific and to use those 3-4 pages crisply and strategically. The final analytical paper will be an open, thesis-led investigation of your creation; the best papers will attend to both primary and secondary texts and be immersed in the historical and critical contexts of the course. You will be asked to submit an abstract in advance that outlines the subject matter, contexts, and possible argument for your essay. All papers must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Unless otherwise noted, all papers must be typed and double-spaced, with 1” margins; to avoid grade reductions, you must meet the minimum page requirement (e.g., 3-4 pages means at least three *full* pages, not counting the space used for headings, etc.). Additional formatting instructions will be provided when the papers are assigned. Late papers will be marked down one-half letter grade per day (weekends count as one day). I’m always open to revisions of formal papers, but to take advantage of this offer the paper must have been turned in on time and I ask that you meet with me during office hours to discuss your revision.

Your class participation grade will be calculated based on responsible attendance, on miscellaneous short writing exercises, on your fulfillment of the “discussion leader” requirement, and on your willingness and ability to engage the reading attentively and critically on a class-to-class basis (which thus might include contributions to the online forum discussions on the class Moodle site). I’ll expect you to bring the relevant books to class at all times, and to have comments, observations, and questions at the ready (a reading notebook and an almost indexical approach to Rushdie’s fiction might serve you well as the pages pile up!). You will increasingly be expected to be conversant in the literary & historical contexts of the course, and to be able to evoke some of the significant moments in Rushdie’s fiction and criticism.

For the discussion leader requirement, you will pair up with one colleague and sign up for one of the “DL” slots on the schedule. On your scheduled day, the two of you will be responsible for starting and maintaining the class discussion about that day’s assigned reading. You should thus plan, as much as possible, to (1) do the reading early in advance of your chosen slot; (2) meet as a group (or at least carry on an email discussion) to organize your thoughts and questions, and (3) come to class ready to ask the questions, encourage your classmates to contribute, and generally help keep the discussion on track. You can create a handout for the class (15-17 copies), if you wish, or even make use of the audio-visual equipment in the room; certainly, though, you should be ready—by invoking specific examples from the text—to call attention to the important moments and issues in the day’s reading.

There will be a short (30-45 minutes) reading and history quiz about halfway through the semester.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All work submitted for this class must be your own, and must be written exclusively for this course. The unacknowledged borrowing of others’ words or ideas—whether from books, the internet, or other sources—constitutes the serious academic crime of plagiarism; if you fail to document properly those sources consulted for your writing, you risk an automatic failure for the entire course. If you have any doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University’s policy on it, please see me.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have a documented disability, or otherwise anticipate needing special accommodations in this course, please bring this to my attention as early in the semester as possible so that we have an understanding and can make arrangements.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

1 Aug 29-Sept 2

m Introduction
w Postcolonialism. Said, *Orientalism* (M)

2 Sept 5-9

m NO CLASS : Labor Day
w *East, West* (5-119)

3 Sept 12-16

m *East, West* (149-211) [DL1]
w *The Arabian Nights* (M)

4 Sept 19-23

m New Historicism. White, "The Value of Narrativity" (M).
w *Midnight's Children* (5-85)

5 Sept 26-30

m *Midnight's Children* (86-205)
w *Midnight's Children* (206-288) [DL2]

6 Oct 3-7

m FILM: *Pather Panchali* (1955)
w *Pather Panchali, cont'd.* [IP1]

7 Oct 10-14

m *Midnight's Children* (289-464) [DL3]
w *Midnight's Children* (465-533)

8 Oct 17-21

m *The Satanic Verses* (3-89)
w *The Satanic Verses* (93-129) [quiz]

9 Oct 24-28

m *The Satanic Verses* (133-208) [DL4]
w *The Satanic Verses* (211-247)

10 Oct 31-Nov 4

m FILM: *Dirty Pretty Things* (2003)
w *Dirty Pretty Things, cont'd.* [IP2]

11 Nov 7-11

m *The Satanic Verses* (251-484) [DL5]
w *The Satanic Verses* (487-561)

12 Nov 14-18

m *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (15-126)
w *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (129-211) [DL6]

13 Nov 21-25

m *The Moor's Last Sigh* (3-120)
w NO CLASS : Thanksgiving

14 Nov 28-Dec 2

m *The Moor's Last Sigh* (123-282) [DL7]
w Writing workshop [IP3]

15 Dec 5-9

m *The Moor's Last Sigh* (285-377) [DL8]
w *The Moor's Last Sigh* (381-433)

16 Dec 12-16

m Conclusions. Scheherazade's last tale.
th [final analytical paper, due by
5 p.m. in my mailbox in LA 133
or under office door in LA 226]
