

Spring 2024

## LIT 340-002: Contemporary Literature

Johnathan Curley

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# Contemporary Literature: Art Confronts the Political

TIER112

T/R 2:30-3:50

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Office Hours Thursdays 4-6 and by appointment

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## Course Description

This class will focus on twentieth and twenty-first century political fiction framed in their various historical and social contexts. We will explore the motivations for political art and assess different representations of it. Through surveying various world literatures during a turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, we shall examine the function of art in times of violence and crisis, exploring how writers represent and respond to specific historical struggles and events.

Such critical and creative endeavoring will help foster awareness of art/literature as both a formidable expression of the contemporary world and an invaluable instrument for interpreting history, addressing civic society and cultural memory, and offering alternative views of how to understand diverse political landscapes. Themes and issues will include the relationship between aesthetics and ethics; literary forms of historical witness and adjudication; experiments in social identities; feminism; political repression; artistic and political dissidence; international political contexts such as the WWIL German Occupation of France and the Collaborationist Vichy Government, 1973 and post-1973 Chile, New York during the 1980s AIDS Crisis, homophobia,

totalitarianism, historical trauma, and political, social, and artistic struggle. Various literary genres will provide an encompassing dimension of styles and forms to complement these contexts.

## Requirements

You are expected to keep up with the reading in the texts and complete all assigned exercises. Classroom participation is essential. The seminar format for this course requires discussion, a constellation of active, energetic voices. Participation can also take the shape of various other engagements, including CANVAS forum posts, written commentaries or suggestions, and other input not assigned.

In addition to whatever other weekly assignments, I will ask that you compile a weekly writing journal based on your writing experience, classroom reactions, and any other thoughts related to literature and politics. These journal entries will be submitted along with your final project at the end of the semester and should account for at least 10 out of our 15 weeks-long semester. **(\*\*\*A full 15 points accounts for participation alone so keep this point of order in mind.\*\*\*)**

**Keep in mind that CANVAS will both complement, supplement and, at times, correct the syllabus in terms of timetables, scheduled speakers, field trips and content.**

## NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity

*“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:*

<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

*Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. **Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university.** If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at [dos@njit.edu](mailto:dos@njit.edu)”*

## Grade Breakdown

Class Participation	25 points
Weekly writings (includes JOURNAL)	25 points

Mid-Term Essay	25 points
Final Project	25 points

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**100 Points**

### **Required Texts**

Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless* (Grove: 978-0802128355)

Roberto Bolano, *Distant Star* (New Directions: 978-0811215862)

Robert Bolano, *By Night in Chile* (New Directions: 978-0811215473)

Dasa Drndic, *Belladonna* (New Directions: 978-0-8112-2721-6)

Nona Fernandez, *The Twilight Zone* (Graywolf Press: 978-1-6445-047-5)

David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives* (Vintage: 978-0679732273)

**(Supplementary Materials will be utilized as well)**

### **CALENDAR?COURSE OUTLINE:**

WEEK ONE (1/16-1/18)

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

***PROPAGANDA, POLEMICS, RHETORICS, & NARRATIVES: CASE STUDIES, EXERCISES, & ENGAGEMENTS***

WEEK TWO (1/23 – 1/25)

#### **CHAPER ONE:**

***SPOTLIGHT: CHILE (9/11/1973 to NOW)::::***

**ROBERTO BOLAÑO, *DISTANT STAR***

WEEK THREE (1/30 – 2/1)

**ROBERTO BOLAÑO, *DISTANT STAR***

WEEK FOUR (2/6 – 2/8)

**ROBERTO BOLAÑO, *BY NIGHT IN CHILE***

WEEK FIVE (2/13 – 2/15)

**ROBERTO BOLAÑO, *BY NIGHT IN CHILE***

WEEK SIX (2/20 – 2/22)

**NONA FERNANDEZ, *THE TWILIGHT ZONE***

WEEK SEVEN (2/27 – 2/29)

**NONA FERNANDEZ, *THE TWILIGHT ZONE***

WEEK EIGHT (3/5 – 3/7)

***CHAPTER TWO:***

***SPOTLIGHT: POLEMIC, MEMORY, HISTORY, & LITERATURE AS ACTION!***

**DASA DRNDIC, *BELLADONNA***

\*\*\*\*\*WEEK NINE SPRING RECESS March 10<sup>th</sup> through March 17<sup>th</sup>\*\*\*\*\*

**ROUGH DRAFT DUE OF MIDTERM ESSAY IN CLASS 3/7; FINAL DRAFT DUE IN CLASS 3/28**

WEEK TEN (3/19 – 3/21)

**DASA DRNDIC, *BELLADONNA***

WEEK ELEVEN (3/26 – 3/28)

**DASA DRNDIC, BELLADONNA**

WEEK TWELVE (4/2 – 4/4)

***CHAPTER THREE:***

***SPOTLIGHT: THE PERSONAL AS POLITICAL AS ANTI-INSTITUTIONAL!***

**DAVID WOJNAROWICZ, CLOSE TO THE KNIVES**

WEEK THIRTEEN (4/9 – 4/11)

**DAVID WOJNAROWICZ, CLOSE TO THE KNIVES**

WEEK FOURTEEN (4/16 – 4/18)

**KATHY ACKER, *EMPIRE OF THE SENSELESS***

WEEK FIFTEEN (4/23 – 4/25)

**KATHY ACKER, *EMPIRE OF THE SENSELESS***

**FINAL DISCUSSION, ULTIMATE RECKONINGS, TERMINAL TESTIMONIALS**

**(4/25: LAST DAY OF CLASS)**

**FINAL PROJECT DUE: Thursday 5/2by 5pm**