Fictional Worlds: Travel, Literature, Culture
English 357, Fall 1998

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Office Hours: MW 1-3, F9-11, and by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Agha Shahid Ali, The Half-Inch Himalayas
Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities
Shusaku Endo, Silence
E. M. Forster, Passage to India
Charles Johnson, Middle Passage
Hanif Kureishi, My Beautiful Laundrette
Paule Marshall, Praisesong for the Widow
Herman Melville, Benito Cereno
Robert Louis Stevenson, The Beach of Falesa
Robert Louis Stevenson, Treasure Island
Albert Wendt, Black Rainbow

PROPOSED SCHEDULE:
Aug. 31 Introduction: Travel Pieces
Sep. 2 Calvino, Invisible Cities
7 Labour Day, No Classes
9 Calvino, Invisible Cities
14 Stevenson, Treasure Island
16 Stevenson, Beach of Falesa
21 Wendt, Black Rainbow
23 Wendt, Black Rainbow
28 Melville, Benito Cereno
30 Melville, Benito Cereno
Oct. 5 Amistad
7 Johnson, Middle Passage
12 Johnson, Middle Passage
14 Marshall, Praisesong for the Widow
19 Marshall, Praisesong for the Widow
21 Endo, Silence
26 Endo, Silence
28 Endo, Silence
Nov. 2 Forster, Passage to India
4 Forster, Passage to India
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
This seminar traces the journeys depicted by writers hailing from various ports of call, primarily in the English-speaking world. We will focus on the way the experience and concept of travel is portrayed, on writers' conceptions of culture (their own and others), and on the way literature itself can create forms of travel and culture. We will examine three particular modes of literary travel: the fantastic journey, enforced travel, and voyages of (self-)discovery. These investigations will require you to develop detailed analyses of the ways writers employ form and structure to create a kind of textual travel.

A seminar is based upon participants' contributions. Teams of two will be responsible for leading discussion for three of our regularly scheduled class meetings. On those days, you will provide the class with a brief written explanation of your goals and any central points and information that help illuminate the book. After you have completed your presentations, you will submit to me a typed one-page assessment of your seminar sessions. You are expected to read and think about the material before each class, and to present your ideas in class discussions, twice weekly e-mail discussions on the seminar list-serve, a term paper abstract and a 15-page term paper (standard fonts and one-inch margins on papers). I will arrange for a showing of the films, or you may view them on your own before we discuss them in class.

You are required to meet with me during the week prior to your presentations. Additionally, I am available for individual writing conferences (do not wait until the days before the abstract or paper is due). An in-class writing workshop will allow you to benefit from others' suggestions as well. Frequent unannounced quizzes on the readings, as well as a mid-semester exam and a final exam, will help ensure that you keep up and allow you to make connections between the readings. I am happy to talk with you at any point about the readings or about your writing. If you cannot make my office hours I would be glad to arrange another appointment.

Attendance and participation are essential and will affect your grade, which will be figured as follows:

Paper and abstract 30%
Seminar presentations 15%
Weekly contributions to e-mail discussion 10%
Class discussion, attendance, unannounced reading quizzes 25%
Mid-semester and Final Exams 20%

You are allowed two excused absences and you are responsible for any material covered or assigned during your absence. Your final grade will be dropped as much as a whole letter grade for each absence over two. Do not be late to class. The paper and abstract are due on or before the date indicated, and must be turned in at the beginning of the class. Late work will be penalized (one-third of a grade for each day late, for example, from a B to a B-). To avoid plagiarism, all quotations and paraphrased ideas from other sources must be cited, in accordance with the Honor Code. Any violation of the Honor Code will result in a failing grade. If you have any questions, please see me.