

San Jose State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
English 208-Comparative Literature:
Magical Realism Around the Globe
Spring 2014

Instructor:	Persis Karim
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Office Hours:	Thurs. 3-3:45 pm & by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Thursday, 4-6:45 pm
Classroom:	BBC 002

Course Description

In this graduate seminar in comparative literature, we will examine notions of reality and its artistic representation, asking what the role of the apparently magical is within our apprehensions of literary and cinematic reality. Is it possible that creative fiction *must* rely upon the magical in order to present “the real” or “the truth”? What are the possible artistic advantages of magical or fantastical representation, and what are the possible sociopolitical implications of these literary modes? Many of our readings will be examples of what has come to be termed “magical realism,” literature that does not quite fit traditional definitions of either realism or fantasy. Although some of the texts we read will come from the Spanish American tradition with which magical realism is perhaps most often associated, we will also explore other examples of magical realism and fantastical fiction, allowing us to develop a broader sense of the philosophical, political, ideological, and literary implications of the texts. We will also read some theoretical essays that explore the history of this unique genre. And we will explore the ways that magical realism has been especially important in histories of repression, trauma, and political turmoil around the globe.

This course is designed as an intensive workshop in reading-writing and understand fiction that employs elements of magical realism. In addition to studying selected novels/films over the course of the semester, we will also propose and complete a significant writing project (literary criticism OR creative writing) that will be workshopped and revised over the course of the semester.

Student Learning Objectives

MA PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.
3. Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints.
5. Students will demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.
6. Students preparing for teaching careers will receive the appropriate instruction.
7. Students will be prepared for further graduate study.

Course Student Learning Objectives

- Explore global themes as expressed in “magical realism” in and through literature/film
- Develop a comparative global approach to the reading, writing, interpretation, and evaluation of literary texts/films.
- Gain greater insight into various social, political, and cultural issues of global importance through the study of global literature/film.
- Learn *from* not just about different cultures/literatures
- Understand key concepts and terms in the study of magical realism and other global literary movements and postcolonial studies and become familiar with significant debates that constitute these two intersecting fields.

Required Texts

Handouts/Articles about magical realism and excerpts from *A Thousand and One Nights* (emailed by Persis Karim)
One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Cities of Salt by Abdelrahman Munif
Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie
Beloved by Toni Morrison

Films

Midnight's Children
Pan's Labyrinth

Classroom Protocol

Attendance & Participation: Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions are extremely important. Please arrive on time and stay for the entire class.

Before you enter our classroom, please turn off your mobile phone, iPod and other electronic devices that might distract you from attending to your work. You are responsible for all materials assigned, presented and discussed. You are encouraged to take notes in class, but you should have studied the materials before class begins. Poor attendance/participation will have negative effects on your final grade. Since most classes will be based on group discussions, presentations and workshops it is crucial for you to keep up with the readings and take an active as well as thoughtful role in all classroom activities. Your questions, comments, insights, and interpretations are valuable no matter how outlandish they may seem. So do speak up!

Conferencing: I encourage you to visit me in my office whenever you need to discuss something, whether it is an assignment or any other difficulty you may be having with the structure and format of the class. I am completely open to suggestions because the only way I can fix things is if I know what is wrong.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. [Information on add/drops are available at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html](http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html) . [Information about late drop is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/](http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/) . Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Assignments and Grading Policy Assignments:

1. **Oral Presentations:** You will make two short oral presentations on two different novels of your choice from our reading list. In consultation with other members working on the same novel, you will select a topic for your presentation (from a list of suggested topics). The lead member in each group will be responsible for ensuring proper coverage and distribution of topics. As part of the presentation, you will prepare a 1-2 page handout/PowerPoint highlighting the main ideas. You may elaborate on these ideas in your oral presentation. You will submit a hard copy of your handout/PPT at the beginning of class. (PLO 3)
2. **Project Proposal:** You will write up a short 2-3 page proposal for a significant writing project you wish to pursue in the class. This could be a work of literary criticism OR a work of creative writing (fiction as well as non-fiction). You may choose from a list of suggested topics/ideas or you may come up with your own. In addition to a brief description, you must provide a list of 8-10 sources and outline a plan/schedule for pursuing and completing the project. You will write your proposal in two stages: a rough draft and a revised final version. **Deadline for submitting proposals: Tuesday of weeks 4 & 5.** (PLO 2, 7); you will be partnered with others working in the same genre who can give you feedback. I will give you feedback also.
3. **Weekly Writing:** Following your proposed plan, you will write a minimum of 500 words each week, from weeks 3-12 (total 10 weeks). **Deadline for submitting Weekly Writing: Tuesday 3 pm (you will email your group).** You must take seriously this opportunity to actively give and get feedback. I will

- read and comment on these submissions but as long as you write the minimum required, you will get the points allotted for this assignment. (PLO 4)
4. **Writing Workshops:** We will have three formally scheduled workshops in which you will participate by submitting your work for critique and by critiquing the work of others.
 5. **Your submission:** Your workshop submission must be a substantive, self-contained piece of literary criticism or a complete story. If your workshop submission is an excerpt of a longer work, please include a brief (1-page) synopsis that contextualizes the selection and focuses readers on particular aspects on which you'd like feedback. Deadline for submitting workshop material **12 pm on the Tuesday** before your scheduled workshop date. If you fail to mail it by 12 noon on Tuesday, you forfeit your workshop experience and lose all points for this assignment.

Your critique: Please bring written critiques of each of the submissions of the others on a separate sheet of paper. You will share these in class during the workshop. All critiques will be collected and given to the writer for revision purposes.

Additional guidelines/protocols for submission, critique, & revision will be clarified in class. You are responsible for bringing electronic or hard copies of all materials being workshopped in class.

Formal workshops for Literary Criticism Projects: Weeks 8, 12, 15
 Formal workshops for Creative Writing Projects: Weeks 9, 13, 15
 (PLO 3, 4)

6. **Seminar Project:** The final seminar project will be either a researched literary criticism article or a complete piece of fiction/non-fiction that has been carved out of the weekly writings, workshops and revisions. (4000-5000 words minimum). Along with the final project you will submit a 500 word report that identifies and explains the specific revisions you made to the 3 workshop submissions and how you incorporated these into the final project. Submit hard copy in class on 5/8/13. (SLO 2, 3).

Grading:

Two Oral presentations with handout	300 points (150 x 2)
Project Proposal	100 points
Weekly Writings	150 (15x10)
Writing Workshops	225 (25+25+25=75 x 3)
Seminar Project	225
TOTAL POINTS	1000

Note: In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the SJSU academic standards of assessment.

University Policies

Academic integrity

Students should know that the University's [Academic Integrity Policy is available at \[http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf\]\(http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf\)](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for [Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at \[http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html\]\(http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html\)](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html). Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

Learning Assistance Resource Center

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. [The LARC website is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/.](http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/)

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. [The Writing Center website is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/.](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/)

Peer Mentor Center

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering “roadside assistance” to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop –in basis, no reservation required. The Peer Mentor Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/> .

English 208 Comparative Literature: Magical Realism Around the Globe Spring 2014

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice; notice will be made available via email or in person.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/23	Introduction to course Read: handouts on Magical Realism and excerpts from <i>A Thousand and One Nights</i> (emailed from
2	1/30	Presentation and Discussion: <i>A Thousand and One Nights</i> and essays Read: <i>Hundred Years of Solitude</i> (up to pp. 206-chapter
3	2/6	Discussion and Presentations: <i>Hundred Years of Solitude</i> Read: Complete <i>Hundred Years of Solitude</i> Weekly Writing starts
4	2/13	Finish discussion of <i>Hundred Years of Solitude</i> Proposal Draft Due Read: <i>Midnight's Children</i>
5	2/20	Discussion and Presentation: <i>Midnight's Children</i> Finish <i>Midnight's Children</i> ; read essays emailed from Persis Proposal Due Read: <i>Snow</i>
6	2/27	Guest Lecture with Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy; discussion of <i>Midnight's Children</i> by Salman Rushdie Read: <i>Snow</i> by Orhan Pamuk (finish it) NOTE: Guest Lecture on March 4 at King Library 7 pm with Pamuk scholar, Burcu Karahan (Stanford University)
7	3/6	Discussion of <i>Snow</i> and Presentations Film screening of "Midnight's Children" Read: <i>Cities of Salt</i> , up to Chapter 58

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
8	3/13	Discussion and Presentation: <i>Snow</i> and <i>Cities of Salt</i> Lit Crit Workshop #1 Read: Finish <i>Cities of Salt</i>
9	3/20	Final Discussion and Presentation: <i>Cities of Salt</i> Creative Writing Workshop #1
10	3/27	SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS
11	4/3	Presentations and Discussion: <i>Beloved</i>
12	4/10	Presentations and Discussion: <i>Beloved</i> Lit Crit Workshop #2
13	4/17	Final Discussion and Presentation: <i>Beloved</i> Creative Writing Workshop #2
14	4/24	Film screening of “Pan’s Labyrinth”
15	5/1	Discussion of film and final discussion Workshop #3 for everyone
16	5/8	Readings from Seminar Project