

Do you want to Read the World?



Can you read this image? Is this a map of the world?

If you're reading this page, you already know how to read. Or do you? In this course, you'll learn how complicated the answer to that question can be. As you go about your day, you're actually reading all the time—faces, pictures, buildings, people, and much more. When you “read the world,” how do you make and share meanings with other readers? These questions are fundamental to human existence—and also lots of fun to think about!

By the end of this course, you'll have sampled a wide range of theories that explain reading, interpretation, and communication. You'll have sampled literature and art from around the world, exploring the powers and limits of comparison. By reading across objects, languages, cultures, people, places, histories, and creative forms (from poetry to film), you'll gain new insights into *how the world really works*. Yes, reading literature can really teach you that.

[If you need to sign the waitlist, click here!](#)

Key Facts

- This course is designed for first-year students, but all are welcome and will find the course challenging
- Enrollment is capped at 50 students
- Class meets MWF at 2-hour, with regular use of x-hour on Thursdays
- Distributive: LIT or INT (you choose)
- World Culture: CI
- Eligible for NRO (non-recording option): you DO need a recorded grade for distrib credit
- All materials will be posted on Canvas. You won't have any expenses for books or other materials, although if you typically print your readings, you might need to budget for extra GreenPrint costs.
- This course is supported by undergraduate Learning Fellows and graduate Teaching Assistants. It's a "large class with a small class feel." You won't get lost in the crowd!
- This course involves lots of collaborative work in pairs, trios, and larger teams because reading is a social activity, even when you're reading silently by yourself.
- The rhythm of this course is demanding and the assessments are cumulative, but the assignments are short and many are credit/no credit. You will succeed if you pay attention!

Assignment Summary

- 8 Journals, credit/no credit—20%
- 6 Projects, credit/no credit—20%
- 4 Papers (2 pages) — 35%
- 1 Team Reading — 10%
- 1 Final Exam — 15%

Assignment Rhythm

- Thursdays = Team/project meetings during X-hour
 - = Journals due by 11:59pm
- Fridays = Papers due every other week, by 11:59pm
- Sundays = Journal Responses / Projects due by 11:59pm

Week by Week Fall 2024; subject to change

Week 1, Hello, World

- Mon Sep 16, Introduction
 - What in the World is Reading?
- Wed Sep 18, Reading,
 - Stanley Fish, "How to Recognize a Poem When You See One" (1980)
 - Dan Porat, "Who Fired First? Students' Construction of Meaning From One Textbook Account of the Israeli–Arab Conflict" (2006)
- Thurs Sep 19
 - X-hour- How to Read the Syllabus

- Fri Sep 20, Worlds
 - Jorge Luis Borges, "The Aleph" (1945) (English)
 - Jorge Luis Borges, "El Aleph" (1945) (Spanish) (optional)

Project 1: "What's your Text?"

Week 2, Things

- Mon Sep 23, Ordinary
 - David Levy, "Meditation on a Receipt" (2001)
 - Susan Pearce, "Collecting Reconsidered" (1994)
- Wed Sep 25, Extraordinary,
 - Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried" (1990)
 - Tiya Miles, "All That She Carried" (2021)
 - Week 2 Journal
- Thurs Sep 26,
 - X-hour- Get to know your Section Team
- Fri Sep 27, Dialogue with a Reader
 - Guest Reader TBD
 - Paper 1

Project 2: "What do your Things Means?"

Week 3, Languages

- Mon Sep 30, Multilingualism
 - Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Resistance to Linguistic Feudalism and Darwinism" (2009)
 - Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987/2021)
 - Michael Erard, "The Small Island Where 500 People Speak 9 Different Languages" (2018)
- Wed Oct 2, Translation
 - Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator (1923/1977)
 - Don Mee Choi, "Translation is a Mode=Translation is an Anti-neocolonial Mode" (2016)
 - Week 3 Journal
- Thurs Oct 3,
 - X-hour for Group Project prep
- Fri Oct 4, Transmedia
 - "Garota de Ipanema / The Girl from Ipanema"
 - João Gilberto, Astrud Gilberto, and Stan Getz (1963) (Brazilian Portuguese/English)
 - Olympics Opening Ceremony, Gisele Bündchen (Rio 2016)
 - Haruki Murakami, "The Girl from Ipanema 1963/1982" (English)
 - Haruki Murakami, "The Girl from Ipanema 1963/1982" (Japanese) (optional)

Project 3: "Can you Translate That?"

Week 4, People

- Mon Oct 7, Imagination,
 - Ernst Goffman, "Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1959)
 - Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" (1983)
 - Bryce Huffman, Same Same Different podcast, "Read the Room" (2019)

- Wed Oct 9, Representation,
 - Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation), "Emergence, Politics, and Marketplace of Native American DNA" (2014)
 - Joseph Dumit and Marianne de Laet, "Curves to Bodies: The Material Life of Graphs" (2014)
 - Marisa Parham, "break.dance." (2019)
 - Week 4 Journal
- Thurs Oct 10,
 - X-hour for Reading Team
- Fri Oct 11, Flashback Friday
 - Paper 2

Week 5, Cultures

- Mon Oct 14, In Fiction,
 - Jorge Luis Borges, "The Ethnographer" (1969)
 - Nnedi Okorafor, "Kabu Kabu" (2013)
- Wed Oct 16, In Practice,
 - Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush" (1966)
 - Alexa Alice Joubin, "Chinese Shakespeare" (2009)
 - Week 5 Journal
- Thurs Oct 17,
 - X-hour for Group Project prep
- Fri Oct 18, Dialogue with a Reader
 - Guest Reader TBD

Project 4: "What Difference does Culture Make?"

Week 6, Time

- Mon Oct 21, Memory and History
 - Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Power in the Story" (1995/2015)
 - Marcus Bull, Thinking Medieval: An Introduction to the Study of the Middle Ages (2005)
- Wed Oct 23, Who Owns the Past?
 - "How Medievalists Read the World" (2019)
 - Week 6 Journal
- Thurs Oct 24
 - X-hour for project
- Fri Oct 25
 - Guest Reader TBD
 - Paper 3

Week 7, Places/Spaces

- Mon Oct 28, Everyday Space, In Imagination
 - Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" (1967/1984)
 - Michel de Certeau, "Spatial Stories" (1974/1984)
- Wed Oct 30, Imaginary Spaces, In Practice
 - Journey (2012)
 - Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" (1981/1994)
 - Week 7 Journal

- Thurs Oct 31,
 - X-hour for Reading Team
- Fri Nov 1, Dialogue with a Reader
 - Guest Reader TBD

Project 5: "What's the Meaning of Your Movements?"

Week 8, The World Reads You

- Mon Nov 4, The Gaze and the Code
 - Michel Foucault, "Panopticism" (1975/1979)
 - Autumn Caines, "The Zoom Gaze" (2020)
 - "Coded Bias" (2020), dir. Shalini Kantayya
- Wed Nov 6, Virtual Worlds
 - "The Matrix" (1999), dir. Lilly and Lana Wachowski
 - Week 8 Journal
- Thurs Nov 7,
 - X-hour with Reading Team
- Fri Nov 8, Dialogue with a Reader
 - Guest Reader TBD
 - Paper 4

Project 6: "Can I Get a Break from Reading??"

Week 9, Fields of knowledge

- Mon Nov 11, Education and the Liberal Arts
 - Martianus Capella, "Marriage of Philology and Mercury" (5th century)
 - Jerome Kagan, "The Three Cultures" (2009)
 - Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon, "Decolonization of Knowledge, Epistemicide, Participatory Research and Higher Education" (2017)
- Wed Nov 13, Scientists Read the World
 - Marcelo Gleiser, "Creation Myths" (1997)
 - Robin Kimmerer (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), "Hearing the Trees" (2021)
 - Week 9 Journal
- Thurs Nov 14,
 - X-hour with Reading Team / Presentation Prep
- Fri Nov 15, Human Nature: The Question and the Answer
 - Marjorie Garber, "Who Owns Human Nature" (2003)

Week 10, Conclusions,

- Mon Nov 18, You, Reading!,
 - "Read Something, Together," Reading Team Presentations
- Sun, Nov 24, 8am-11am
 - Final Exam, "How will you Read the World?"