

Literature and Medicine

Syllabus, 2014-2015

Session I

9/16/14 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Religious Experience

Arundhati Roy *The God Of Small Things*

We open the 2014 season of Literature and Medicine with a tested classic and an echo of the end of 2013 (*The Lowland*). This 1997 Man Booker Prize winner is the debut and only novel by Arundhati Roy. Set in the period of 1960s to contemporary Karala, *The God of Small Things* explores the concepts of love and family and of what happens to them when they are thrown into the whirlwind of the social and political climates of India.

Session II

10/21/14 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Metallic Experience

Paul Harding *Tinkers*

With one session under our belt, we dive back into our meditations on time and memory with *Tinkers*, a debut novel by Paul Harding and winner of the 2010 Pulitzer Prize. Beautifully self-described as a work addressing “the legacy of consciousness and the porousness of identity from one generation to the next,” *Tinkers* will serve as a reminder (get it? reminder) of Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending*.

Session III

11/25/14 SW107 7:30-9pm

An Eastern Flying Bird Experience

Haruki Murakami *Norwegian Wood*

If already discussing memory, is there a better topic to remember than college and those first relationships?

We will, indeed, discuss this novel against The Beatles.

*She asked me to stay and she told me to sit anywhere
So I looked around and I noticed there wasn't a chair*

Session IV

1/6/15 SW107 7:30-9pm

An Illuminating Experience
Eleanor Catton *The Luminaries*

Yes, *The Luminaries* did win the Man Booker Prize in 2013; yes, Catton is the youngest author to this award; yes, the book is 800 pages long.

With 6 weeks and a winter break between this session and *Tinkers*, it's now or never. Although 800 pages that aren't Robbins of Campbells are a heavy load on a med students' desk, this story magically real story of journey and mystery. So excited.

Session V

2/10/15 SW107 7:30-9pm

A Blissful Experience
Yasmina Reza *Happy are the Happy*

Though known for her play *God of Carnage*, Yasmina Reza's novel *Happy are the Happy* is, like *Carnage*, a study of everyday life. As Reza grants us access into the inner working of a family, reminding us that while all families might be happy in the same way, unhappy families are given the uniqueness of their unhappiness.

We will read Reza against Dane Cook's "The Nothing Fight." Cheese? Jelly?

Session VI

3/24/15 SW107 7:30-9pm

B-sides, the Edition
Karen Joy Fowler *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*

Below is an excerpt chosen by Fowler to represent her book. Wheels within wheels:

As part of leaving Bloomington for college and my brand new start, I'd made a careful decision to never ever tell anyone about my sister, Fern. Back in those college days I never spoke of her and seldom thought of her. If anyone asked about my family, I admitted to two parents, still married, and one brother, older, who traveled a lot. Not mentioning Fern was first a decision, and later a habit, hard and painful even now to break. Even now, way off in 2012, I can't abide someone else bringing her up. I have to ease into it. I have to choose my moment.

Though I was only five when she disappeared from my life, I do remember her. I remember her sharply — her smell and touch, scattered images of her face, her ears, her chin, her eyes. Her arms, her feet, her fingers. But I don't remember her fully, not the way Lowell does.

Lowell is my brother's real name.

Brace Yourselves.

Session VII

4/21/15 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Pending Edition

Hanya Yanagihara *The People in the Trees* vs Philipp Meyer *The Son*

For our last and quite democratic session, we will find ourselves at a fork: on one hand is Yanagihara's debut novel story of an expedition to find a mythical Micronesian tribe, a magical turtle, and the inevitable consequences of neo-colonialism; on the other is Philipp Meyer's second inquiry into the American underbelly. *The Son*, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, explores three generations of a mid 1800s Texas family and is as much a history of the American as it is a history of Texas.

Parting is such sweet sorrow.