

## Travel Literature

Professor: Jason Pearl, Ph.D.

Course #: LIT 3306

Meetings: \_\_\_\_\_

Office hours: \_\_\_\_\_ (by appointment)

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### Description:

This course will survey the literature of travel in the eighteenth century, focusing on encounters with and representations of cultural difference. The semester will be split into four units. In unit one, "Travel and Transculturation," we will read Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721) and consider the ways travelers are both agents and objects of change. "Travel, Satire, and Utopia," unit two, will put Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) along with questions of truthfulness and notions of progress and perfection. In unit three, "Travel, Gender, and the Body," we will read Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1716) and discuss the relative restrictions and liberties of Christian and Islamic women in early modernity. Unit four, "Travel, Race, and Colonialism," will center on Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789) and reflect on the implications of free and forced journeys. Requirements include class participation and four written assignments that involve active, creative, and collaborative learning. This is a discipline-specific Global Learning course that counts toward your FIU Global Learning graduation requirement.

### Learning Outcomes and Objectives:

- Read and discuss fictional and non-fictional literature by travelers to and from around the globe.
- Show your understanding of theories that explain representations of different cultures.
- Analyze texts and create original arguments with the help of literary and historical scholarship.

### Global Learning Outcomes and Objectives:

- You will gain a sense of global awareness by reading and interpreting narratives of travel and identifying and explaining conventions of description and judgment.
- You will acquire a more fully global perspective by comparing and contrasting the accounts of travelers from various locations writing about various destinations.
- You will demonstrate global engagement by reflecting on and writing about your own travels.

### Required Texts:

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*. Ed. Werner Sollers. New York: Norton, 2001.

Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley. *Turkish Embassy Letters*. Ed. Teresa Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2013.

Montesquieu. *Persian Letters*. Trans. Margaret Mauldon. Ed. Andrew Kahn. New York: Oxford, 2008.

Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. Ed. Albert J. Rivero. New York: Norton, 1997.

### Course Guidelines:

1. Attendance and Participation (20%): Attendance is mandatory because in-class lectures and discussions will contextualize the readings and allow us to expand our understanding of them. Moreover, the classroom is a space where knowledge is produced, not just conveyed from professor to student. Your participation is vital to this process. If you miss a class, please let me know, and try to get notes from one of your peers. Everyone should arrive prepared to discuss the assigned reading. I understand some people do not like speaking in class, which is why we will also do small group work. I ask that you bring the assigned reading—the physical text, itself—and put away cell phones and computers, because studies show reading actual books and taking notes by hand facilitate greater intellectual engagement.
2. Short Response Paper (20%): In two pages, respond to any part of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. Think of this exercise as an extension of classroom discussion, or better yet think of it as a chance to say something you have not yet had the opportunity to share with me and your classmates. What do you find interesting about *Persian Letters*? And why? Be specific. Do not worry about the formal requirements for an essay. More important are the ideas you present. Completing the assignment will give you full credit. Submit your paper via Canvas.
3. Book Review (20%): For this assignment, you will write a commentary on Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. It should appear in an online forum where it is visible to the general public, for instance as a user review on *Amazon* or a review on *goodreads* or perhaps as a post on social media or as a video on YouTube. Write in your own voice. Submit a two-page write-up, on Canvas, that includes the text of your commentary, a link to it, and an explanation of how you tailored your ideas to the site where it appears. Completing this assignment will earn you at least a C. For a B or A, you must make insightful comments about the novel. Be creative!
4. Imitation (20%): In two pages, you will write an imitation of Montagu's *Persian Letters* that is about not Turkey but Miami. Try transpose some of the specific attitudes, rhetorical structures, and habits of thought, but consider: what would she have to say about this city in this time? What would impress her? Repel her? What would confuse her? How would she describe some of Miami's distinctive features? Submit your paper on Canvas. Completing this assignment will earn you at least a C. B papers will include insightful descriptions. A papers will incorporate subtle details of Montagu's writing style.
5. Personal Narrative (20%): In two pages, write your own travel narrative. It can be about any place at all—except Miami. Consider what you have learned in this course about the impossibility of neutrality, about the ways descriptions betray and reveal describers. Try, moreover, to model a kind of attitude that you think is important for understanding and respecting the differences of other people and places. Submit this assignment on Canvas. Be prepared, moreover, to read and discuss your narrative with peers. Completing this assignment will earn you at least a C. For a B or A, make sure it is obvious how this class has informed your narrative, and reflect philosophically on what your account says about not just the place you visited but you yourself.

6. Oral Presentation (extra credit): For this optional assignment, you will give a five-minute oral presentation to the rest of the class. The presentation will focus on a short passage of your choosing from that day's assigned reading. First, read the passage to us out loud. Next, interpret it: explain the passage's meaning, or meanings. Finally, tell us its significance within the text as a whole. See me if you would like to volunteer. Speaking for five minutes will earn you full credit: a 1/3 grade increase on one of your written assignments.
7. Learning Disabilities: Your ability to engage and participate fully in this course is important to me. If you need any special accommodations—a note-taker, extra time for exams, anything else—contact me at the beginning of the semester, or have the Disability Resource Center do so, and we will make the appropriate arrangements.
8. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the representation of the work of another as if it were your own. This includes using language, expressions, or ideas taken from another source, including Internet sources. If you plagiarize, you will be penalized. You will also break my heart.

### Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction

Weeks 2-4: "Travel and Transculturation"

This section will introduce you to some of the major themes of the course. It will foster a **global awareness** of the role of travel narratives in the history of intercultural relations.

Read: Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*

Write: Short Response Paper

Weeks 5-7: "Travel, Satire, and Utopia"

This section will present to you key terms and concepts of utopian writing. It will elucidate the position of this genre in the history of world geography.

Read: Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*

Write: Book Review

Weeks 8-10: "Travel, Gender, and the Body"

This section will focus on some of the connections between travel and gender. It will promote a **global perspective** that can include multiple identity categories.

Read: Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*

Write: Imitation

Weeks 11-13: "Travel, Race, and Colonialism"

This section will add race and racial justice to the issues considered in the last section. The goal will be to turn our readings and writings into concrete practices of **global engagement**.

Read: Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*

Write: Personal Narrative