

History and the Novel

KHC RS 103

Spring 2014

Mondays and Wednesdays

9:30am-11:00am

KHC 107

Professor Jeffrey Mehlman

Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 2:00-3:30

Office location: 718 Commonwealth Avenue; Office 202B

Course Description

A series of close readings of major modern works of fiction. Focus will be on such topics as the novel's effort to speak the truth of history, its status as unintended historical symptom, its occasional conflictual relation with history, its rivalry with music in the effort to distill an essence of time, and the notion of literary history itself. Readings will include J.-L. Borges' *Ficciones*, Joseph Roth's *Radetzky March*, Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*, Anthony Burgess' *A Napoleon Symphony*, Henry James' *The Ambassadors*, Cynthia Ozick's *Foreign Bodies*.

Course Objectives

The course is intended to impart to students:

1. A keen sense of the achievement embodied in a series of major twentieth-century works of fiction.
2. Competence in the art of literary criticism
3. A command of the various paradoxes underlying fiction's pretense to speak the truth of history
4. An awareness of the extent to which the novel in the twentieth century has been able to make good on its claim to constitute a "supreme intellectual synthesis" (Kundera).

Required Texts

1. J.-L. Borges, *Ficciones*
2. Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March*
3. Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
4. Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer*
5. Anthony Burgess, *A Napoleon Symphony*

6. Henry James, *The Ambassadors*
7. Cynthia Ozick, *Foreign Bodies*

Attendance

Attendance in class is required.

Academic Dishonesty

All KHC students are required to adhere to both the KHC Academic Conduct Code and the University Academic Conduct Code. The Academic Conduct Code can be found online at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Grading

Course requirements will include two short papers, a midterm, a final essay, and a final exam.

- 2 short papers (20%)
- 1 midterm exam (25%)
- 1 final paper (30%)
- 1 final exam (25%)

Course Outline & Readings

Week I: Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*

Week II: Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March*

Week III: Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March* (continued)

Week IV: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

Week IV: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (continued)

Week VI: Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer*

MIDTERM EXAM

Week VII: Anthony Burgess, *A Napoleon Symphony*

Week VIII: Anthony Burgess, *A Napoleon Symphony* (continued)

Week IX: Henry James, *The Ambassadors*

Week X: Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (continued)

Week XI: Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (conclusion)

Week XII, Cynthia Ozick, *Foreign Bodies*

Week XIII, Cynthia Ozick, *Foreign Bodies* (continued)

Week XIV: Concluding Reflections