

CHINESE LITERATURE

Course Description

This course covers Chinese literature. Students will analyze primary texts covering the genres of poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction, and will discuss them from different critical stances. They will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the works by responding to questions focusing on the works, movements, authors, themes, and motifs. In addition, they will discuss the historical, social, cultural, or biographical contexts of the works' production. This course is intended for students who already possess a bachelor's and, ideally, a master's degree, and who would like to develop interdisciplinary perspectives that integrate with their prior knowledge and experience.

About the Professor

Dr. Susan Smith Nash has developed numerous literature courses in the humanities, including world literature, American literature, and film. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma, and is widely published in the areas of literature, e-learning, and discourse. In addition, she has served as editor for journals focusing on literature and literary criticism.

Study Guide

Instructions for the Study Guide: Please use the questions to develop a deeper understanding of the text and to review the concepts. As you read, consider the questions. Keeping careful notes or a journal will help you prepare to write the essays at the end of each section as well as the final essay. Your required and supplemental readings can be found in the "Readings" file.

Instructions for Essays: Please write a 1,250 – 1,500 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Instructions for Final Essay: Please write a 5,000 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Required Texts

Bedford Anthology of World Literature, Books 1-6. Boston: Bedford-St. Martins, 2004.

UNIT/ WEEKS	AUTHOR / WORK	INTRODUCTION
I		Ancient Literature
1-3		
Overview	The Ancient Way	
Authors	Anonymous	Although it is impossible to date precisely the individual poems, it is thought that five of them came from the Shang dynasty, while the majority originated with the Zhou dynasty, the longest and were collected between 1000 and 600 BCE. Certain names and events with the invasions of the Hsien-yun tribes help to date several poems at c. 800 BCE, but the themes of love and feasting in other verses are too general to associate with any particular period. (p. 1573)
Poetry	The Book of Songs	Shijing (The Book of Songs) is the earliest collection of Chinese poems including 305 poems of the Zhou Dynasty (1122-256 B.C.). It was said that the poems in Shijing could all be sung as songs. According to the tunes they were sung by, the poems were divided into three categories, namely, Feng (Ballads), Ya (Festal Odes), and Song (Sacrificial Songs). Feng consists of 160 poems, including those of 15 countries and areas. They are: Zhounan (Zhou and the south), Shaonan, Bei, Yong, Wei (ĪÀ), Wang, Zheng, Qi, Wei (Ī°), Tang, Qin, Chen, Gui, Cao and Bin. Most of the poems in Feng are folk songs from along the Yellow River. Only a few of them are works of the nobles. Ya consists of 105 poems which are divided into Xiaoya (The Minor Festal Odes) and Daya (The Major Festal Odes). The poems in Ya are basically written by the nobles.
	Literary Terms	shih ching
	Comparative Literature: Nature imagery	Egyptian Love Poems Egyptian Love Poems and the Chinese <i>Book of Songs</i> share the technique of using nature to express feelings and to describe a loved one. What roles does nature imagery play in the courtship poems? How do they heighten a sense of passion?
	Comparative Literature: The role of patriarchs	<i>Book of Songs</i> Hebrew Scriptures and the <i>Book of Songs</i> have a strong sense of patriarchy in common. In <i>The Book of Songs</i> , patriarchs have specific cultural roles. They differ from the patriarchs in Hebrew scriptures who interpret dreams, bring wisdom texts from the mountain top, and utter jeremiads. How are Chinese patriarchs in the <i>Book of Songs</i> different?
	Comparative Literature: Transcendence / Spirituality through sensuality	Rumi (poetry) Rumi's lyric poetry is highly emotive. Imagery is used to reinforce the idea of love. For Rumi, there is also a spiritual component, and they explore ways to experience transcendence. The <i>Book of Songs</i> explores ways of connecting with the spirit world as well. How does it differ from Rumi?
	Theme: Nature	Discuss the way that nature and passion enmesh in the songs. Please identify one poem that uses nature to illustrate deep feelings, and explain how the language brings the intensity to the forefront.
	Theme: Love	How do individuals describe themselves, their feelings, and the way they approach love? Select three poems and discuss how they deal with the theme of love.
Author	Confucius	The Gentleman Thinker as Founder of Culture Chinese philosopher, teacher of ethics) Chinese name Kong Zi or K'ung Fu-tse. 551-479 bc, Chinese philosopher and teacher of ethics (see Confucianism). His doctrines were compiled after his death under the title The

		Analects of Confucius. Discuss the political and historical highlights Confucius' life and times.
Essay	The Analects	The Lunyu (Analects), is the most revered sacred scripture in the Confucian tradition. The collection of writings was probably assembled by the followers of Confucius and Confucianism. Based primarily on the Master's sayings which were set out in both oral and written form, the collection (The Analects) captures the essence of the Confucian spirit.
	Comparative Literature: Law	Hebrew Scriptures. Hebrew Scriptures and the writings of Confucius are similar in that they concern the law. However, they take fundamentally different approaches to the ethical life. Moses and the Code of Hammurabi are very tightly organized. In contrast, Confucius goes about it in a different way. How?
	Comparative Literature: Ethics	Lao Tzu (Tao Te Ching) Confucius and Daoists take uniquely different paths to ethics. Confucius is prescriptive and clear. Lao Tzu's approach is one of passivity. Describe them.
	Comparative Literature: Cosmic order and justice	Bhagavad Gita The Bhagavad Gita focuses on dharma (duty) as the central focal point of the individual's responsibility in life. In contrast, Confucius looks at the dao. How are they similar? Different?
	Comparative Literature: Concept of the Deity	Hebrew Scriptures (Book of Job) In the Book of Job, God speaks directly to Job. He and Job have conversations, and Job complains about his sufferings. In contrast, in Confucius, deities are more abstract. Filial piety is what informs the individual's behavior, rather than a direct conversation with God.
	Idea : Gentleman	What characterizes "the gentleman," according to Confucius? How, for instance, does a gentleman look upon his own endeavors? In what light does he understand his relationship to others both above and below him? How does he regard his parents?
Author	Laozi (Lao Tzu)	Lao Tzu, which means "Old Master", was a philosopher of ancient China and is a central figure in Taoism (also spelled "Daoism").
Essay	Dao De Jing	Wu wei, which means "non-action" or "not acting", is a tenet of the Tao Te Ching. The concept of wu wei is very complex and reflected in the words' multiple meanings, even in English translation; it can mean "not doing anything", "not forcing", "not acting" in the theatrical sense, "creating nothingness", "acting spontaneously", and "flowing with the moment."
	Comparative Literature: Ethics	Bhagavad-Gita. Dharma forms the underpinning of the Bhagavad-Gita. Dharma refers to duty, which involves disciplining both mind and body, and aspiring to "right thought" and "right deed." In contrast, Daoism promotes the idea of "letting go" – a passive approach that seems antithetical to the dharma approach. Compare and contrast them.
	Comparative Literature: Good Life	Hebrew Scriptures (<i>Book of Job</i>) The Book of Job problematizes the notion of justice and righteousness vis a vis misfortune and suffering. In a nutshell, it asks, Why do bad things happen to good people? In contrast, one would never ask that question if one is following the dao. Why? Explain the differences between the views of life.
	Comparative Literature: Righteous Life	St Augustine. (<i>City of God</i> and <i>Confessions</i>) Existence, according to St. Augustine, is very different than that found in Daoism. St. Augustine is concerned with the "fallenness" of the human – the fact that all are born sinners (rather than born pure), due to original sin. What is man's relation to sin in Daoism?
	Theme: Religion Daoism	What are the main teachings of Lao Tzu? Describe his idea of "Letting Go of Self." What does the term "Tao Te Ching" mean? Why can the Tao not be spoken of? How can one "express the inexpressible"? Is action possible, given

		the notion of passivity?
Author	Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu)	Chinese Taoist philosopher who advocated a skeptical approach to knowledge and a willing acceptance of change as a means of unifying oneself with the Tao. As you read, consider the following questions: Who was Chuang Tzu? Discuss the values that his work embodies. Describe the nature of his questions / questioning.
Essay	Basic Writings	Chuang Tzu (399 - 295 B.C.) was an influential Chinese philosopher. His work consists of parables and conversations that reflect a Daoist view of the world. Chuang Tzu used Lao Tzu as a point of departure, and elaborated the writings and philosophy. Chuang Tzu focuses on nature, the role of the individual, and the order of the cosmos.
	Comparative Literature: Ethical Life	Confucius. <i>Analects</i> . Confucius and Chuang Tzu have seemingly opposite approaches to life and ethical behavior. Confucius stresses action. Zhuangzi stresses inaction. What do the two approaches reveal to you?
	Comparative Literature: Ethics	Hebrew Scriptures. <i>Book of Job</i> . One of the central paradoxes of the <i>Book of Job</i> is the fact that a good man is seemingly punished for no good reason. After all, in the Hebrew Bible, punishment follows disobedience. Yet, Job was a good man. In Zhuangzi, there is a different calculus at work. What does Zhuangzi say about the pattern of the dao and how it relates to the things that happen to men and women?
	Comparative Literature: Good Life	Machiavelli (<i>The Prince</i>) There are different ways to teach about ethics and ethical behavior. Each author uses a different approach.
	Unit Essay	E1. Can you draw any parallels among those various thinkers, from the personal knowledge you bring to this class? Socrates, the Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao Tzu? Discuss the similarities and differences between the thinkers.

II

Middle Period

4-6

Overview	Middle Period Dynasties	
Author	Tao Qian	T'ao Ch'ien, 365–427), also known as Tao Yuanming (陶淵明), born in modern Jiujiang, Jiangxi, was one of the most influential pre-Tang Dynasty Chinese poets. Apart from his poems, Tao is perhaps best known today for his short but intriguing depiction (in prose) of a land hidden from the outside world called "Peach Blossom Spring" (桃花源記). The name Peach Blossom Spring (桃花源 Tao Hua Yuan) has since become the standard Chinese term for 'utopia'.
Poetry	Peach Blossom Spring	The story involves the tale of a fisherman who, one spring during the period 376-397, rowed upriver from his home in Wuling. Somewhere upriver he discovers a hidden valley in which people live in peace and know nothing of the outside world. After spending a rather idyllic time there, the fisherman goes home. Although he tried to mark the path by which he had entered the valley, he could not find his way back to the hidden valley. <i>Peach Blossom Spring</i> is a depiction of paradise, and gives rise to a number of lost paradise narratives. A sense of longing and lost perfection characterizes the story.
	Comparative Literature: Emotion	Basho (Haiku) Matsuo Basho was the most influential poet of the Edo period of Japan. His haiku were widely regarded as brilliant because they evoked deep emotion

		through simplicity.
	Comparative Literature: Elegy	Wordsworth (Tintern Abbey) Wordsworth was elegiac in many of his writings, particularly in Tintern Abbey. In addition, he discusses how and where the mind creates an ideal form.
	Comparative Literature: Loss	Li Bai (Poetry) These poets have an elegiac tone, and they deal with nature. They evoke a sense of longing for a perfection can never be, or what has been lost.
Overview	Tang Dynasty Poets	Tang poetry refers to poetry written in or around the time of and in the characteristic style of China's Tang Dynasty, often considered as the Golden Age of Chinese poetry. During the Tang Dynasty, poetry continued to be an important part of social life at all levels of society. In fact, poetry was a part of the civil service examinations. Consequently, there were a large number of poets. Two of the most famous poets of the period were Du Fu and Li Bai.
Authors	Wang Wei	Wang Wei (699–759) was a Tang Dynasty Chinese poet, musician, painter, and statesman. He was one of the most famous men of arts and letters of his time. His paintings survive only in later copies by other artists, but numerous poems are preserved and some were included in the highly influential 18 th century anthology, <i>Three Hundred Tang Poems</i> .
	Li Bai	Li Bai was one of the greatest poets in China's Tang period, often considered China's "golden age" of poetry. He was part of the group of Chinese scholars called the "Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup" in a poem by fellow poet Du Fu. Approximately 1,100 poems attributed to Li Bai remain today. Li Bai writes about altered states of consciousness, love, longing, loss, and nature. His imagery tends to be concrete, and there is a sense of relentless wandering and restlessness.
	Du Fu	Du Fu (712–770) was a prominent Chinese poet of the Tang Dynasty, who explored issues of the day and ideas of character. Du Fu's poems are known for a strong sense of history, high standards of morality, and technical excellence.
	Bo Juyi	During his lifetime, Bai Juyi wrote over 2,800 poems. They are notable for their relative accessibility, which made them very widely read. The <i>Song of Everlasting Sorrow</i> and <i>The Song of the Pipa Player</i> are two of his most famous works, and are known for their intensity of emotion and the clear images. Like Du Fu, he had a strong sense of social responsibility and history.
Poetry	Poems	The classical poems were usually composed of lines of four characters, or words, with every other line rhymed. Lines were allowed, however, of more or fewer words. Under the reign of the Emperor Wu (140-87B.C.) of the Western Han Dynasty new types of poetry were introduced; and the five-character and seven-character poems became popular and have dominated ever since. The Emperor himself invented the latter: While Li Ling and Su Wu, two of his statesmen-generals, wrote their verses in the former type. The number of characters of each lines was uniform; no irregular line might occur. These two types were afterwards named the "ancient" or "unruled" poems. Nearly all poems before the T'ang Dynasty were in this form. The Emperor Wu introduced also the Po Liang style, which is a seven-character poem with every line rhyming in the last word. Po Liang was the name of a pavilion in the Emperor's garden where, while he banqueted his literary attendants, each wrote one line to complete a long poem. This has been a favorite game among Chinese poets.
	Comparative Literature:	Matsuo Basho (Haiku) William Wordsworth (<i>Lyrical Ballades, The Prelude</i>) John Keats ("On Autumn") Each poet exhibits a love of nature and simplicity.

Idea :
Persona How does Li Bo establish a persona as an outsider--that is, as radically different from the Confucian poet-scholar typical of classical China? Refer to specific examples from his poetry to describe his a) family and educational background; b) political and social points of view; c) religious stance; d) personal behavior

Unit Essay E2. Discuss themes of nature, harmony, and inner balance in the works in this unit.

III Early Modern China

7-9

Overview Ming Dynasty

Author Wu Chengen Wú Chéng'ēn, ca. 1500–1582), courtesy name Ruzhong (汝忠), was a Chinese novelist and poet of the Ming Dynasty. He was born in Huainan, Jiangsu. He studied in ancient Nanjing University for more than 10 years.

Fiction Monkey "Monkey King", or known to the Chinese as "Journey to West", written by Wu Ch'eng-en (1500?-1582), a scholar-official, is one of the renowned classical Chinese novels about an allegorical rendition of the journey, mingled with Chinese fables, fairy tales, legends, superstitions, popular beliefs, monster stories as well as whatever the author could find in the Taoist and Buddhist religions. It was based on a true story of a famous Chinese monk, Xuan Zang (602-664). After years of trials and tribulations, he travelled on foot to what is today India, the birthplace of Buddhism, to seek for the Sutra, the Buddhist holy book.

Comparative Literature: Quest Homer (*The Odyssey*)
Cervantes (*Don Quixote*)
It's important to recognize that although the quest is a predominant theme in literature, the conditions, beliefs, and prevailing attitudes that inform the various quests in literature make each one quite unique. For example, the quest in Homer serves to illustrate valor and heroism. In Cervantes, the quest functions to parody the chivalric code and what are considered to be effete, delusional values. What happens in the quest in Monkey? What is Tripitaka's role?

Comparative Literature: Founding Story Virgil (*The Aeneid*)
Milton (*Paradise Lost*)
The epic is considered a narrative of origin(s) and as such, it establishes the foundations of an emergent nationalism. How does Monkey relate to the origins of a particularly Chinese consciousness, with attendant differentiations of religion (Buddism). Monkey also sets the stage for a sense of separate identity.

Comparative Literature: Fantasy Arabian Nights
Garcia Marquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*)
Each work deals with an encounter with alternative realities, even magic. Is the magic functional or is it merely perceptual?

Theme Growth Monkey learns special daoist (taoist) powers: a magic staff and the ability to summersault huge distances and to grown or shrink, for example. He even learns the supreme secret of Daoism: immortality. But Monkey also demonstrates some less exalted aspects of human personality and behavior, and he is thrown out of the Celestial Kingdom until he learns better behavior. What has Monkey done wrong and what do those mischievous deeds show about his character? What does Monkey have to learn before he can reenter the Celestial Empire? What human traits does he demonstrate and which of these endear him to readers?

10-12

Overview Qing Dynasty The Qing Dynasty was the second time when the whole of China was ruled by

		foreigners, the Manchu. The first time was during the Yuan Dynasty when China was controlled by the Mongols. The Qing Dynasty lasted from 1644-1911 A.D
Author	Pu Song-Ling	Pu was from a poor landlord-merchant family from Zichuan (淄川, now Zibo, Shandong). Possibly he was of Mongol ancestry. At the age of nineteen, he received the xiucan degree in the civil service examination, but it was not until he was seventy-one that he received the gongsheng degree. He spent most of his life working as a private tutor, and collecting the stories that were later published in Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio. Some critics attribute the Vernacular Chinese novel Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan to him.
Fiction	The Wise Neighbor; The Mural	Pu Songling's short stories explore the boundary between the natural and the supernatural, and they contain characters who are animated by desire in one form or another; there is a longing for love; for connection and/or bonding. The fact that humans interact with fairies, sprites and miniature beings is characteristic, and reveals a core mindset that appearances deceive.
	Comparative Literature: Love triangle	Chikamatsu Monzaemon ("The Crucified Lovers") E. T. A. Hoffmann ("The Sandman") Samuel Taylor Coleridge ("Rime of the Ancient Mariner") Each author explores the dark side of love: obsession, self-delusion, destruction. The plot of "The Wise Neighbor" involves a love triangle. Values and attitudes about marriage and love outside the marriage in the form of concubines differ in each of the works. What does each one illustrate about the human condition?
	Comparative Literature: Supernatural	ETA Hoffman ("The Sandman") Alifa Rifaat ("Distant View of a Minaret") The work of each of these authors explores the world of the dream, and the place where the unreal and the real come together, often with perplexing, even tragic, consequences. How does Pu Song-Ling use the supernatural to posit an explanation about the nature of the phenomenal world? How does his view contrast with that of authors whose encounters with the supernatural trigger desire, obsession, and destruction?
	Comparative Literature: Supernatural	Coleridge ("Kubla Khan" and "Rime of the Ancient Mariner") Pu Song-Ling uses the supernatural to create a narrative that involves powerful metaphors that illustrate powerful insights into the human condition, particularly as it relates to feelings of guilt, fear, and self-recrimination.
	Idea: Marriage-Polygamy	Pu Song-Ling's work, relationships are often complicated because of the tradition of having extended families that involved multiple wives and even concubines. While some cultures have an informal approach to social / family relations, the Chinese society had distinct practices and laws. Discuss the complexities and problems of polygamy with multiple wives and concubines in the seventeenth century Chinese Society.
	Psychology Attraction	A characteristic of Pu Song-Ling's work is the presence of what exists beyond the realm of the tangible, measurable, concrete world. Describe the supernatural character's advice over the psychology of attraction in romantic relations. Is her advice useful and effective? Why?
Authors	Cao Xueqin (1715-1763), Gao E (1740-1815)	Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in, ca. 1715? —1763) is the author of Dream of the Red Chamber, believed by many to be the greatest novel written in the Chinese language. His given name was Cao Zhan (曹霑) and his courtesy name is Mengruan (夢阮). Cao belonged to a Han Chinese clan which later became part of the Plain White Branch (正白旗) of the Manchu Banners. Although forced into slavery (包衣) to Manchu royalties in the late 1610s, his ancestors distinguished themselves through military campaigns and subsequently held posts in officialdom.
Fiction	Story of Stone	The Story of the Stone (The Dream of the Red Chamber), was written by Cao Xueqin (Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in). It was written during, and is set in, the 18th century. In many ways, this is a tragedy of immense proportions, as it traces the gradual decline of the huge, wealthy and influential Jia family. The central

narrative centers on Jia Bao-yu, the charming but decadent eldest son of an important and wealthy man, and Lin Daiyu, his virtuous yet aloof female cousin. Many of the stories contained in the novel involve Buddhist precepts, such as the danger of attachment. Throughout the narrative, the presence of the supernatural catalyzes the phenomenal realm, and the individuals within it.

Theme:
Growth

Novels that trace the development of a writer are common in world literature. they often follow the form of the “Bildungsroman,” which deals with the events, emotions, and external forces that shape an individual’s perspective and result in the making of a writer. Why is this novel a “Bildingsroman”? Describe Bai-yu’ s stages of growth from irresponsible childhood and adolescence to responsible adult to enlightened Monk.

Philosophy
Confucianism
Daoism
Buddhism

Discuss the ideals of Confucianism vs Daoism/Buddhism in the Chinese society. Compare and contrast the life of Bai-yu and his father Jia Zheng

Comparative
Literature:
In the Company of
Women

Murasaki (*Tale of Genji*)
Murasaki presents a view of reality that is informed by the experience of women in the court. At that time, men and women tended to live their lives in separate spheres. Consequently, it would be disappointing and/or confusing to see someone cross gender lines. Discuss the way Bao-yu’s preference for the company of women made him a psychologically complex individual.

Comparative
Literature:
Aristocracy

Moliere (*Tartuffe*)
Pope (“Rape of the Lock”)
Each of the authors depicted life within the aristocracy. What do the elite in the various worlds have in common?

Comparative
Literature:
Change

Chekhov (*The Cherry Orchard*)
Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*)
Cheever (*The Wapshot Chronicles*)
In many ways, The Story of the Stone is a chronicle of decline, and it parallels other stories of the loss of glory and stature. Similar chronicles can be found in The Cherry Orchard (Chekhov) and Things Fall Apart (Achebe), as well as Cheever’s The Wapshot Chronicles.

Author

Shen Fu

Shen Fu was a low-level bureaucrat in the Chinese government whose autobiography, *Six Records of a Floating Life*, is remarkable for its candor, clarity, and depth of feeling. He discusses his relationship with his wife, his struggles with debt, his relationship with his family, and his life as a whole.

Six Records of a
Floating Life

Shen Fu’s autobiography is quite touching. It depicts the relationship that he had with his wife, Yun, by describing their daily interactions, as well as the feelings and attitudes they have toward each other. For all the concreteness of the narrative, there is still a sense of otherworldliness. For example, the passage that describes what happened during the Ghost Festival seems to invoke the supernatural. The way in which Shen Fu accommodates his wife’s desire to go out of the home helps illustrate the cultural milieu. Shen Fu suggests she disguise herself as a man. She does so, but at the last minute, backs out.

Comparative
Literature:
Feminism

Mary Wollstonecraft (*Vindication of the Rights of Women*)
Wollstonecraft explores women’s situations in a patriarchal society. In many ways, Shen Fu delves into the condition of women in Chinese society. The parallels reveal much about the perceived need to establish and maintain gender differentiation.

Theme:
Culture / Gender

What do you see as some of the key differences between the culture in which Shen Fu’s story takes place and that of today?

Unit Essay

E3. Discuss trends in literature in this unit. What is the relationship of the

individual to society and to others?

IV	13-15	Modern China
Author	Lu Xun	Considered the founder of modern baihua (白話) literature, Lu Xun was a short story writer, editor, translator, critic and essayist. He was one of the founders of the China League of Left-Wing Writers in Shanghai. Lu Xun's works exerted a very substantial influence after the May Fourth Movement to such a point that he was lionized by the Communist regime after 1949. Mao Zedong himself was a lifelong admirer of Lu Xun's works. Though highly sympathetic of the Chinese Communist movement, Lu Xun himself never joined the Chinese Communist Party despite being a staunch socialist as he professed in his works.
Fiction	The True Story of Ah Q	This satirical novel illustrates a culture in transition. Ah Q persists in seeing the world through very deluded eyes; his explanations of phenomena are resolutely positive when the reality is much different. The resulting sense of absurdity is amusing and illuminating with respect to cultural different, individual psychology, and ambition.
	Comparative Literature: Historical Forces	Kafka (In a Penal Colony) Chekhov (The Cherry Orchard) Achebe (Things Fall Apart) The idea of being caught up in historical forces and suddenly losing control of one's destiny is a common theme in literature, and it is illustrated clearly in Lu Xun. The response of the individual may vary, depending on their perspectives.
	Comparative Literature: Naivete as a platform for satire	Swift (Gulliver's Travels) Voltaire (Candide) Ah Q is an innocent in a world that is not kind to its more naive inhabitants. Ah Q does not understand his situation, which leads him to absurd encounter. Swift and Voltaire's protagonists are in similar situations. What results? What insights are gained?
	Comparative Literature: Values of Times Past	Cervantes (Don Quixote) Don Quixote parallels Ah Q in certain ways –the protagonists of both narratives are seeing the world through lenses forged in a different era. For Cervantes, it was the notion of chivalry. For Ah Q, it is a sense of his own superiority, which is rooted in a belief in the flawed nature of those around him.
	Comparative Literature: Destiny	Sophocles (Oedipus Rex) Each author has written about anti-heroes and the role of individuals. In the case of Oedipus Rex, there seems to be an unavoidable destiny at work. How is Ah Q's experience the same or different?
	Theme: Anti-hero	Part of the fundamental tragedy of human existence is the inescapable fact that all live on the edge of rejection – not only by one's love, community, but seemingly by fate itself. Part of the tragedy has to do with the fact that most individuals are powerless in the face of isolation and consequently, loneliness. Discuss the theme of loneliness and being an outcast in this story. Why might Ah Q be considered an anti-hero?
	Theme: Tradition	The Madman's central realization (3rd section) is that Chinese society is cannibalistic; he learns this only after studying the classical texts. Although the Madman refers to incidents of actual cannibalism in China, his diary also develops an analogy between cannibalism and the social and political injustices of imperial China. In what way were individuals "consumed" by traditional Chinese society? How does Confucianism lend itself to repressive social and political practices? Is the madman himself cannibalized by the system? Describe some specific traditional Chinese practices that victimized and repressed people. For example, what was the position of women in Confucian society? What about the average farmer in the feudal Chinese society? What do you make of the report that the Madman has recovered and

is waiting to take a job with the government?

Author	Bei Dao	Bei Dao (traditional Chinese: 北島; simplified Chinese: 北岛; pinyin: Běi Dǎo; literally "Northern Island", born August 2, 1949) is the pseudonym of Chinese poet Zhao Zhenkai (趙振開). He was born in Beijing, his pseudonym was chosen because he came from the north and because of his preference for solitude. Bei Dao is the most notable representative of the Misty Poets, a group of Chinese poets who reacted against the restrictions of the Cultural Revolution.
Poetry	Poems	The Misty Poets wrote poetry that was imagistic, and the meanings deliberately indeterminate. While there was definitely an artistic motive, the underlying political implications resulted in difficulties for many of the poets. The poetry is characterized by concrete descriptions of nature and natural processes, which are juxtaposed with the behaviors of individuals, and a particularly historical context.
	Theme : Politics	Many poets in Communist China have felt the need to develop a new poetic idiom in order to express thoughts and conditions of being. One development is the "Misty" school, which has experimented with form, syntax, and imagery. Bei Dao employs innovative techniques which make a commentary about life in Communist China. Discuss the political aspects of Bei Dao's writing.
Author	Gao Xingjian	Kao Hsing-chien; born January 4, 1940), is a French Chinese émigré novelist, dramatist and critic, who received the 2000 Nobel Prize in Literature. He is also a noted translator, particularly of Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco, a stage director and a celebrated painter.
Drama	<i>Dialogue and Rebuttal</i>	<i>Dialogue and Rebuttal</i> follows two strangers who have spent the night together, examining their inability to communicate and their individual relationships with language. The play, which contains absurdist elements, may remind some readers of the 20 th century European plays that exhibit an existentialist philosophy or perspective.
	Comparative Literature: The Absurd	Samuel Beckett (<i>Waiting for Godot</i>) Pirandello (<i>Six Characters In Search of an Author</i>) Both Beckett and Pirandello use the spoken word to evoke a sense of the core meaninglessness of language, and the futility of precise communication. In the postmodern world, the breakdown of language and the storehouses of meaning – religious metaphors, symbols, and cultural icons – are equally problematized. Discuss Xingjian's perspectives.
	Comparative Literature: Religion	Lao Tzu (<i>Tao Te Ching</i>) Chang Tzu (<i>The Great Happiness</i>) Daoism involves an approach to life that asks the individual to contemplate giving up his or her desire to control. In Xingjian's work, basic tenets of Zen Buddhism are brought to the center. What are the views of religion and the world?
	Comparative Literature: Crime and Punishment	Dante (<i>Divine Comedy</i>) Dante's <i>The Inferno</i> features a world where individuals are punished for the crimes they committed in life. Their punishments are creative; and, without exception, the punishment fits the crime, often almost fiendishly so. In Gao Xingjian's work, how is the afterlife similar or different to that envisioned by Dante?
	Theme: Alienation	Q1. In the play "Dialogues and Rebuttal," two strangers – a man and a girl -- never reveal themselves to each other, but talk superficially on many different topics. Discuss the theme of loneliness and alienation in the modern world illustrated in this play.
	Unit Essay	E4. Discuss the themes of loneliness, alienation, and madness in the works in this unit.

Final Essay

FE1. What role does humor play in the Chinese literature you have read? What kinds of humor—belly laugh, irony, satire, biting humor—seem to you to surface in this literature? Would you accept the idea that humor is culturally specific, or does it seem to cut across cultural lines, from one time and place to another? In other words, is there a specific kind of Chinese humor in literature?

FE 2. Chinese culture is widely considered the oldest continuous culture. When it comes to the language, this fact is indisputable. But what about the literary texts we have read? When it comes to literature, is there a pervading continuity reaching from The Ancient Way to the Modern China? If not a total unity, traceable step by step, are there partial continuities? Does it make sense to talk about “Chinese literature” as a unit?

FE 3. *Monkey* and *The Story of the Stone* are often taken to be the greatest prose masterpieces of Chinese literature. Do you see a strong poetic, and even fanciful, side to each of those tales? Would you call *The Story of the Stone* a novel? Do you know other novels like it? Of what genre would you think *Monkey*, which dates from the sixteenth century? Does either work seem to you a novel in the usual sense?