

Professor Katherine Arens (k.arens@mail.utexas.edu)
GER 382N (Unique # 35540); Spring, 2005; MW 1230 to 2p EPS 4.102A
COURSE TITLE: Can(n)on Fodder: Case Studies in Textual Afterlives
OFFICE: E. P. Schoch 3.128

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on the politics of the "Canon" of great texts, as defined through the material processes and ideologies that have defined "canonicity" at various moments of history. Each era has defined its "classic" or "canonical" authors differently; these authors themselves were often at pains to portray themselves as classic or hegemonic authors; literary histories, critics, prize boards, institutions, publishing houses, translators and editors contributed to "becoming canonical" in other ways.

This course will allow students from any national literature or cultural studies to work out their own "case studies" through the course of the semester, while reflecting on what having "great works" means to a culture, its identity, and its politics. Each student will pick an author to use during the term, and then will work through a set of theoretical and practical issues surrounding that author. Each week, a theory question will be posed, along with readings in aspects of cultural and literary history and criticism; each week, students will post/discuss the results of their own preliminary investigations in that field/for their chosen author as part of an electronic works-in-progress seminar.

Approximate order of topics:

- 1) Identifying a Canonical figure: finding one and finding out why canonical?
- 2) Aesthetics as legitimization for canonicity
- 3) "The Order of Books": Chartier and how texts are used, circulated, and valued
- 4) Printing and Publishing: how the material form of the book influences prestige and content
- 5) Libraries, Archives, Collections, Performances, and Catalogues: Ownership, status, and social prestige
- 6) Genres and Text-Types: Problems in Interdisciplinarity
- 7) Institutional Hegemonies: PEN, Harvard, etc.
- 8) Books in Trade: Literary histories, Anthologies, Editions, Translations
- 9) Media, Publicity, Fads, Scandal: Selling the Author in the Public Sphere
- 10) The Prize and Reviewing Rackets
- 11) Ghosts in the Machines: Online, Onscreens, and in Pixels

This course will be of interest to anyone working on (cross-)cultural contact, on the sociology of literature, on (counter-)hegemonic cultural practices, and on cultural identity politics. IT IS NOT SPECIFIC TO ANY ONE NATIONAL LITERATURE OR LANGUAGE.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Working in guided stages, students will develop a semester project on either the more theoretical or the more practical side of this problem. The final paper will capitalize on this work, by taking the form of a critical *publishing, aesthetic, and reception study* of one author/work, showing how the author is reconfigured for different audiences, or a study of how that author "performed" an identity and/or was staged in *literary histories* themselves, as history writing and as reflecting aesthetic and social ideologies.

Books Ordered

David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds. *The Book History Reader*. London: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-22658-9

Anthony Grafton. *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997. ISBN 0-674-30760-7 (strongly recommended)

Roger Chartier. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Trans Lydia G. Cochrane. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1994. ISBN 0-8047-2267-6

Susan Bassnett. *Translation Studies*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-06528-3