Universalism: Confronting Global Thought

INFL 488 – Macalester College International Studies Senior Seminar, Fall 2010

Instructor: David Chioni Moore
Class: MWF 1:10 to 2:10 pm, Carnegie 404
Office hours: Tues 10:15-11:30, Wed 12:00-12:45, and Fri 2:30-4:00, and by appointment.
Please use the signup sheet outside my office door, C-410.
Contacts: office: 696-6242 mooredc@macalester.edu

Description: This course offers senior International Studies majors of diverse academic and life backgrounds a common space in which to think, read, and write synoptically about our transnational world. Since rapid globalization in all areas of modern life has raised afresh the age-old question of Universalism – do we live in one world or many? – this course reviews a series of politically, culturally, and philosophically charged experiments in global cogitation. It is a course less about data or facts than about thought.

Beginning with American questions, and then moving through Caribbean hybridities, theories of purity and diversity, transnational business analysis, questions of world literature and much more, we will ask: in whose interest is the universal? is there any local left? how might one think the world as one? does global mean homogeneous? is today’s “unification” new, or only an update of ancient ways? is it possible to be cosmopolitan? and from what standpoint can one responsibly judge the world?

Our readings will vary widely. Our first five weeks will focus on essays, and the next six on books published in the past two years. We’ll range across philosophy, business, the environment, human rights, literary studies, fiction, and global social and cultural critique. The remainder of the course focuses on writing a final term paper with multiple intermediate dates.

Course Conduct: The class will be run as a seminar – that is, a joint exploration. Class sessions will be much more participant- (rather than instructor-) directed than in previous courses.

Assignments/Evaluation:
Presentation of one or two readings in the seminar 10%
A medium-length (7-8 page) paper 15%
Active and insightful class participation 25%
A long (17-20 page) final paper 50%

The midterm paper will treats readings. The highly configurable final paper – a capstone to your I.S. major – should be written with future inclusion as a text for this course in mind. A required prospectus offers early guidance.

Two notes: Timely class attendance is integral to the course and its grade. Let me know in advance of conflict with any religious holidays and/or any relevant disability issues. We’ll arrange acceptable alternatives and/or accommodations, and your grades will be unaffected.

Paper format: See my full roster of paper format requirements and writing advice on my homepage, linked from the I.S. faculty page. You are responsible for all format requirements. (They include, but are not limited to, double-spacing, numbered pages, 1” margins all around,
12-point font, un-numbered title page with a good title, generous acknowledgements of all helpers and works used at the paper’s end.) Physical papers are due under my office door by the day and time noted, and drop 1/2 grade per day from that point. RTFM.

Finally: the raw length of readings varies widely each week; this does not constitute widely varying workload, since shorter items will be examined in detail. Some of the readings appeared originally in other languages. I’ll ask students proficient in these languages to comment on the originals, which I’ll supply.

Schedule (the date indicates the Monday of each week):

1 S8 W: introductions, housekeeping, aims and scope

2 S13 The Caribbean and the Americas
   José Vasconcelos, La Raza Cósmica / The Cosmic Race, 1927, pp. 1-30
   Coco Fusco, “The Incredible Disappearing Woman,” 2000
   ➔ Friday’s class will shift 10 minutes early – from 1:00 to 2:00 pm

3 S20 Self-Other-Pure-Hybrid
   ➔ no class Monday Sept 20: DCM at Wesleyan U.
   Benita Brahmbhatt, “Intelligibility and the Global Moment,” 1999
   James Scott et al, “The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States,” 2002

4 S27 Global Fiction (I of II): New Global Ireland
   Roddy Doyle, The Deportees and Other Stories, 2007

5 O4 Human Rights

Note: the Macalester International Roundtable, this year on the subject of Human Rights, Thurs-Sat, October 7-9. Keynote Thursday 4:30-6:15 pm, talks Friday 9:30-noon and 1:30-4:00, and roundtable Saturday 10-noon. Attendance at at least three of these is required. We’ll cancel Friday’s class to attend the event.

6 O11 Global Business
   Victor Fung, “Supply Chain Management, Hong Kong Style,” 1998
   ➔ no class Friday Oct 15: DCM out of town

midterm paper due at 1 pm, Friday October 15, under my office door
7  O18  World Literature
   Erich Auerbach, “Philology and Weltliteratur,” 1952
   David Laitin, “Can Language Be Planned?” 1991
   Francesca Orsini, “India in the Mirror of World Fiction,” 2002
   David Chioni Moore, “Nigerian Email Spam as World Literature Contender,” 2009

8  O25  Environment and History (I)
   1st half
   [Fall Break Th-Fri October 28-29: no Friday class this week]

9  N1   Environment and History (II)
   Radkau, Nature and Power, second half

10 N8  East/West, South/South (I)
   Amitav Ghosh, The Hungry Tide, 2006 – first half
   ➔ no class Mon: DCM at UCLA

11 N15 East/West, South/South (II)
   Amitav Ghosh, The Hungry Tide, 2006, second half

12 N22 Our Work (I)
   M & W: first final paper workshop
   [Thanksgiving is Thurs November 25: no Friday class this week]

13 N29 Post-Identity Lit?
   Nam Le, The Boat (short stories), 2009

14 D6   Our Work (II)
   M & W: second final paper workshop
   F: course conclusion

15 D13 (Macalester classes end Monday, December 13; we will not hold class that day.)

Finals period, Wed-Sat, December 15-18.

Final course papers due Thursday, December 16, by 1:30 pm under my office door.

Five Books, in order of reading:
Course Essay Readings: IS-488, Fall 2010, Prof. David Chioni Moore


