Introduction: This module will encourage students to investigate various fictional images of the contemporary world from the mid-twentieth century to the present. The contemporary, as we shall see, is multi-faceted and represents a cosmopolitan series of landscapes; contemporary authors are alert to the strains of contemporary music, influenced by the visual arts, film and television, and the digital. Many contemporary authors engage with the relativisation of various kinds of values and we will closely consider the ways in which this tendency continually resurfaces. Central ideas and themes, like morality, memory, love in its various forms, the meaning of knowledge, and the complexity of human communications, will be revisited in the context of the different works.

At the conclusion of the course, students should have a clear understanding of some of the key patterns of ideas and narrative strategies deployed by contemporary writers and will be able to identify, engage with, and articulate key concepts relevant to the period.

Formative feedback

Feedback is central to this course. Students will receive both written and verbal feedback from the course coordinator on their research essay. They will also receive both written and verbal feedback in response to their proposals, as each proposal will be returned individually. Extensive feedback on grammar, style and content will be provided.

Core Texts

Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Faber & Faber ISBN 9780571135394)
Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* (Faber & Faber ISBN 9780571169344)
Selected Poetry, short stories TBA (*Handouts*)
**Method of Instruction**

3 Hour Seminar

**Approach:** Contextual presentation by the instructor forms the central focus of the seminar, in which students are encouraged to participate, ask questions, discuss amongst themselves. The class involves some theoretical comments about the author of the text we are working on, the period, and the major theoretical concepts that have significance for the author/text. Students are encouraged to participate freely in this period of the class. Presentation is always supplemented by multi-media resources (audio/visual interviews, supporting material, music, paintings, commentaries, and/or historically-relevant information).

Class discussion can happen at any point during the three-hour period – although in some seminars, specific discussion-linked tasks are set. Presentations, group discussions are used where appropriate.

**Course Assessment**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Continuous Assessment</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>(Includes research abstract and essay)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Co-ordinator</th>
<th>Office Room No.</th>
<th>DID</th>
<th>E-mail Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neil Murphy</td>
<td>HSS-03-84B</td>
<td>65922410</td>
<td><a href="mailto:camurphy@ntu.edu.sg">camurphy@ntu.edu.sg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week No.</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 13 Jan</td>
<td>Week 1: Introduction to Contemporary Literature</td>
<td>Handouts (Calvino/Borges)</td>
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<td>2 20 Jan</td>
<td>Week 2: John Banville and Postmodern Murder</td>
<td>John Banville, <em>The Book of Evidence</em></td>
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<td>3 27 Jan</td>
<td>Week 3: John Banville and Art</td>
<td>John Banville, <em>The Book of Evidence</em></td>
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<td>4 3 Feb</td>
<td>Week 4: Garcia Marquez, loss, memory and imagining love</td>
<td>Gabriel García Marquez, <em>Love in the Time of Cholera</em> (Vintage)</td>
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<td>5 10 Feb</td>
<td>Week 5: Garcia Marquez, loss, memory and imagining love</td>
<td>Gabriel García Marquez, <em>Love in the Time of Cholera</em> (Vintage)</td>
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<td>6 17 Feb</td>
<td>Week 6: Jeanette Winterson &amp; ‘Love’</td>
<td>Jeanette Winterson, <em>Written on the Body</em></td>
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<td>7 24 Feb</td>
<td>Week 7: Passions of the mind</td>
<td>Alessandro Baricco, <em>Silk</em></td>
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<td>8 3 March</td>
<td>Recess Week</td>
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<td>9 10 March</td>
<td>Week 9: Postmodernism and theories of fiction</td>
<td>- Handouts</td>
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<td>10 17 March</td>
<td>Week 10: Samuel Beckett</td>
<td>Beckett, <em>Waiting for Godot</em></td>
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<td>11 24 March</td>
<td>Week 11: <em>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</em></td>
<td>Milan Kundera, <em>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</em></td>
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<td>12 31 March</td>
<td>Week 12: Contemporary Poetry (Galway Kinnell)</td>
<td>Handout</td>
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<td>13 7 April</td>
<td>Week 13: Stoppard’s quest for truth</td>
<td>Tom Stoppard, <em>Arcadia</em></td>
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<td>14 14 April</td>
<td>Week 14: Conclusion</td>
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**Preliminary Bibliography 1: Contemporary Fiction, Postmodernist Fiction – Analysis of Fiction**


Marshal, Brenda K. *Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1992


Richardson, Brian. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006


**Bibliography 2: Postmodern Theory & Theories of Fiction**

Bloom, Harold.
How to read and why / Harold Bloom.

Kundera, Milan.
*L'Art du roman*. English
The art of the novel / Milan Kundera ; translated by Linda Asher.

Eagleton, Terry, 1943-
The illusions of postmodernism / Terry Eagleton.

From modernism to postmodernism : an anthology / [edited by] Lawrence E. Cahoone.
Lyotard, Jean François. 
Condition postmoderne. English: The postmodern condition : a report on knowledge / Jean-François Lyotard ; translation from the French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi; foreword by Fredric Jameson. 

Norris, Christopher, 1947- 
The truth about postmodernism / Christopher Norris. 


Kaufmann, Michael. 
Textual bodies : modernism, postmodernism, and print / Michael Kaufmann. 

Modernism/postmodernism / edited and introduced by Peter Brooker. 

Begam, Richard, 1950- 
Samuel Beckett and the end of modernity / Richard Begam. 

**In addition, there are several book-length studies on each of the primary authors held in the library.