

Course Design and Requirements

In this course, you will write a comparative analysis, a lens essay, and a multi-source research essay in which you consider a text in its context. In addition to the first drafts and final versions of these three formal papers, you will also complete short writing assignments and response papers for homework. These exercises, in addition to group work and writing exercises during class time, will guide you through the process of writing an academic essay—from brainstorming initial ideas to proofreading your polished work.

In **Unit 1**, we'll consider how the choices translators make when bringing a text from its "source" (original) language into the "target" (translated) language shape readers' perceptions of the original text's meaning, the author's intentions in creating the text, the voice with which the author writes, as well as conceptions of source culture and contexts. You will write an essay that undertakes a close reading of two celebrated English translations, by W.S. Merwin and Mark Eisner, of what is perhaps Pablo Neruda's most popular love poem, "Tonight I can write..." and make an original argument about how each depicts the theme of lost love.

In **Unit 2**, we'll study fictional depictions of the power relations between translators and authors and interrogate our preconceived notions of originality and authorship. We will read the novella *Translator, Translated* by Indian writer Anita Desai and the short story "The Case of the Unfaithful Translator," by Spanish author José María Merino, translated from the Spanish by Erin Goodman for the Cervantes Institute at Harvard. The protagonists of these stories bring to life the trope of the "traitorous translator" who misrepresents, sullies, or even destroys the original text. By employing the work of theorists Hélène Cixous, Roland Barthes, and Lori

Chamberlain as lenses with which to study the texts, we will illuminate elements of these stories that were not apparent to us on the first reading, discovering how translation is complicated by issues of gender, sexuality, class, violence, identity, and cultural hegemony, among others. You then will write an essay that applies one of these ideas to the fiction we have read, revealing something new about Desai's and Merino's depictions of translation that would not be apparent without the theoretical lens.

In **Unit 3**, we'll further explore the notion of the translator-as-author, consider how social history shapes the way texts are translated, and observe how translations influence new literary works, and indeed entire literary genres. To do so, we'll study the work of influential English writer Angela Carter, translator of *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, or *Tales from Past Times* (1697), by Charles Perrault. We'll compare Carter's translation of Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood" to an early English translation from 1795, as well as to arguably more "faithful" translations from 1999 and 2009. We'll also study Carter's version of the fairy tale for adults, "In the Company of Wolves," which she wrote while working on the translation. The version is found in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), her seminal collection of stories that influenced an entire generation of writers, including Margaret Atwood and Salman Rushdie. Following the ideas of pioneering translation theorist Gideon Toury, we'll consider Carter's translation and rewriting of "Little Red Riding Hood" in the context of the time and place in which she produced them, the UK in the 1970s. A decade between the "swinging 60s" and the austere 80s, the 70s was rife with turmoil and change. In your essay, you will research one salient feature of these turbulent times — such as second wave feminism, the founding of the Gay Liberation Front, burgeoning environmental

activism, labor strikes, or political violence — and identify the subtle and not-so-subtle ways they make their mark on Carter's pages.