Polyglossic Writers, Multilingual Meanings
Prof. Kavita Singh

Salman Rushdie, Junot Diaz, Samuel Beckett, Theresa Hak Hyung Cha: for these groundbreaking writers, language, and more precisely, languages, are intrinsic to creation. Coming from all corners of the globe, often straddling multiple corners at once, polyglossic writers are unavoidable in modern and contemporary literature. Are they writing across languages to express the realities of their multilingual, post-colonial, post-Soviet worlds, or are they using their polyglossic imaginaries to transform literary conventions of meaning; to propose new aesthetic norms; or to engage headily in a politics of language? Can we categorize them by the language(s) they live, or by the country or region they write from? Is Gloria Anzaldua a Mexican writer? American? Spanish? Is meaning lost when Nancy Huston self-translates from adopted language French into mother-tongue English?

This course brings together texts that traffic in languages, texts that deform language, and texts that make language the very subject of the work. The vulnerabilities of bilingualism and the excitement of linguistic transgression will be explored, as will the legacies of imperial language, the grammars of racism, and the gendering of idioms.

In addition to those mentioned above, authors studied may include:

Claude McKay
Jonathan Safran Foer
Michelle Cliff
David Grossman
Patrick Chamoiseau
Derek Walcott
Doris Sommer
Edouard Glissant

Requirements are two oral presentations and one seminar paper (research or translation).

This course satisfies requirements for later literature and for Empire Studies and Translation Studies certificates. Students who translate a multilingual work for a final project can fulfill a language requirement.