Beyond Borders
Transnationalism in the Arts

Instructor: Kristina Förster
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Course description:

This course is an introduction to contemporary transnational literature by Central European writers. We will explore literature that challenges traditional national, cultural or linguistic boundaries and examine how living and writing in a second language reshapes our identity. Students will be introduced to the concept of transnationalism alongside other paradigms such as minority literature, intercultural writing and multilingual literature. We will read novels and short stories by immigrant, minority and multilingual writers and examine how their diverse voices challenge and contribute to conceptions of national, cultural or linguistic identity. Authors to be read include canonical writers such as Milan Kundera and Herta Müller, and newcomers such as Aleksandar Hemon and Wladimir Kaminer. When appropriate, we will also discuss feature films such as “The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner.” All works will be studied in English translation.

Course Requirements and grading:

Attendance and Participation 25%
Homework (reading journals) 25%
Quizzes (on weekly readings) 10%
Oral Reports 10%
Final Paper (10 p.)
  Paper Proposal 10%
  Paper Draft 10%
  Final Paper 10%

Required Primary Sources:

All of the required readings, including the secondary sources, will be available in electronic version.

Herta Müller, *Nadirs*, University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
Films:

Weekly Schedule

Note: The course plan is subject to minor changes. Revisions will be announced by e-mail, and/or in class.

**Week 1** Orientation

Lectures and site visits on subjects of history, culture, politics, and economies of the Czech Republic and Central Europe in order to establish a common interdisciplinary background and vocabulary for all courses.

**Week 2** Situating Transnational Literature

Part I Introduction Transnational Literature


**Week 3** Writing from the Margins: Herta Müller’s Romanian Childhood


Part II Readings: Herta Müller, *Nadirs*, University of Nebraska Press, 1999: pp. 10-76.

**Week 4** Writing in Exile: Milan Kundera’s World Literature


**Week 5** Self-fashioned Russianness Conquering the World: Wladimir Kaminer

Film Discussion: *Russian Disco* (2012)

Week 6  **Going Global: Bosnian-American Expat Aleksandar Hemon**


Week 7  **Truly Transnational: Terézia Mora**


Week 8  **Truly Transnational: Terézia Mora (continued)**


Week 9  **A New Generation Looking Back: Saša Stanišić Reimagines the Past**


Week 10  **A New Generation in the Here and Now: Alina Bronsky’s Ghetto Girl**


Film Discussion: *Broken Glass Park* (2013)
Week 11  Situating Transnational Cinema


Part II  Film Discussion: Ijia Trojanow, The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner (2008)

Week 12  Transnational Movements After The Fall of the Iron Curtain


Part II  Film Discussion: Dani Levy, Go for Zucker (2004)

Week 13  Conclusion

Part I  Final paper presentation

Part II  Conclusion, summary, outlook