

Literature and Medicine
Syllabus, 2015-2016: The Many Forms of Narration

The West

Session I

9/8/2015 SW 107 7:30-9pm

The Parenting Edition

Anthony Doerr *All the Light We Cannot See*

We open the 2015 season of Literature and Medicine with the 2015 Pulitzer Prize and Andrew Carnegie Medal winner as well as the National Book Award finalist – Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See*. Set during the second World War, the novel tells the story of a blind six year-old girl in France and an orphaned eight year-old boy in Germany and the intersection of their seemingly opposite lives. Filled with linguistic precision, stunning descriptions, and alternating narrative voices, this novel is a critically-acclaimed, nail-biting pager-turner.

Session II

10/13/2015 SW 107 7:30-9pm

The Phenomenological Edition

Aimee Bender *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*

In this session we will explore the profoundly personal nature of experience through Aimee Bender innovative protagonist, Rose, who suddenly develops the ability to feel others’ emotions by tasting the food they prepare. Her novel form of synesthesia enables the narrative to take on a quasi-omniscient form: Rose is aware of others’ inaccessible experiences while, at the same time, infusing them with her own interpretive machinery.

Session III

11/10/15 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Invulnerable Edition

Eula Biss *On Immunity: an Inoculation*

Yes, we've sworn ourselves to the world of fiction. But if ever a book were to warrant our departure from that oath, Eula Biss' *On Immunity* is it. As a National Book Award finalist and a member of nearly every "Books to Read This Year" list, this account of immunization, language, and the human condition is creative nonfiction at its very best.

Session IV

12/8/15 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Ornithological Edition

Helen Macdonald *H is for Hawk*

Although Macdonald's *H is for Hawk* is ostensibly a memoir (she is the recipient of the 2014 Samuel Johnson Prize), the work, in fact, represents a union of several genres. Revolving her memoir around the sudden death of her father, Macdonald depicts a yearlong account of grief and ... goshawk training. Yes, we will certainly open this session with "The Second Coming,"

The East and Beyond

Session V

1/5/16 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Big Brother Edition

Adam Johnson *The Orphan Master's Son*

We will spend the second half of the year outside the United States. And where better to begin than North Korea.

In *The Orphan Master's Son*, Adam Johnson, a Pulitzer Prize recipient and National Book Award finalist, creates an unsettling and complicated account of a life under North Korean dictatorship.

Still invested in exploring the many forms of narration, in this book we will discover three different voices and three different accounts working together to form a singular narrative.

Session VI

2/16/16 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Daltonic Edition

Haruki Murakami *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*

Traveling farther east to Nagoya, Japan, we will embark on a temporal journey with Murakami's newest protagonist, Tsukuru Tazaki. Tsukuru's pilgrimage is an attempt to solve the mystery of his past. The introspective prose inherent to Murakami will serve as a perfect echo to Macdonald's meditative narrative.

Session VII

3/8/16 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Anthropological Edition

Lily King *Euphoria*

The story of Margaret Mead as an anthropologist and pioneer of the sexual revolution is well known. Lily King's *Euphoria* is not that story. A work of historical fiction, *Euphoria* re-imagines Mead's expedition to New Guinea, saturating it with lust, jealousy and betrayal. What could be better?

Session VIII

4/12/16 SW107 7:30-9pm

The Retrospective Edition

Richard Flanagan *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*

"The months and days are the travelers of eternity. The years that come and go are also voyagers," are the opening lines of Matsuo Basho's "Oku no Hosomichi" ("The Narrow Road to the Deep North") – the poem to which Flanagan's novel owes its name. Recipient of the 2014 Man Booker Prize, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* chronicles five different stage of the life of an Australian physician Dorrigio Evans. It is a contemplative inquiry into the cognitive dissonance that occurs when the understanding of self fails to align with outside perceptions.