**LITR 348 / ENG 456 The Practice of Literary Translation**

This course combines a seminar on the history and theory of translation (Tuesdays) with a hands-on workshop (Thursdays). The readings will lead us through a series of case studies comparing, on the one hand, multiple translations of given literary works and, on the other, classic statements about translation—by translators themselves and prominent theorists. Students will be expected to prepare short class presentations, participate in a weekly workshop, try their hands at a series of translation exercises, and undertake an intensive, semester-long translation project. Proficiency in a foreign language is required. May be taken for graduate credit by permission of the student’s department.

**All students who meet the foreign-language requirement are welcome to apply to the class. Before you prepare your letter of application, please read through the course description below, and, once the Canvas site for the class is up, have a look at the short video that will be posted there. That will give you a sense of the indirect ways we’ll sometimes approach our elusive topic and task. Applications are due by November 11. I will let you know if you’ve been accepted within several days, and will ask for a firm acceptance or pass at that time, so that people on the waiting list can be notified.**

 Course Format

This is really two courses rolled into one. That means the workload is relatively heavy, and the pace demanding (especially at first), but I’ve found that this is the best way to immerse oneself in the enterprise, and that the method pays substantive dividends. I should add that most people find that the readings are varied and engaging, and that both the translation exercises and the work on the semester-long project become something that’s in fact hard to STOP doing. In other words, if all goes well you’ll enjoy the work, and will soon see the method behind the slight madness.

The readings will lead us through a series of case studies comparing, on the one hand, multiple translations of given literary works and, on the other, classic statements about translation—by translators themselves and prominent theorists. We’ll consider both poetry and prose from the Bible, selections from Chinese, Greek, and Latin verse, classical Arabic and Persian literature, prose by Cervantes, Borges, and others, and modern European poetry (by Pushkin, Baudelaire, Rilke, and others).  And, just as you begin to feel that you know what you’re doing, we’ll throw a joker into the mix. We’ll also read excerpts from essays about translation by the German Romantics (Schleiermacher, Goethe, Herder, Nietzsche, et al), classical writers such as Augustine and Jerome, neo-classicists like John Dryden and the Earl of Rascommon (James Dillon), modern and contemporary writers including Walter Benjamin, José Saramago, George Steiner, Cynthia Ozick, Marilynne Robinson, Christopher Middleton, Anne Carson, Rosanna Warren, Eliot Weinberger, Lawrence Venuti, and more.

You’ll read approximately 75 pages per week while also working on a semester-long project. Occasional short assignments will involve exercises in translation and the analysis of translation. Early in the course, you’ll be asked to propose a topic for your translation project, which you’ll then work on throughout the term in consultation with me (you should start thinking about this as soon as possible—perhaps even now, as you read these lines for the first time). This project will consist of the translation of a group of poems or an extended passage from a prose work (or anything else that you care to propose); in addition to the translation, you’ll prepare an introduction and annotation to the translation. In short, a book in miniature! The progress of this project will be documented in a translation journal, in which you’ll reflect on your reading in the history of translation and on the challenges and pleasures you encounter in the translation process. One class each week will be devoted to a workshop in which students present their own work in progress.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**Short translation exercises: weekly for the first half of the term.

Workshop preparation: you’ll be asked to read a classmate’s work each week and prepare thoroughly to participate in the workshop discussion, then send your comments on to the person involved.

Midterm paper: 5-7 pages, due TBA.

Translation journal: To be discussed.

Final project: Length to be determined in consultation with me.

**APPLICATION:**

[**After having read the material on Canvas, watched the welcome video, and looked at the syllabus, please write me a letter titled “Why Me.” The title points in two directions at once: On the one hand, it asks you to explain, in a paragraph or three, why you want to be in this class, what your language skills are, what sort of intellectual and/or artistic and cultural interests you have, and what project you’re considering taking on (I won’t hold you to the latter.) On the other hand it’s saying: “What did I do to deserve this—having to work so hard, as if for two classes, while in fact I’ll be getting credit only for one?” In other words, I want you to be aware that the class does require a serious commitment for each and every member, and TO each and every member.**](https://yale.instructure.com/courses/64193/files/4534788/download?wrap=1)

**Try to be yourself in the letter: I’m not looking for a turbo-charged resume so much as a lively piece of writing that gives me a sense of who you are as a person and as a writer or translator, and what you’ll bring to the class and to the work of translation.  Also, please be sure to let me know some basic facts: what class you're in (Class of 20XX); what your major is (if you already have one—first- and second-years are most welcome to apply!); and what sort of translation experience you have, if any (none is required).**

[**If you are a Literature major and are in the Translation Track, please be sure to note that.**](https://yale.instructure.com/courses/64193/files/4534788/download?wrap=1)

[Email the letter to me: peter.cole@yale.edu by noon on November 11.](mailto:Email the letter to me: peter.cole@yale.edu by noon on November 11.)