

HL4024 Advanced Studies in Contemporary Literature (AY 2025/2026 S1)

Associate Professor Michelle Wang
michelle.wang@ntu.edu.sg

Class meets	Monday	9.30am – 12.20pm	SHHK Seminar Room 6 (School of Humanities)
Office hours	<i>by appointment</i>		
	Monday	12.30pm – 1.30pm 2.30pm – 3.30pm	SHHK 03-57

Course Description and Objectives

HL4024: Advanced Studies in Contemporary Literature engages with issues of form, narration, artistic echoes, aesthetics, intermediality, and adaptation in contemporary literature—focusing in particular on long-form narratives such as the novel, graphic novel, graphic memoir, and film. We engage with a wide range of issues in the course, including bioethics in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* (2005); “model minority” myths in Lan Samantha Chang’s *Hunger* (1998); aging and care in Roz Chast’s *Can’t We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* (2014); and more.

Given the lively and ever-shifting nature of concerns and texts that dominate contemporary literature, one of the dynamic components in HL4024 includes familiarizing ourselves with the types of writing that currently capture the imaginations and critical attention of readers and literary critics alike, including works that have been translated into English. While the assigned core texts comprise of books written in English from dominantly British and American traditions, the book review and presentation – which will include a creative writing component – will engage with texts that have gained a wider readership in translation.

Content advisory: Reading material in this course includes texts that address self-harm, rape, and other emotionally challenging material. You may wish to factor this into your enrollment decision during the Add/Drop period.

Assessment	65%	Continuous Assessment
	35%	Examination (closed book)

Academic Integrity Policy

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU’s shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to NTU’s Academic Integrity policy page on the Student Intranet

(https://entuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/Student/dept/ctlp/Shared%20Documents/Student%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20NTU%20rev_Nov_2021.pdf) for more information.

In line with NTU's Academic Integrity Policy, please attach the "Declaration of Authorship" form when you submit written assignments (available on NTU Learn).

Please be reminded that in line with clause 4.1:

- repeating the work submitted to another course (whether at NTU or another institution, in part or in whole); and/or
- reusing material taught or submitted in another course *without properly crediting source/s*

all constitute a violation of NTU's Academic Integrity Policy and is subject to the relevant penalties. Please consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course, and familiarize yourself with the Technology Policy before enrollment.

Late Work Policy

All graded assignments are due in hard copy *and* soft copy (those submitted electronically on NTU Learn through the Turnitin dropbox) by the start of class on the due dates. Late work will be accepted within 24 hours for a reduced grade. All papers submitted after the deadline will receive no instructor comments.

Attendance Policy

Your prepared and active participation is critical to your success in the course. If you are unwell, please *do not* attend class and seek medical advice instead and follow up with the instructor via email. You may only do a make-up quiz/test/assignment/presentation (where applicable) for reasons relating to an excused absence with proper documentation (such as a medical certificate), which needs to be submitted to the English Undergraduate Office, with a copy via email to the instructor. Please note that it is your responsibility to get in touch with the instructor within 3 days of the missed session in order to arrange for a make-up quiz/test/assignment/presentation.

Technology Policy

Given that this course emphasizes process-based critical thinking skills and originality of thought, the use of all generative AI technologies (including, but not limited to, large language models, chatbots such as ChatGPT, Bard AI, Bing AI, etc.) is strictly prohibited. While these technologies offer learning opportunities in relation to specific modes of assessment, they are antithetical to the learning outcomes of this course.

Students are otherwise welcome to use e-books etc. to facilitate your learning in the classroom, so long as the devices are being used on task and with one exception: no audio, video, and/or screen recording is allowed at any point during the lectures, seminars, and/or tutorials. This applies to any/all online sessions, where applicable. Please see the University Copyright Statement for more information. The classroom is meant to be a space where students feel comfortable to respectfully, critically, and constructively exchange ideas about the texts discussed.

Please use your NTU OneDrive account to save your assignments as you are working on them, to prevent a loss of data.

All quizzes, tests, and exams—where applicable—are closed-book, unless otherwise stated; please ensure all electronic devices including cellphones, tablets, computers, smart watches, etc. are put away into your bags at that point.

University Copyright Statement

All course materials (including and not limited to lecture slides, handouts, recordings, assessments and assignments) are for your own educational purposes at NTU only. All course materials are protected by copyright, trademarks or other rights.

All rights, title and interest in the course materials are owned by, licensed to or controlled by the University, unless otherwise expressly stated. The course materials shall not be uploaded, reproduced, distributed, republished or transmitted in any form or by any means, in whole or in part, without written approval from the University.

You are also not allowed to take any photograph, video recording, audio recording or other means of capturing images and/or voice of any of the course materials (including and not limited to lectures, tutorials, seminars and workshops) and reproduce, distribute and/or transmit in any form or by any means, in whole or in part, without the written permission from the University.

Appropriate action(s) will be taken against you (including and not limited to disciplinary proceedings and/or legal action) if you are found to have committed any of the above or infringed copyright.

Reading List

1. Auster, Paul, Paul Karasik, and David Mazzucchelli. *City of Glass: A Graphic Mystery*. 1994. Picador, 2004. ISBN 9780312423605 (136pp.)
2. Auster, Paul. *City of Glass* (in *The New York Trilogy*). 1985. Penguin Books, 2006. ISBN 9780143039839 (308pp.)
3. Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. 1979. Beacon Press, 2003. ISBN 9780807083697 (264pp.)
4. Chang, Lan Samantha. *Hunger: A Novella and Stories*, 1998. W. W. Norton, 2009. ISBN 9780393337952 (193pp.)
5. Chast, Roz. *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* Bloomsbury, 2014. ISBN 9781608198061 (240pp.)
6. Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*. Vintage International, 2006. ISBN 9780307276476 (288pp.)
7. *One additional text of your choice from the supplementary reading list*

Supplementary Reading List (select one book of your choice from the following titles; with the exception of Maarouf's book, all e-books are available through NTU Libraries)

- i. Mazen Maarouf, *Jokes for the Gunmen* (translated from Arabic, 2019)
- ii. Samanta Schweblin, *Mouthful of Birds* (translated from Spanish, 2019; ebook)
- iii. Emmanuelle Pagano, *Faces on the Tip of My Tongue* (translated from French, 2019; ebook)

Films (available in NTU Libraries)

1. *Never Let Me Go* PR6059.S5N513 2010

Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Week – Date	Topic
01 – 11 Aug	Introductory lecture
02 – 18 Aug	Octavia Butler, <i>Kindred</i> (1979) (end of subsection 5, “The Fight”)
03 – 25 Aug	Octavia Butler, <i>Kindred</i> (end of book) <i>Distribution of assignment prompts and sign-up sheets</i>
04 – 01 Sep	Paul Auster, <i>City of Glass</i> (1985) Paul Auster, <i>Ghosts</i> (1986)
05 – 08 Sep	Paul Auster, Paul Karasik, and David Mazzucchelli, <i>City of Glass</i> (1994)
06 – 15 Sep	Lan Samantha Chang, “Hunger” and “San” (1998)
07 – 22 Sep	Written book review (in-class session) *Note: Attendance is compulsory for this session; no make-up session is allowed without valid documentation for reasons relating to an excused absence* <i>Written book review due</i>
08 – 06 Oct	Kazuo Ishiguro, <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (2005) (end of chapter 10) <i>RECESS</i>
09 – 13 Oct	Kazuo Ishiguro, <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (end of book) <i>Never Let Me Go</i> []
10 – 20 Oct	<i>PUBLIC HOLIDAY; NO CLASS</i>
11 – 27 Oct	Roz Chast, <i>Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?</i> (2014) (end of chapter 10) <i>Research essay due</i>
12 – 03 Nov	Roz Chast, <i>Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?</i> (end of book)
13 – 10 Nov	Exam revision