ENG 3604-001: Special Topics: Nation and Self

Bruce Guernsey
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall1998

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall1998/128

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 1998 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 1998 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
Each of us in this classroom is carrying with us, or has access to, some form of identification that links us with some place or governmental institution, local, state, or federal. At the same time, we each feel that we are individuals, that we are somehow special, just as every nation thinks of itself as unique in the world with its own myths and history. For citizens of an established nation, such as our own, the question of identity—of "Who am I?"—may be easier to answer than for those living in a country that itself is only just emerging. Imagine if your link with a place were taken away: no town to say you came from, no "Eastern" logo to stick to the rear window of the family car. Maybe not even a family.

How much more difficult and confusing would this question of identity then be if local or national values were blurred by years of famine, colonization, and the sorrows of war. The distinguishing color of your passport might thus be bled with other colors and the photo on your driver's license become a double or triple exposure.

The literature of emerging nations presents exactly these multiple and complex images from which we may learn both about these countries themselves and about who we are as Americans, ourselves lost in a frightening house of mirrors at the end of the century.

Course Outline:

We will travel around the world, heading west into the sun, but starting first at home. All our readings will be contemporary, though we will start with an earlier poem by W.H. Auden to establish some themes.

Unless otherwise noted, readings will be in OWL:
from Great Britain: Auden, "The Unknown Citizen"

from the United States: Forche, "The Colonel"
           Kingston, "The Grandfather . . ."

from Japan: all selections in OWL
        from Cultures: pp. 104-109; 153-164; 252-259

from China: all selections in OWL
        from Cultures: pp. 43-54; 259-266; 394-407; 407-417

from Vietnam: all selections from OWL
          Sorrow of War, Bao Ninh
          Scent of Green Papaya (film)

from India: all selections from OWL
         from Cultures, pp. 61-81; 164-172

from Egypt: all selections from OWL
        from Cultures: pp. 120-133; 561-567
          The Sixth Day, Chedid

from Israel and Palestine: all selections from OWL
         from Cultures: pp 134-140; 612-620

from Greece: Zorba The Greek, Katzantzakis

from Algeria: all selection from OWL

Requirements:

1. class participation
2. daily quizzes
3. two 4-6 page papers on assigned topics
4. a comprehensive final exam

I will assign no percentages for these requirements, but I will know each of you well by the end of the term. Please know that I value most a curious mind, so ask questions-- of the literature, of me and your fellow travellers, and of yourself. And let's also have some fun along the way.