Complit 309 Great Works of Modern Literature: The Truth of Others (Fall 2019, M/W 4:00pm-5:15pm, Curtin Hall 124)

In this class we'll be exploring a modern literary experience that is mediated by a narrative encounter with otherness. This experience of otherness can be cultural, social, racial/ethnic, religious, or sexual, and is always embodied. We will focus on a range of well-known works from various parts of the world and examine how in these works the encounter with various kinds of otherness unsettles our normal ways of looking at the world, bringing to crisis our assumed values, cultural identities, and a sense of a stable and coherent self always in control... Central to our study are various textual formations that generate an embodied experience of the Other, creating an array of literary subjectivities capable of answering to the truth of others. We will examine how literary texts posit different epistemological relations to this truth and enable our experience of otherness to be authentic and richly rewarding. In this semester, we'll be exploring also the topics of diaspora and immigration in the context of both postcolonial and global capitalist conditions worsened by the rise of nationalism. The general goal of the course is to expose students to the transformative power of literature and to equip them with ethical and interpretive tools to make sense of a number of literary and visual texts produced in diverse cultural and social conditions. In addition, they may assimilate a variety of critical ideas relevant for addressing some of the most urgent problems of society and find creative solutions. The course is taught by Jian Xu, Professor of Comparative Literature, and satisfies the Humanities GER and L&S International Requirement.