

EN 4813/6813
The World Novel since 1900:
The Human and its Others
Fall, 2015 T/TH 9:30-10:45
Professor: Dr. Andrea Spain



The manifestos of the historical avant-garde at the beginning of the 20th century sought to situate art in relation to the rising mechanization of everyday life. As technologies of war, transportation, and entertainment begin to radically transform senses of time and place, so do our understandings of “the human.” In this class, we will read a selection of novellas and novels from 1913-2013 that take up the mantle – and the attendant anxieties – of defining “the human.” We will also mark shifts in the form of the novel accompanying those of perception and memory, displacement and loss, and formulations of futurity and hope. We will analyze how these shifts refigure humanity, or, for some, the post-human. Reading writers as diverse as Joseph Conrad, Jorge Luis Borges, Michael Ondaatje, Lisa Fugard, Monica Ali, Yann Martel, J.M. Coetzee, and Bhanu Kapil, we will pay particular attention to the ways novelists work to figure the human, or unravel its conceptual boundaries, in relation to its “others”: the racialized, the ‘mad,’ the machinic, the animal. We will read short theoretical selections by Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Giorgio Agamben, Deleuze and Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Cary Woolf and Elizabeth Grosz.

Students will write weekly reading responses, give a formal group presentation, take two exams and write a final research project.