EVENT TITLE: Teaching Global Literature in the American Creative Writing Class

EVENT DESCRIPTION:
Ursula K. Le Guin said, “We read books to find out who we are.” With rising nationalism and fundamentalism worldwide, this quote is of even greater importance now. We underestimate our students’ hunger and curiosity when we teach them worlds they already know. Panelists will discuss works of global literatures (including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry) uniquely suited to the contemporary American classroom along with teaching strategies and exercises.

EVENT CATEGORY: Pedagogy

Event Organizer & Moderator:

Sayantani Dasgupta is the author of Fire Girl: Essays on India, America, & the In-Between--finalist for the 2016 Foreword Indies Award--and the chapbook The House of Nails: Memories of a New Delhi Childhood. She teaches at UNCW, and has led writing workshops in India, Italy, Mexico, & the US.

Event Participants:

Khem K. Aryal writes fiction and poetry. His fiction has appeared in such journals as Isthmus, Hawai’i Pacific Review, Poydras Review, Northeast Review, and Warscapes. He is the author of two poetry books, Epic Teashop and Kathmandu Saga, and teaches creative writing at Arkansas State University.

Mildred K Barya is Assistant professor of creative writing and literature at UNC-Asheville, board member of African Writers Trust (AWT) and has published three poetry books & short stories in various journals. She holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Denver & blogs on literary matters.

Aruni Kashyap : Writer, translator, and poet. Author of The House With a Thousand Stories (Viking/Penguin, 2013) and His Father’s Disease (Context: An Amazon Company, 2019). Translates from the Indian language Assamese to English and Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Georgia.

Moderator’s outline:
Welcome, Introduction and Opening Remarks: After I have welcomed everyone in my capacity as the moderator, I will introduce myself, and briefly talk about the importance of such a panel. I will also mention the three things that I think are on our agenda: What questions have brought us here? What are we hoping to achieve through our panel discussion? What sorts of writing/reading/teaching tools we hope to give the audience by the end of the discussion (total 5-6 minutes)
Introduction of the Panel: I will ask each of you to introduce yourself and talk about what brought you to this panel. What questions/issues you have faced in your teaching? (15 minutes or so, 5-6 minutes per person). Discussion + end with writing/reading/teaching tools we hope to give the audience. Audience questions: last 20 minutes.

Khem K Aryal’s outline:

I plan to take a theoretical approach: I will discuss that by heavily relying on “mainstream” literature and encouraging students to write what they know, to “show” instead of to “tell,” and to concentrate on perfecting form, contemporary workshop pedagogy has turned the notion of “craft” into an exercise in surface manipulation of language at the cost of socio-cultural and theoretical lenses to study and create literature. I will argue that introducing global literature to the creative writing class will result in a broader and more inclusive definition of “craft” since socio-cultural and theoretical lenses will be crucial to reading, understanding, and enjoying such literature.

Mildred Barya’s Outline:

Building on what Khem has highlighted, I’ve observed that students in my creative writing classes sometimes resist Global/World Literature because: 1.) It’s not familiar and they’ve been trained or advised to stick with what they know. 3). In terms of form, craft, and content, it does not easily conform or fit within Western-Eurocentric categories or labels they’ve been exposed to, and may therefore not want to deal with discomfort. In order to clear such resistances, I’ll discuss how engaging with what’s unfamiliar could, in fact, inspire their creative imagination in ways that broaden their knowing and writing approaches.

Aruni Kashyap’s outline:
Over the years, I have taught three important women writers from South Asia who write in different widely spoken languages: Bengali, Urdu, and Assamese. Teaching stories by Ismat Chughtai (Urdu), Ashapurna Debi (Bengali) and Indira Goswami (Assamese) has not only enabled me to teach subjects such as setting, craft, and perspective in a different way, but have also generated stimulating discussions in my classes about other related aspects such as censorship, role of the writer in a society, the importance of the public intellectual, and literary debates associated with the global south. Teaching these stories also demonstrate how a rich text enables conversations and fits a wide array of teaching criteria.