

EN 4/6813
The World Novel since 1900:
The Human and its Others
Fall, 2013 T/TH 3:30-4:45
Professor: 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, as perception and memory, displacement and loss, futurity and hope, are refigured through writing for humanity, or, for some, for the post-human. Reading writers such as Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Angela Carter, Michael Ondaatje, Haruki Murakami, Yann Martel, J.M. Coetzee, Samuel Delany, 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 Agamen, Deleuze and Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Cary Woolf and Elizabeth Grosz.

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