

**CHP 395 Spring 06  
The Politics of Eroticism East and West**

**TR 12-1:20 Campus Honors House**

**Professor Nancy Blake 3092C FLB 11-12 T,W  
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**In the course of this semester we will be exploring some of the most enduring myths of eroticism including the *Tristan and Isolde* legend in the medieval versions and in Wagner's opera. We will also attempt to come to terms with Eastern versions of erotic passion in the *Tale of Genji* from feudal Japan and the Hindu *Kalika Purana*. We will then turn to more contemporary renditions of the themes.**

**Some of the questions we will be asking are: is there a necessary link between the erotic and the forbidden? Do cross cultural studies reveal any universal elements in erotic experience? What does the portrayal of passion tell us about a society's value system? Art and literature speak to us of the unspeakable in the erotic experience which is often inseparable from the religious notions of taboo and sacrifice. Thus eroticism brings into play the very basis of the sacred and is traditionally linked to the mysteries considered fundamental to each culture. Do thinkers closer to us shed light on the phenomenon? According to Freud love is a "short psychosis". While twentieth century French philosopher Georges Bataille defines eroticism as "assenting to life up to the point of death".**

**The course will be conducted as a seminar. Each session features some lecture material and discussion time. The discussion periods will sometimes be led by a member of the group who will provide background on the reading and a series of questions or themes to be explored during the session. (About 5 pages of written handout to the group)..**

**The members of the seminar will also prepare an individual project of about 15 pages to be presented orally to the group during the final class meetings. The written report will be presented to the instructor as a draft, then in final version. There will be an individual oral defense of the final project in the instructor's office during the exam week in lieu of a final exam. There will be no in class exams, but there will be one take home exam and there may be quizzes on the readings.**

**This is a seminar and attendance is obligatory. Three unexcused absences will result in lowering of grade. Oral participation and quizzes to count 50%. Seminar presentation 20%. Written work 30%.**

Jan 17 Introduction

Jan 19 Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*

Jan 24 *Tristan* cont.

Jan 26 *Tristan* cont.

Jan 31 Richard Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*

Feb 2 Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji* **Proposal for individual project due**

Feb 7 *Genji* cont.

Feb 9 *Genji* cont.

Feb 14 Heinrich Zimmer, *The King and the Corpse* (Hindu mythology) **Bibliography for project due**

Feb 16 Zimmer cont.

Feb 21 Georges Bataille, *Erotism*

Feb 23 Bataille cont.

Feb 28 Casanova, *Memoirs*

Mar 2 Casanova cont. **Outline for final project due**

Mar 7 Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*

Mar 9 Luciano Visconti, *Death in Venice*

Mar 14 Review session **Take home exam**

Mar 16 **Mid-term exam discussion of results**

Mar 18-26 Spring vacation

Mar 28 D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Mar 30 Lawrence cont.

Apr 4 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*

Apr 6 *Lolita*, cont.

Apr 11 *Lolita*, cont.

Apr 13 Bai Hua, *The Remote Country of Women*

Apr 18 Bai Hua, cont.

Apr 20 Oshima, *In the Realm of the Senses* **First draft of final project due**

Apr 25 Presentations of final projects

Apr 27 Presentations of final projects

May 2 Presentations of final projects **Final project due**