Comp Lit 100A Nations, Regions, and Beyond: Greece and Cyprus

Comp Lit 100A Nations, Regions, and Beyond (4) F, W, S. Intensive study of national and regional cultural and literary traditions from across the globe, among them the literary and cultural production of the Middle East, Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia. Prerequisite: satisfactory completion of the lower-division writing requirement. May be repeated for credit as topics vary. (VIII)

DESCRIPTION:
Through a combination of literary genres the course explores the relationship between place and inspiration with a focus on Greece and Cyprus. ‘Place’ is meant as geographical location mediated by politics, and ‘inspiration’ as the imaginative process that reconciles the complex dimensions of lived experience. The course opens with a look at literary incarnations of Athens, whose illustrious history and classical heritage have drawn some of the greatest minds, from Lord Byron to Sigmund Freud, and from Mark Twain to Gustav Flaubert. After brief literary stopovers in Santorini and Delos the course moves to an in-depth survey of the contemporary literatures of Cyprus. The course undertakes to represent the diverse communities of the island, as well as its visitors, and its diasporic subjects (living and writing abroad). The writing includes poetry and fiction but also the literary and autobiographical impressions of expatriate Cypriots, visitors, and foreign residents. With particular attention on 20th century and contemporary writing, the course explores themes of war, peace, ethnic division and unity, gender and sexual choice as these emerge in the many literatures of Cyprus. The literature will be complemented with critical readings that will help students gain theoretical insights on the issues affecting every facet of the island’s history and its peoples.

A. Athens: Literary Escapes
Athens is one of the world’s most visited and most written about cities. Its symbolic significance, its monuments, and its troubled history are examined through brief excerpts from a large number of important thinkers who have visited and written about the city. (This part of the course will draw its material mainly from the chapter “Athens” in A Literary Companion to Travel in Greece, edited by Richard Stoneman (Penguin, 1984; 119-153).

B. Santorini: Island of Ghosts; Delos: Island of Gods
This section of the course will study closely the poem “Santorini” by Nobel Laureate poet Odysseas Elytis; one of the most representative literary ‘births’ of the island, and look at excerpts from Ovid that concern Delos.

C. Cyprus in Travel Narratives
Through a selection of travel narratives from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries combined with photographic material we will examine debates concerning East and West and a sense of belonging. These debates will provide the connecting link with the first two sections of the course (above). Ideological positionings will be discussed in some detail because students will witness ideological tensions during their stay.

D. George Seferis’ Cyprus: the restlessness of longing
Students read poems by George Seferis, one of Greece’s two Nobel Prize winners, who visited Cyprus in 1953, 1954, and 1955. Apart from well-documented, Seferis’ visit inspired some fine verses that often focused on particular places, drawing poetical sketches that are philosophical, historical, and overwhelmingly lyrical. His Cyprus collections include the
famous poems “Agianapa I” and “Agianapa II” that weave a striking narrative about the place that used to be a small fishing village and is now a renowned cosmopolitan tourist resort.

E. Nicosi-senses
This session would include a selection of poems and short stories written by Cypriot writers about Nicosia as capital city but also as imaginary site of transformations and affective possibilities. Readings include Nora Nadjarian’s *Ledra Street*, Akis Makris’ “Journal of Nicosia,” Stephanos Stephanides’ “Broken Heart,” Niki Marangou’s “Nicosia.”

F. Literature of Conflict and Division
Through readings about conflict and separation, students will gain some idea about the harsh politics of the island but will also be exposed to unorthodox but useful ways of interpreting the conflict. Poems and short stories by Lysandros Pitharas (especially his poem “Green Line”), Aydın Mehmet Ali, Andriana Ierodiakonou, Tamer Öncül, Elli Peonidou, and Neşe Yasın would create a dynamic collection for students to examine in relation to this theme.

G. Aphrodite: from Sexy Goddess to Contemporary Politics
Readings in this section of the course will focus on Aphrodite as Legend and as Tourist Commodity. Students will visit the birthplace of the goddess on their way to Akamas Peninsula, almost half way between Limassol and Paphos. References to Aphrodite will be explored in the work of George Seferis, and Cypriot poets including (but not limited to) Alev Adil and Gürgenç Korkmazel.