

**Course: Cultures, Literatures and Languages in Caucasus and Central Asia.  
The case of Azerbaijani**

**Prof. Rahilya M. Geybullayeva, Baku Slavic University**

WhatsApp contact: +994 50 212 5252

***Course description:***

This course's academic concept is based on *theory and criteria of national and transnational literature and culture, interdisciplinary core of literary studies*. We refer both to inward (plot, image, literary imagination, symbols, poetic forms, literary trends) and outward principles: literary contexts such as philosophical, sociological, historical scope, cultural, political boundaries. The course features interdisciplinary approach to literary studies, based on sociology and historical background investigating the research question of what is *national identity and national literature and culture*, how parameters of this identity have gone through transformation in history, going back from post-soviet period to medieval and ancient history, definition of nationality of literatures, with remarkable parallels from various transitional periods and national literatures. The course is concentrated on highlighting these topics through *criteria of Caucasus, Central Asia and Azerbaijani literature*. No previous experience in this field of studies is necessary.

***Course objectives:***

This course contributes to theory and criteria of national literature& culture, which is still, after three decades of collapsing identities, remains struggle point for many people. Focusing on Azerbaijani literature and culture, our course intends to bring parallels to *post-soviet transformations* over time, from earlier transition periods, and across regions. Comparison of modern-day Italian literature& culture and in historical discourse of Roman Empire will be good to understand to develop a critical understanding of how demarcation of some identity components in post-socialist transition period made important conceptualization in "History of National Literature," flexibility of criteria because of flexibility of national identity components and lack of certainty in definition of fragile national borders.

***Course purpose and learning outcomes***

By the end of the course, you should:

- Know the historical outlines of theory/criteria of national literature on an example of Azerbaijani literature
- Be familiar with some of the struggling points on "nationality" of cultural and literary works, social and political contexts which generates them
- Recognize key themes, images, and components
- Recognize connections among national literatures& cultures through archetypes; common moulds with different interpretation; alphabet reforms and identity

### ***Assignments and grading***

As when learning any new course, you will have to do substantial work inside and outside of class in order to achieve the learning goals for this course.

### ***Final project***

In addition to the short presentations and papers, you will complete a final paper with a longer text (around 15 pages) about any of discussed questions from the syllabus. Final paper assumes independent research and incorporate a wider range of scholarly sources than was the case for the shorter projects. Each student will be assigned a *different literary text or cultural factor* for the final project. The final seminar meeting (and part or all of the penultimate meeting, depending on enrollment) will be devoted to student presentations, 10–15 minutes long, summing up their findings.

### **Reading**

For this course we will use some translated texts and films based on the mentioned Caucasus, Central Asia and Azerbaijani texts. You are free to choose any text for comparison from Italian and other literatures and films.

### **Course Content**

1. **Introduction of the course concept: why this course, research methods and learning outcomes.** Nation, literature and theory of national literature. “We” and “others” identity and national culture. **The name of nation: exonym and endonym.** Rutul tribe in “Aeneid” and in Azerbaijan. mogul (mugal), tat, tallish; Rum, Cartveli (Georgian), ejem, German-nemes-alman. **The name of a country.** Persian and Pars; Roman, Latin and Italian; Greece and Hellenic; Russian and Soviet. Tradition: country by a name of a dynasty Mugal Dynasty, Sefevids’ Dynasty, Ottoman Empire.  
**Role of religion and dominant factor in the Middle Ages** in shaping of multicultural communities (on an example of empires: Mugal Dynasty, Sefevids’ Dynasty, Ottoman Empire in Medieval period).  
**State principle as a dominant factor for identity in modern history.**
2. **The understanding of “literature” and “edebiyat”** across historical periods and in contemporary period. Between literature and folklore.
3. **Is chronicle literature? Is sacred book literature? Samples.** Hagiography-didactic literature-sacred literature; historical chronicles, epics; modern-day understanding of literature. *“Kitabi Dada Gorgud”* epic between history and myth. *Parallels* form other national literatures.
4. **Starting points of literature for various modern-day nations and their comparative analysis** in synchronia na diachronia. Nation as a concept. Nation and Literary Studies: history of nation? tribes? country? history of literature of which? Contemporary debates and historical background. What is starting point for Azerbaijani literature? Analogues from Italian literature. 4 criteria for national literature?

5. West and East: Cultural paradigms and their transformation in the epics "Kitabi Dada Gorgud"(circa 14 century) (by Caucasian Oghuz-Azerbaijanis, Aq Koyunlu) and "Nibelungenlied" (circa 1200) (by Germans around Frankfurt)
6. **Cultural space of the text** as a criterion for national literature. **Wine** as a symbol in Medieval classic Islamic poetry and as a food in folklore? Classic literature: wine in Islamic poetry – **forbidden drink in religion or glorified drink in medieval Islamic poetry?** Wine parallels with Christianity and Judaism. Translation or semiosphere (cultural history) of the word *wine*. Between *şarab* and *çaxır* in Azerbaijani language. Background. Parallels of wine in folklore (Epic “Kitabi Dede Qorqud”). Parallels with forbidden rules and comparison with icon in Orthodoxy.
7. **Cultural space of the text** as a criterion for national literature. **Social psychology and marriage models in the national literature:** literary works by M.F. Akhundov (18 century) to J. Mammadguluzadeh (20-th century).
8. **Cultural space of the text** as a criterion for national literature. Social psychology and **marriage models** in reflected in national literature (based on “Kitabi Dede Gorgud”) (levirate, sororate, polygamy, monogamy, zina). **Comparison with modern-day rules in Azerbaijani society.**
9. **Cultural space of the text** as a criterion for national literature. Soviet period and socialist realism in literature. Azerbaijani case. J. Jabbarli, Anar.
10. **Cultural space of the text** and its contribution: Is social psychology of a nation, national values, cultural traditions changing? Using behavioral models in Azerbaijani literary works in chronical line from “Kitabi Dada Gorgud” to M.F. Akhundov and J/ Mamed-kuli-zadeh, I.Shixli. Using wine symbol and food from medieval Azerbaijani literary works and in modern Azerbaijani society. Comparison **other societies** (geisha, adultery, concubine) - “Wild Swans” by J. Chung, “Memoirs of a Geisha” by Artur Golden.
11. Medievality: links to the ancient (sample of **‘kitab’ term translation**) and modern day (**medieval multilingual authors in XXI century**). Azerbaijani literary terms and their regional parallels (semiosphere). Translation stereotypes and their relation to modern identity
12. Medieval identity and Past in the future: shared literary and cultural past in modern-day debates and background for dispatches. **Religious identity** as a dominant criteria in **Medieval period**. Modern-day criteria for medieval period literature and culture. Transitional periods and division of national and cultural identity as reason for enmity. **Ethnicity and country of origin as identity factors.**  
*Nizami in modern interpretation.* Parallels of struggles from other national literatures and cultures (as Shota Rustaveli, Ibn Farabi)

13. **Language of the literary text criterion.** Role and status of language and its role in “nationality” of literature from mediocrity to XXI century. Languages of Islamic and Christian classic literature. Shah Ismail Khatai and Maria Stuart; Nizami and Dante.  
 “Molla Nasreddin” journal and its language (beginning of the 20-th century). Language of literature and double ifrntity in XX-XXI centirues. Khalid Housseyni, Murakami and others.  
**Plurilinguality of national literatures? Can literature define nationality?**  
**Language of national literature:** monolingual or multilingual (China, Malta; Spanish and Hispanic):  
**Language – elite** (Latin, Persian)-**sacred** (Arabic, Greek)- **native** - factor of national literature language?  
**Language of classic lit and language of folklore** (in synchrony) –KDG (written folklore)  
**Lit. language priorities** (M.F/ Akhundov and Vagif- compare; H. Javid, J. Jabbarly and their contemporaries - ) **and discussions on classic high style** (Akhundov, ) or Anamin kitabi by J. Mamed-Kulu-zadeh
14. **State-ideology principle: what we share with others. Divided nations.** Irish case. Dutch and Germans. Germans and 3 country + Scandinavia.  
 Azerbaijanis between Azerbaijan and Iran, between former Soviet people.  
 Language of Iranian Azerbaijanis.
15. **Historical background- collapsed empires from Medieval period and new nations.** *Latins and their components and future name as in Aeneid by Virgil.*  
 Alphabet as identity factor in Azerbaijani case. Parallels with other nations (confessional and state division).

Discussions on "nationality" of some cultural heritage. *Hybridization of ethnoses and elements of cultures* on an example of comparative line with other (social) identify factors, other branches of the arts as *cuisine* (potato, tomato, tea); *music* (mugham, jaz, chorus, classic genres). Musical instruments (tar, keman between Iranians, Azerbaijanis, Pakistanis, Armenians and their national definitions at the museums).

*Hybridization of cultures in literary texts and regional-state criterion*

Recycling cultures.

**Final project day**