Comparative Literature 600
Topics in Comparative Literary Analysis
COLT 600, #22086D, Spring 2009, Tuesdays, 5-7:50 p.m., THH 105


**Practices of the Exotic**

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Although frequently dismissed as superficial or censured as a tool of empire, exoticism remains an alluring presence in various kinds of cultural productions; critics may denounce the power of exoticism in controlling others, yet readers and viewers often seem to relish the outlandish depiction of different peoples and places. In this seminar, we will explore the pleasures and perils of exoticism through close readings of narrative fiction, opera and critical theory, with some attention paid as well to poetry, travel writing, painting, and film. Topics will include the possibilities of exoticism as a form of knowledge, the bonds between exoticist and imperial discourses, the role of self-exoticism in constructions of nationhood, the links between exoticism and sexuality, the workings of theory and performance in bringing to light exoticist practices, and the possible cultural intersection of exoticism and cosmopolitanism. Readings may include fiction by Alencar, Borges, Carpentier, Forster, Fuentes, Hwang, James, Lahiri, Mann, Melville, Mérimée, Vargas Llosa, Verne, and Woolf, as well as operas by Adams, Bizet, Mozart, Puccini, Strauss, and Verdi. As we search for specific definitions and theories of the exotic, we will also read critical essays by Abbate, Appiah, Barthes, Fischer-Lichte, Gilman, Lindenberger, McClary, Robinson, Said, Segalen, Todorov, and Young.