Why do we study Literature? Literature seems to be a subject that both befuddles and captivates students. There are usually no “right” or “best” answers. But at the same time, some students credit it for inspiring them and opening up their minds to new worlds and perspectives. According to surveys scientists consider the study of Literature one of the best investments they have made.

First, through Literature, one can acquired a love of books and the joy of reading. Reading is a joyful, educational and liberating experience. You are transported from your circumstances into another world, another time and another civilization. Reading is the key that unlocks the door to the treasury of the world.

Second, reading literature helps the person to think clearly, write clearly and speak clearly. Clarity of thought and expression is a virtue which should be cultivated.

Third, reading literature gives one a better understanding of human nature and the complexity of the human condition. It makes one less judgemental and more sympathetic. Literature can also be more insightful than non-fiction.

Often, there are the utilitarian values placed on Literature. It helps develop students’ critical thinking skills in the quest for the ubiquitous 21st century competencies. Linguistically, it gives students the opportunity to analyse and appreciate good language use by highly regarded wordsmiths. It helps students gain a better understanding of the societies which produce the literature to foster greater empathy for others.

Introduction. Above all that, Literature education is about teaching young people to appreciate what it means to be human. It is about what it means to care for someone or something and what it means if we lose it. It is asking what is important to us as a person as we relate to the world around us. Through the novel, the poem, the short story, the dramatic text, we explore with students different contexts which all deal with what it means to live and to live well.

Many students who struggle with Literature often ask these questions: “Why do we need to study Literature? How is it important for us?”

Although many people today may not have as much interest in reading literature, preferring to engage in new forms of entertainment such as computer games, I believe that literature remains relevant to all of us. It teaches us about life by exposing us to the lives of different people through their stories, and from these vicarious experiences, we learn important lessons and values.

Literature teaches us humanity to be sensitive and empathetic towards others. It also provides us an outlet for our thoughts and emotions and imagination. All these can help address the problems that our world is facing now, such as increasing intolerance and stress in life. Above all, Literature teaches us language and the power of communication, a skill we cannot do without in the 21st century.

Literature is about good writing. Literature education teaches one to appreciate various forms of writing and hopefully, trains one to write well. In the 21st century, forms of communication have multiplied, making the written word all the more
important. After all, we all message, email, blog, post on social media in our daily lives. Hence, the ability to write well and also to appreciate good writing by others can only enhance our experiences.

How to teach literature?

The problematic nature of teaching contemporary world literature begins with its competing terms: world literature, global literature, international literature, as well as the “deep divide between comparative literature and world literature” (Damrosch & Spivak, 2011, p. 457). Many writers’ lives cross national boundaries: Albert Camus is studied as a French author, despite having been born and raised in Algeria; likewise, Joseph Conrad is known as a great English writer, although he was born in Poland and did not speak English fluently until he was over 20 years old. Contemporary writers often have even greater “multinational literary heritage” (Damrosch, 2009, p. 9):

**Research Methodology.** A question concerns what we mean by the term ‘literature’ in the twenty-first century, as we see a reduction in use of printed, published books through the rise of visual and multi-media texts, books, and self-publishing. For today’s literature classroom to mirror what and how students are reading outside the academy, instructors need to include film; graphic novels; online multimedia; and social media such as blogs, wikis, and social networking sites in the study of literary texts. New technology mediated reading and writing practices are transforming how we write, read, interpret, understand, and relate to ‘literature.’ In addition to opening up the definitions of ‘literature’ and ‘text,’ new reading and publishing formats have changed the timeframe of “contemporary literature.”

Traditionally, the teaching of contemporary literature has been problematic due to the long textbook publication process. Relying on commercial publications meant that classes were working on material that could easily be three or more years old. The wait for literature written in foreign languages – particularly by new authors – to be translated is even longer. Emerging voices are often published in online literary magazines and self-publishing sites long before finding a way into academic anthologies. With the advent of online publishing, the definition of ‘contemporary’ is changing, as literature can be produced in ‘real time,’ responding to current events as they unfold. In order for a course to address current changes in cultural and political life, teachers must include web resources and interactive online forums that are constantly updated.

**New Directions in Global Learning**

Instructors can use online resources and multimedia in ways that help address problems of limited access to and understanding of foreign languages and cultures, and include lesser-known international writers and texts. Blogs and wikis; online self-publishing and translation sites; maps, timelines, primary documents, and other sources of historical and socio-political context; and social media platforms can help students attain a more inclusive understanding of contemporary world literature. Moreover, by integrating these resources into the course content as well as classroom activities, instructors promote a learning process that is dynamic, collaborative, and relevant to students’ lives. By contributing to international blogs, collaborative Wikis, and interactive discussion fore, students actively participate in the concrete, quotidian realities and lives of contemporary literature. Literary websites provide access to new writing in translation, so that students can see a range of authors and texts. Online translation and publishing sites provide a valuable resource in introducing students to a range of newly emerging authors and texts that may not yet be translated or anthologized in print publications. Another advantage of these sites is that they often offer bilingual versions of texts, so students can get the sound and look of the original version and teachers can point out divergences in the translated rendering of the text.

**Analysis and results.** Other websites contain primary sources in the form of original documents, maps, and interactive timelines with links to historical and cultural events to give students a broader understanding of the national issues and the time period of a particular author and text. For example, websites such as Guernica: A Magazine of Art and Politics allow students to post comments in response to articles and images and thus actively engage with and contribute to the body of views and analyses of texts they read in class. In his article, “Conversation in Context: A Dialogic Approach to Teaching World Literature,” Gary Harrison (2009) notes “the need to recalibrate the concept of world literature from a canon of masterworks to a way of reading that places texts from the world into conversation with one another” (p. 210). The vast realm of open-source news, cultural and political commentary, and literary websites allows instructors to go beyond this conversation of texts to allow students to enter into an ongoing dialogue with today’s culture and events. A further step is to have students respond to what they read and see in a public online forum, and eventually create their own texts. The China Beat: Blogging How the East is Read provides a forum for students to make the transition from readers/spectators to creators of texts and videos, adding their voices to the evolving tapestry of online literary criticism. Another website, Repeating Islands: News and Commentary on Caribbean Culture, Literature, and the Arts, was created by two Puerto Rican literature professors for the purpose of connecting and sharing information about the multi-lingual Caribbean community. Students can both read and contribute information, comments, and questions on the site’s blog.

Web 2.0 technologies allow students to interact with one another and with the outside world; participate in reviews and discussions of literature; and even author their own documents. Self-publishing programs, blogs, and social media offer ways for individuals to write and access audiences without having to go through the publishing industry and mainstream media and distribution channels. ‘Other’ voices get heard, both those of new and lesser-known/unknown writers and those of the students themselves, as they post their creative and critical writing on websites, blogs, wikis, or even as finished self-published books. This also allows continuity and community-building from one course, one semester, and one year to the next, as students can benefit from and add to the insights and contributions of the previous year’s students.

**Conclusion and recommendations.** Because a course on contemporary world literature raises questions about the meanings of ‘contemporary,’ ‘world,’ and ‘literature’ in our globalized, technology saturated and -mediated society, and because the Internet has fundamentally changed the mechanisms for creating, distributing, and viewing texts, faculty are called on to include evolving resources and technologies using innovative methods and approaches to the course content and assignments. By incorporating open-source web resources such as online texts, social forums, and multimedia into such a course, instructors can help connect world literature to current affairs and social issues, and to students’ lives in contemporary society. Today, established, well-known authors, new writers starting out, and even the students themselves, have elaborate and accessible online presences, which may include Web sites, blogs, Twitter accounts, and social media pages. These interactive technologies are being used by published authors and amateurs alike to recount, interpret, and respond to global events as they unfold. Ultimately, a contemporary world literature course can increase students’ awareness and understanding of global events and of the role that literature and writers play with respect to global issues and relationships. Indeed, students can themselves become active
participants in the development of world literature, adding their voices to the continuing conversation within the present and future emerging media environment.

REFERENCES