

## Who's Afraid of a Postmodern Novel?

### Contemporary novels with heart and soul

<b>Course #</b>	21SWA
<b>Format:</b>	Seminar
<b>Moderator:</b>	Nancy Coiner
<b>Date and Time:</b>	Monday, 9:30-11:30 AM 10 weeks, starting February 22
<b>Location:</b>	<b>ONLINE, via Zoom</b>
<b>Maximum number of participants:</b>	18
<b>Auditors accepted:</b>	Yes, up to 2; Auditors are expected to do the reading.

**Purpose:** Together we will read three beautiful, funny, moving novels of the past thirty years. As we work through our favorite passages, we will discuss how these brilliant contemporary writers speak to the world we are living in now.

**Description:** If the payoff is big, we don't mind investing a little effort at the beginning, right? As with Shakespeare's plays, contemporary novels can seem daunting at first glance. But with background information and good discussions, some of these challenging novels open to reveal treasures of beauty, wit, humor, and genuine emotion.

We will read three prize-winning postmodern novels: Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and Saunders' *Lincoln in the Bardo*.

All three focus on how we interpret the world, not just through our minds but through our physical bodies and historical situations. They show us how war and violence lead to unexpected encounters with complicated strangers, who may alter our understanding of ourselves. And they remind us how we heal from loss and trauma: through our memories, our moments of laughter, and (above all) our small acts of kindness and connection.

**Role of participants:** As in other LIR literature classes, members will lead a discussion or present on background matters (the authors, the history behind the novels, or other aspects of postmodern literature). As we read and share insights about passages, our discussions will guide us to a richer understanding of these novels and our postmodern world.

**Resources:** Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient*. Vintage Books 1992.  
Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Mariner Books, 2005.  
George Saunders, *Lincoln in the Bardo*. Random House, 2017.  
(Any edition will do.)

**About the Moderator:** Nancy has taught college and high-school English. She loves to read and talk about books.