

**21L.488**  
**Contemporary Literature**  
Spring 2007

**Characteristics of Contemporary Literature**  
(constructed, collectively, throughout the course)

1. Uses code switching between elevated literary language and "lower" forms, between high art and low art
2. Deploys metafictional techniques to draw our attention to the work's relationship (or non-relationship) to "reality"
3. Emphasizes performative nature of our identities; they aren't "true" or natural but just seem that way because they are consistent and persistent
4. Emphasizes fragmentation in human experience of postmodern culture, and as an artistic strategy
5. Breaks down our faith in the supremacy of the rational, scientific human being (e.g. comparisons between animals and humans and machines)
6. Questions our ability to understand ourselves and our culture
7. Questions omniscience by questioning our ability to accurately see reality
8. Questions the link between language and reality (everything is a biased representation)
9. Depicts border-crossing and migration as fundamental to human experience
10. Emphasizes the permeability of old boundaries: between men and women; between the East and the West; between high and low culture
11. Shows people struggling to find meaning in a world that doesn't offer us the old assurances (of either faith or science)