It is a truth almost universally acknowledged that Europe occupies a privileged space in cultural and political history as the cradle of global empires, the source of major languages spoken around the world, and the arbiter of aesthetic canons. More recently, Europe has also become the new home of migrants from various other parts of the world. Literature and the other arts have often functioned as tools through which Europe has defined itself against other peoples and places and deployed its perceived cultural preeminence. Yet the arts have also served as a critical space in which Europeans themselves as well as citizens of other parts of the world – often writing in European languages – have challenged Europe’s claims of primacy, questioned the boundaries that seem to divide it from the rest of the world, and investigated the pleasures and perils of exoticism. Focusing on Europe’s relations with the Americas and the so-called Orient, we will study texts by various European and non-European authors and artists from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first. These texts may include literary works by Françoise de Graffigny, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, Jorge Luis Borges, Alejo Carpentier, P.D. James, David Henry Hwang, Michel Houellebecq, and David Mitchell; films by Bernardo Bertolucci, Werner Herzog, and Alfonso Cuarón; operas by Antonio Vivaldi and Giacomo Puccini; and critical writings by Victor Segalen, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Tzvetan Todorov, and Edward Said.