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ENG 3704-002: Late Twentieth-Century American Literature

Tim Engles
Eastern Illinois University

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**Late Twentieth-Century American Literature:
 “What Was Postmodernism?”
 English 3704—Fall, 2007**

Instructor: Tim Engles (Coleman 3831; 581-6316)
 Office hours: 2:00-3:00, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and by appointment
 Instructor’s e-dress: tdengles@eiu.edu Course listserv: 3704f07@lists.eiu.edu

Texts:

Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (2002)
 Vladimir Nabakov, *Lolita* (1955)
 Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)
 Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions* (1973)
 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)
 Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (1985)
 Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres* (1991)
 Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
 (read the following carefully; these words constitute our contract,
 and I will request your written agreement to them)

This course will include analysis of literature written in the second half of the Twentieth Century, including both traditionally canonical works and those more recently hailed as important. We will read and discuss some of the “great” literature of this period, paying particular attention to what may or may not be “postmodern” about it. We will do a lot of reading in this course, and much of the material will be difficult to grasp and to discuss; thus, you must prepare for each session by reading the material carefully before class in order to fully participate in our discussions, and in order to get enough out of them.

GRADES: Your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

Exam 1	15%
Final exam	25%
2 short essays	10% each
Formal essay (6-8 pages)	20%
Participation/quizzes/attendance	20%

REGARDING WRITING: All writing assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due, whether the student is in class or not. Papers will be graded on a one hundred-point scale, and late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may turn in papers before their due dates if you know you must miss class that day. Good, clear, careful writing and solid, insightful content will improve paper grades dramatically.

REGARDING READING (AND QUIZZES): Since one skill you will be developing in this class is the art of textual analysis, you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over (and of course, you must read the novels, rather than notes of some sort about the novels). Instead of wolfing them down right before class, set aside enough time to read all of the assigned pages, and to read them carefully. I suggest that you take notes as you read, then decide for yourself, before coming to class, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light.

Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I will occasionally give “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings. These quizzes will not be announced beforehand and because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after they are taken, they cannot be made up (even if you come to class late). These quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. I recognize that some students must be absent at times; accordingly, when I compile your quiz grades at the end of the semester into an average score, I will drop the lowest one—if you miss a quiz, that will be your one dropped quiz. If you don’t miss any quizzes, I will still drop your lowest score from your quiz average.

E-MAIL ACTIVITY: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently, preferably every weekday, for messages pertaining to the course. E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Our class discussions will sometimes carry over onto the e-mail listserv, and I will occasionally send messages to the entire class. I will subscribe you to the listserv after you send me a message about yourself (from an email account that you use frequently). If you do not send an email message to me at tdengles@eiu.edu by Friday, August 24 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, describe yourself in whatever ways you choose, and also write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and procedures. The latter will constitute your signature of our class contract—that is, the “policies and procedures” you are currently reading. I will send back a reply to your message, and I will use the address you use to send me this message to subscribe you to the class listserv.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: In class, my teaching style is to lead discussions as much as possible, rather than perform lectures. Lectures are fun for me, but as studies have repeatedly demonstrated, less effective for you. As in all of your college courses, you should strive to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question. Again, I plan to keep lectures to a minimum, and I instead want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Finally, please note that drinking beverages in class is okay, but chewing gum or eating food can be very distracting to others. Finally, no caps, please, but if you must wear one, turn it backwards so we can see your eyes.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the “Daily Schedule” (you will be receiving a completed Schedule for the entire semester soon). Note that more than three missed classes will lower your class participation grade to an F. Missing class frequently will also harm your grade on the reading quizzes. Regarding tardiness: this is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another course.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department’s policy on plagiarism: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

ENGLISH 3704: DAILY SCHEDULE (to be continued)

T AUG 21 Introduction to the course, including demonstration and practice of procedures for essay submission

- After class, and before Friday, August 24 at 3:00 p.m., send an e-mail message to Dr. Engles at tdengles@eiu.edu describing yourself in whatever ways you like and confirming that you have read and agree to our “course policies and procedures”—if you have any questions or concerns about the latter, write about those as well

R AUG 23 Butler, *Postmodernism*, Chapter 1

F AUG 24 3:00 p.m.: **Deadline** for sending Dr. Engles an e-mail (cftde@eiu.edu): In your message,

- since I teach several courses, explain which one you’re in (English 3704)
- describe yourself in whatever ways you like, including your career aspirations
- After reading the above “course policies and procedures” carefully, write a statement in this e-mail saying that you have read and agree with them (also, if you disagree with any of them, describe those)
- finally, as with all e-mail messages to your teachers, type your full name at the end of it

T AUG 28 Butler, Chapter 2