

Summer 6-15-2008

# ENG 2009G-001: Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, Gender

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English 2009-001  
 “Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, Gender”  
 Summer 2008/Coleman Hall 3290  
 Class Meeting: 11-12.15pm

Dr. Dagni Bredesen

Office Hours: Tues/Wednesday 12.30-1.30p or by appointment  
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**Course Overview:** In this general education humanities course, we will be reading literature—both fiction and non-fiction—that grapples with markers that crucially define who we understand ourselves to be and how society views us: our age, our race, our gender. One objective of this course is to develop further a critical appreciation of and a confidence in reading and discussing literature and the ways literature speaks of and to the human condition. Furthermore, in this course, you will have many opportunities for extending and enhancing skills in reading, writing, and speaking in general, in ways that will benefit you throughout your University career, and, indeed, your life.

This class is discussion-driven. This means that students need to be prepared for each meeting, which in turn means, that you have read and thought about the text assigned for the day and are able to initiate or contribute to discussion with relevant and meaningful questions or comments that indicate you have attempted to grapple with the assigned texts and questions that frame the course.

**Texts:**

Cisneros, Sandra	<i>House on Mango Street</i>
Douglass, Frederick	<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, a slave</i>
Fuller, Alexandra	<i>Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight</i>
Lahiri, Jhumpa	<i>The Namesake</i>
Neely, Barbara	<i>Blanche on the Lam</i>
Tan, Amy	<i>The Joy Luck Club</i>

Please note: You will also need a College Level Dictionary to succeed in this course.

**Course Assignments:** To achieve the objectives described above students will need to keep up with the rigorous reading schedule and actively participate in the class discussion. The following assignments will foster the active engagement necessary to make this a productive and exciting learning experience.

**I. Exams and Quizzes:** \*There will be a mid-term (20%) and a final examination (25%). I reserve the right to give pop quizzes as warranted if I sense students are not keeping up with their readings.

**II. Papers:** One paper 3-4 pages (15%) and One paper 5-6 pages (20%)

**III. Participation (20%)**

Participation means showing up physically for class with your textbooks or handouts/homework due that day having turned off your cell phone and with your attention focused what we are doing in class. It means participating in the day's discussion by preparing comments or questions and responding to other people's comments or questions. It also means looking for ways to identify links between what one person is saying and your own or another's comments. In relation to questions, I expect that you will look up words you don't understand and try to find out the answer to your question on your own to the best of your ability and to be able to say if you haven't been able to come to a satisfactory answer why the question matters to our understanding of the text. Finally, there will be a number of assignments that will be part of your participation grade.

**Course Schedule:**

Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to change. Also, students should read assigned text(s) prior to the class in which the text(s) will be discussed.

**Week One:**

- M: 06/09      Introduction to course  
Name exercise/ Intro to *House on Mango Street*  
Homework (HMWK): Pick up course texts and begin reading *House on Mango Street*
- T: 06/10      Discuss *HMS* up to and including page 57  
HMWK: Finish *HMS* for Wednesday
- W: 06/11      Discuss *HMS*  
**HMWK:** Read Chapters 1-2 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
- Th: 06/12      Introduction to *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
- Fr: 06/13      *FD*

**Week Two:**

- M: 06/16      Discuss *FD*  
Historical Contexts 1) The Middle Passage; 2) The Runaway Slave Act  
3) The Mason-Dixon Line      4) Abolition Movement
- T: 06/17      Discuss *FD*  
HMWK: Read handout "What to the slave is the fourth of July"
- W: 06/18      Discuss Final conclusion and assigned essay.  
Introduce first paper  
HMWK: Introduction to paper and thesis
- Th: 06/19      Writing Workshop I: The thesis statement
- Fr: 06/20      **Writing Day/ Start reading *Blanche on the Lam***

**Week Three:**

- M: 6/23      First Paper Due  
**Bring 3 copies of your paper to class**
- T: 6/24      Watch film on Ida B. Wells  
HMWK: Finish reading *Blanche on the Lam* and be prepared to discuss in class
- W: 6/25      *BL* Historical Contexts: 5) Reconstruction  
6) Jim Crow Laws  
7) Civil Rights Movement
- Th: 6/26      *BL*
- F: 6/27      *BL* 1<sup>st</sup> paper Revision Due  
Introduce *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*  
Midterm Prep Sheet Distributed Study Groups

**Week Four**

- M: 6/30 Midterm  
HMWK:  
T: 7/01 *DLGT* to p 103 Historical Brief 8) Cecil B. Rhodes and Rhodesia  
W: 7/02 *DLGT* to p 160 Historical Brief: 9) The Rhodesian Civil War a.k.a. War of Liberation and the founding of Zimbabwe  
Th: 7/03 *DLGT* to 209  
Assignment: Finish reading *DLGT* and start reading *Joy Luck Club*  
Fr: 7/04 PUBLIC HOLIDAY / NO Class

**Week Five:**

- M: 7/07 Finish discussion of *DLGT* and discuss  
*Joy Luck Club* "Feathers from a Thousand Li Away"  
T: 7/08 *JLC* "The Twenty-six Malignant Gates"  
W: 7/09 *JLC* "American Translation"  
Th: 7/10 *JLC* "Queen Mother of the Western Skies"  
Fr: 7/11 Finish discussion of *JLC*/introduce *The Namesake*

**Week Six:**

- M: 7/14 *Namesake* chapters 1-4  
T: 7/15 *Namesake* chapters 5-8  
W: 7/16 *Namesake* chapters 9-12  
Th: 7/17 Final paper due  
Fr: 7/18 Final Exam

Note to self: maybe knock out the Joy Luck Club and put back in the Sherman Alexie stories and some Asian short stories and poems.