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ENG 2011G 001: Literature Self World Fiction

Julie Campbell
Eastern Illinois University

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English 2011G: Literature, the Self, and the World: Fiction
(3 Credit Units)
Fall 2017

Dr. Campbell
CH 3572
Office hours TTH 11:00-12:30; 2:00-3:00;
and by appointment

TTH 12:30-1:45pm
CH 3609
jdcampbell@eiu.edu

“Fiction is a kind of simulation, one that runs not on computers but on minds: a simulation of selves in their interactions with others in the social world... based in experience, and involving being able to think of possible futures.”

Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction by Keith Oatley

“Fiction and poetry are doses, medicines. What they heal is the rupture reality makes on the imagination.”

Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal? by Jeanette Winterson

Texts for the Whole Class

Sloan, *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Book Store*
Yoshimoto, *Kitchen*
Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
Kimmel, *Solace of Leaving Early*

Texts for Book Group Choices

Brooks, *Year of Wonders*
Cisneros, *House on Mango Street*
Adichie, *The Thing Around Your Neck*
Kingsolver, *Pigs in Heaven*
Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*
Doyle, *Hound of the Baskervilles*
Paretsky, *Indemnity Only*
Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (Memoir)

E-Texts

Note: The last 4 articles are available in full text formats via Booth Library.

--Julianne Chiaet, “Novel Finding: Reading Literary Fiction Improves Empathy.”

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/novel-finding-reading-literary-fiction-improves-empathy/>

--Sarah Kaplan, “Does Reading Fiction Make You a Better Person?”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2016/07/22/does-reading-fiction-make-you-a-better-person/?utm_term=.db9fdc7d04f5

--Ceridwen Dovey, “Can Reading Make You Happier?”

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/can-reading-make-you-happier>

--Bridget Kies, “Literary Culture Inside and Outside Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice”

--Helen Boswell and Tasha Seegmiller, “Reading Fiction in Biology Class to Enhance Scientific Literacy.

--Josie Billington, “‘Reading for life’: Prison Reading Groups in Practice and Theory.”

--Jeff Whittingham and Stephanie Huffman, “The Effects of Book Clubs on the Reading Attitudes of Middle School Students.”

Course Focus

During the past two decades, the U.S. has experienced a renaissance of reading as book clubs have sprung up across the country and electronic devices have made reading more portable and accessible than ever before. As a result, sales of books in general, perhaps fiction especially, have been on the rise (see, for example, the “Oprah Effect”). This is a phenomenon that we will consider as we discuss the notions that reading fiction informs how we engage with the world, how we learn about ourselves, and how we empathize with others. In this course, we will read a selection of novels and short fiction that will allow us to explore a variety of subgenres of fiction (mystery, adventure, romance, historical fiction). We will consider some works that have made best seller lists recently, as well as some that have been around for a while. We will also take some cues from book club style as we occasionally analyze texts in small groups that make their own reading selections.

Learning Objectives

- Students will engage in diverse critical perspectives as we discuss the texts.
- Students will perform research tasks based on primary and secondary source readings, and they will make use of traditional library resources as well as library databases and online resources of scholarly repute.
- Students will synthesize, critique, and interpret their findings in their writing assignments.
- Students will craft cogent, defensible, and well-researched theses for their projects.
- Students will discuss their findings in informal, small group settings and in formal presentations for the whole class.

Policies and General Information

--The English Department statement on plagiarism stipulates that 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 assigned essay and for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. See <http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php> for further information.

--Papers and exams: Hand papers in on time. Late papers will be reduced a letter grade for each class day that they are late without a university approved excuse (properly verified absences due to illness, emergency, or participation in an official University activity). If you miss an exam, and you have a university-approved excuse, you may make up that exam. You will have no more than one week to do so, and the make-up exam may be different from the one given during class.

--If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) or stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, as soon as possible to make an appointment.

--If you require general help with your studies, please make an appointment with The Student Success Center. Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (<http://www.eiu.edu/~success>) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

--Please make use of EIU's Writing Center, located at 3110 Coleman Hall, this semester. The consultants there can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support for, and documenting your papers. One caveat: the Writing Center is not a proofreading or editing service. It is a place where you can learn how to become a more thoughtful, independent, and rhetorically effective writer. To schedule an appointment, drop by (3110 Coleman Hall) or call 581-5929.

--Be prepared for class. You'll get more out of class discussions if you are participating in them, and I'll notice if you do not seem prepared to participate.

Requirements

Two exams (25% each of final grade; thus, 50% total)

Two sets of discussion questions and/or comments, minimum of five total for each book club text (5% each of final grade; thus, 10% total)

Two short book club research assignment reports (5% each of final grade; thus 10% total)

One researched essay (20% of final grade)

Final presentation (10% of final grade)

Exams: The exams will cover the two units of study; however, there will be interplay between these units in our discussions and in the test questions, and the final exam will have some comprehensive elements.

Book club comments/questions: These will be substantive statements and questions that begin with an observation about the text, then either draw a conclusion to share or a question to ask.

For example: "*The Solace of Leaving Early* makes me think about people that I know and their experiences, especially when I consider the relationship between the children and their grandmother. Which relationship in the book do you find to be the most realistic and why?"

This example would be 1 of 5 such ideas/questions *per book club text* that you will share with your group for each book club text.

Book club research reports: For each book covered by a club, the group members will have individual research tasks, and they will report their findings to the group. The reports (1-2 pages each) will record the basic information that they present to the group and will cite the sources used.

Researched essay: The essay (5-7 pages) will be researched writing on topics generated from the texts that we have read this semester from either unit. Prompts will be provided. You will use MLA Parenthetical Style for documentation.

Final presentation: The final presentation (20-30 minutes total) will be a group presentation in which each member will address a specific area of research or critical discussion that arose during your club's discussion of the book or books that you selected for this assignment. You may choose to compare two books in your presentation or to focus specifically on one book. You will draw your audience into discussion with you and be prepared to answer their questions. Prompts will be provided.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Reading Fiction Together

T. Aug. 21— Introduction to course. Read together excerpt from Maryanne Wolf, *Proust and the Squid*. In class, write a brief response to prompt about reading tastes and experiences.

Homework: Read Chiaet and Kaplan essays, and begin *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Book Store*.

Th. Aug. 24—Discuss **Epic and Quest Fiction** and *Mr. Penumbra*.

Homework: Finish *Mr. Penumbra*.

T. Aug. 29—Continue *Mr. Penumbra*.

Th. Aug. 31—Finish *Mr. Penumbra*. Consider Dovey.

Homework: Begin *Kitchen*.

T. Sept. 5—Discuss the **Novella** and *Kitchen*.

Homework: Read Dovey essay.

Th. Sept. 7—Finish *Kitchen* and consider Dovey.

Homework: Begin *Pride and Prejudice*.

T. Sept. 12—Discuss the **Novel of Manners** and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Homework: Do some research on Jane Austen and current reception of her works. Read the Kies essay.

Th. Sept. 14—Continue *Pride and Prejudice* and Kies essay.

T. Sept. 19—Finish *Pride and Prejudice*. Discuss **Adaptations** and begin film.

Homework: Begin *Solace of Leaving Early*

Th. Sept. 21—*Pride and Prejudice* film.

Homework: Continue *Solace of Leaving Early*.

T. Sept. 26—Finish *Pride and Prejudice* film.

Th. Sept. 28—Consider **Non-linear Narrative** and *Solace of Leaving Early*.

Homework: Finish *Solace of Leaving Early*.

T. Oct. 3—Continue discussion of *Solace of Leaving Early*.

Th. Oct. 5—Finish *Solace of Leaving Early*.

Homework: Begin reviewing for Exam 1.

T. Oct. 10—Wrap up Unit 1. Review for Exam 1.

Th. Oct. 12—**Exam 1**.

Homework: Look over the remaining novels on our reading list. Bring to next class a list of six that you would like to read and learn more about in a book club. Read Boswell and Seegmiller essay.

Unit 2: Book Clubs

T. Oct. 17—Plan Book Club Groups. Discuss rules and assignments for groups.

Homework: Read Billington essay along with Whittingham and Huffman essay.

Th. Oct. 19—Assign books for groups. Discuss essays.

Homework: Begin reading first book club book. For next class, be prepared to present your first

2 or 3 questions and comments about the reading so far. **Note:** You will turn in your five comments/questions to me, typed and printed out, at the last session for book 1. You may want to write 2 or 3 for your first session, then 2 or 3 more for your next sessions with your book.

T. Oct. 24—Book Clubs, day 1 for book 1.

Homework: Based on your discussion of the book so far, assign research tasks. Use the research day to prepare your brief reports. Continue reading book 1.

Th. Oct. 26—Library research day.

Homework: Finish brief reports and continue/finish reading book 1.

T. Oct. 31—Book Clubs, day 2 for book 1. Continue discussion of book 1 and present your research for the group.

Homework: Begin reading book 2 if you have finished reading book 1.

Th. Nov. 2—Book Clubs, day 3 for book 1. Complete discussion of book 1.

Comments/Questions and short research reports are due.

Homework: Continue reading book 2. Be prepared to present your first comments/questions next class. **Note:** You will turn in your five comments/questions to me, typed and printed out, at the last session for book 2. You may want to write 2 or 3 for your first session, then 2 or 3 more for your next sessions with your book.

T. Nov. 7—Book Clubs, day 1 for book 2. Discuss assignments for **Researched Essay**.

Homework: Based on your discussion of the book so far, assign research tasks. Use the research day to prepare your brief reports. Continue reading book 2.

Th. Nov. 9—Library research day.

Homework: Finish brief reports and continue/finish reading book 2.

T. Nov. 14—Book Clubs, day 2 for book 2. Continue discussion of book 2 and present your research for the group.

Homework: Finish reading book 2, if you have not already finished it.

Th. Nov. 16—Book Clubs, day 3 for book 2. Complete discussion of book 2. Discuss **Final Presentations. Comments/Questions and short research reports are due.**

Homework: Work on Researched Essay. Work on Final Presentations.

T. Nov. 21—Thanksgiving

Th. Nov. 23—Thanksgiving

T. Nov. 28—Catch-up day. Discuss presentations and review for Exam 2.

Th. Nov. 30—Final Presentations.

T. Dec. 5—Final Presentations.

Th. Dec. 7—Final Presentations.

Exam 2: Final Exam—Mon., Dec. 11, 12:30-2:30pm. Researched Essays are due.