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ENG 2099-099: Race, Age, and Gender in "Coming of Age" Narratives

Tim Engles
Eastern Illinois University

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Race, Age, and Gender in “Coming of Age” Narratives

English 2099—Spring, 2015

Tues/Thurs, 9:30 – 10:45

3691 Coleman Hall

Instructor: Tim Engles

Office: CH 3831

Instructor’s email: tdengles@eiu.edu

Office hours: 11:00 – 12:00, Tuesday, Thursday and
by appointment

Written Texts:

J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)

Craig Thompson, *Blankets* (2003)

Daniel Woodrell, *Winter’s Bone* (2006)

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006)

Brian Ascalon Roley, *American Son* (2001)

Junot Diaz, *This Is How You Lose Her* (2012)

Danzy Senna, *Caucasia* (1998)

Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* (1999)

ZZ Packer, *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* (2003)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The job of young people is not, as we sometimes assume, to go to high school. It is to imagine and begin to construct their lives. They need to understand both their own interests and abilities and the society of which they are a part. And they need to make a self that makes sense for the times in which they live. This isn’t easy.

–Thomas Hine

Bildungsroman: *A novel that recounts the development (psychological and sometimes spiritual) of an individual from childhood to maturity, to the point at which the protagonist recognizes his or her place in the world.*

–Ross Murfin

**(Read the following carefully! These words constitute our contract,
and I will request your written agreement to them)**

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES: A primary goal of this course is to enhance your skills in the art of textual analysis, a skill that any university student should fully develop. We will read, discuss, and write about works that foreground what it means to grow up and come to understand, and misunderstand, oneself and other people. We will consider literature (and film) as both reflecting and shaping forces, asking how they seem to reflect artistic intentions and values, and whether they help to shape social values, beliefs, and behaviors for young people.

More specifically, we will explore the concept of identity as represented in coming-of-age stories from the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will investigate what it means to be a "teenager," to grow up, and to do so under the influence of such factors as race, class, gender, and sexuality. We will also investigate the storytelling methods recent writers and filmmakers use to represent identity formation and maturation.

This course will require dedicated daily work (reading and talking), quizzes (primarily meant to help keep you reading), two formal essays, a presentation, and a final exam. This is a three-credit, writing-intensive course with prerequisites of ENG 1002G or 1092G and enrollment in the University Honors College or a Departmental Honors Program.

Finally, note that issues and ideas sometimes considered touchy or off limits will arise in our readings and discussions, so you should approach this course and its material with an open mind and a willingness to consider viewpoints expressed from different perspectives. Be aware that some of our course material contains strong language, sexual content, and controversial themes.

REGARDING READING: Again, a primary purpose of this course is to help you develop your skills in the art of textual analysis. Consequently, you **must** do the readings, and you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before our meetings, set aside enough time to read carefully—decide for yourself, beforehand, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I may give “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings. These quizzes will not be announced and they cannot be made up.

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

Presentation	15%
Formal essay 1 (6-8 pages)	25%
Formal essay 2 (6-8 pages)	25%
Final Exam	25%
Participation/quizzes/attendance	10%

REGARDING WRITING: Because this is a writing-intensive course, and because we are a small group, you will write two major essays. I will help you create, revise, and edit the best writing you can produce, and you will definitely improve your writing skills in the process. I will also encourage and help you submit your written work to university essay contests, and, if you're interested and willing, to the English Department's annual student conference (stay tuned for more on these opportunities later in the semester).

Some basic writing rules: papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not (it's okay to turn in papers earlier). Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. Be mindful also of the dire consequences of plagiarism, as described below.

REGARDING THE WRITING CENTER: Tutorial services are free at the English Department's Writing Center, and students may drop in or schedule appointments during working hours (Room 3110 of Coleman Hall, <http://www.eiu.edu/~writing>). If you are aware of chronic problems with your writing, I strongly recommend that you make use of this helpful service. While I will pay

close attention to each student's particular writing problems, I may advise some to seek additional help at the Writing Center.

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." More than three missed meetings will lower your class participation grade to a Zero. Also, coming to class "prepared" means coming to class with your copy of that day's assigned reading—anyone who does not have a copy of the day's assigned reading with them may be considered absent.

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 repeatedly arriving late for our meetings. If for any reason you will not be able to arrive on time, be sure to let me know.

MISSED QUIZZES: Again, because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after they are taken, quizzes 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. At the end of the semester, the average grade on these quizzes will constitute a major portion of your class participation grade. Because I recognize that students must be absent sometimes, I will drop your lowest quiz score before figuring the average grade.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. I expect all of you to participate in discussions (participation will be figured into your final grade). **BE SURE** to bring the day's reading assignment with you, and be ready to talk about it. The best way to do well in this course and to demonstrate that you are an active, interested reader is by contributing regularly to our discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say.

As noted above, sensitive issues tend to arise within a course of this sort, so we must respect the opinions of others—at times it will help to respond to ideas, rather than to the person stating them. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question.

Also, please do not use a computer or your phone, chew gum, or eat food during class, activities which can be distracting to others—drinking beverages is okay. Please also silence your phone. Finally, no caps, as they're anti-social in a classroom setting. If you must wear one, turn it backwards so we can see your eyes.

EMAIL ACTIVITY: Enrollment in this class requires checking your email frequently for messages pertaining to the course (preferably every day). We will use email for announcements and assignments, and email is also the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all emailed questions and comments.

Using email is crucial for this course. One of your first assignments will be to send me an introductory e-mail message (tdengles@eiu.edu) by Friday, January 16 at 5:00 p.m. In that message, (1) tell me which course you're in (English 2099); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your major and career aspirations; (3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with (or perhaps in part disagree with, which is fine, if you explain

why) these course policies and requirements; and (4) as with all emails you send to instructors, “sign” it by adding your name at the end of the message.

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.”

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, and if you have not already contacted the Office of Disability Services (581-6583), please do so as soon as possible.

THE STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER: Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test 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.

ENGLISH 2099: DAILY SCHEDULE

(this schedule may be subject to change;
you need to read the readings listed for any day by that day;
bring the readings to class—not doing so could result in being marked “absent”)

T JAN 13 Introduction to the course

R JAN 15 J. D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye*

F JAN 16 5 p.m.: deadline for sending an e-mail message to Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu); see above for what to include in the message

T JAN 20 *Catcher in the Rye*

R JAN 22 *Catcher in the Rye*

T JAN 27 Finish *Catcher in the Rye*; also read Kathleen Knight Abowitz and Richard Rees, “What Is a Teenager?” (handout)

Complete Daily Schedule Coming Soon . . .