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ENG 1092G-099: Composition and Literature

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Goals: 1092 is a writing course designed to improve skills in critical thinking and analytical expression based on the reading of literary texts. At the end of the course, you should be able to write even better than you did at the end of 1092/1001. The course is also designed to introduce three major genres of literature—poetry, drama, and fiction—and to enhance your enjoyment of them. And finally, I'm hoping you'll find the reading and writing useful on a personal level, since talking about literature often involves discussing our own values and identity. A couple of comments on reading, writing, and education:

If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read? So that it shall make us happy? Good God, we should also be happy if we had no books, and such books as make us happy we could, if need be, write ourselves. But what we must have are those books which come upon us like ill fortune, and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves; like suicide. A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us. --Kafka

... at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously -- I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason ... --Keats

Policies: English Department statement 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 assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

Late/missing work: Hand in papers on time. If you're having problems, let me know; often even a brief conversation with make the paper easier to write. Papers a week or more late will not be accepted at all. Any paper handed in on time may be rewritten IF it is handed in again within one week of its being returned. I will grade that paper separately and average the original and rewrite when I figure grades. In-class writing assignments may not be made up except in cases of serious illness/personal emergency.

Attendance: Come to class prepared. You'll have more fun if you've done the reading, and I will notice if you haven't. Note that a portion of the grade is based on class participation and reading responses--both of which require keeping up with the reading and being in class. Excessive absences will result in a grade
of 0 for participation. Missing a peer editing session will result in a 5-point penalty on your paper grade. If, due to illness or personal emergency, you must miss class, let me know so I can make sure you're not penalized.

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

This class is writing-centered. You may use an essay from this class in your electronic writing portfolio. For more information, visit the website: http://www.eiu.edu/~assess.

Requirements: midterm and final (20%)
- Four essays of 3-4 pp. each (50%)
- Brief in-class and at-home writing assignments and WebCT postings: 20%
- Group presentation, class participation and involvement 10%

Grades: Paper grades will be based on “Guidelines for Evaluating Writing Assignments in EIU’s English Department.” I plan to use number rather than letter grades; this will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 70-80=C. 65-69=D. Because I grade on a 100-point scale, missing assignments affect the grade tremendously. Please note that you must have a C average in order to receive credit for this course.

Responses: Each week, you'll be required to write at least one response to a reading assignment on the Web CT bulletin board. Your response must be posted at least 90 minutes before the class for which the assignment is due, and you must be present in that class to receive credit. Plan on writing a thoughtful 1-2 paragraph response in the course of which you: 1. respond to the comments of at least one other student (unless you're the first to post); 2. make some observation about what you've read and develop your idea; and 3. quote at some point from the reading, providing the page number in parentheses after your quotation. You might focus on a question from the list at the end of the syllabus, follow up on an issue raised by a previous posting, or make and develop an observation of your own. If you fail to gain access to Web-CT for reasons beyond your control, bring a typed 1-page response to the appropriate class period.

Group presentation: In groups of 2-3, I'd like you to select, from the list at the end of this syllabus, a contemporary poet or fiction-writer who particularly interests you. Your task will be to research that writer's work and, as a group, lead a class on either a story from the anthology, or a group of 3-4 poems you select (and get to me ahead of time so that I can duplicate them for the class). Prepare 5-10 minutes of background information, then lead the class in a discussion of the work. Use whatever methods you'd like to make it interesting (let me know ahead of time if you need anything duplicated; feel free to assign group work, give quizzes, etc. For your final paper, use what you have learned to make some point about the author's work.

Tentative Syllabus
Mon Jan 10: Intro to course

I. Families and fate
for Wed Jan 9: Oedipus (in Bedford Introduction to Drama). Post to WebCT #1,
Fri. Jan 11: Oedipus Post to WebCT if you didn't for W.
Mon. Jan 14: Oates, "Where are you going, where have you been?" (Pickering 1083). Post to WebCT #2 M, W, or F
Wed Jan 16: Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (Pickering 37)
Fri Jan 18: Wright, "Autumn Begins" (Kennedy, 520); Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays" (461); Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz" (18); Plath, "Daddy" (494)

Mon Jan 21: no class.
Wed Jan 23 Bring 3 copies of essay #1. Stevenson, "The Victory" (Kennedy, 92); Olds, "Rites of Passage" (35); Brooks, "The Mother" (433); Hughes, "Mother to Son" (375)
Fri Jan 25: workshop essay #1.

Mon 28: conferences
Wed 30: conferences

II. Sexuality and gender
Fri Feb 1: Hand in essay #1. Shakespeare, Much Ado about Nothing

Mon 4: Much Ado Post to WebCT #3 M, W or F
Wed 6: Much Ado
Fri 8: Much Ado.

Mon 11: Much Ado. Post to WebCT #4 M or W
Wed 13: Chopin, "The Storm"
Fri 15: no class

Mon 18: Gilman, "Yellow Wallpaper" Post to WebCT #5 M or W
Wed 20: Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers," (8); Bloch, "Tired Sex" (99); Collins, "Embrace" (100); Atwood, "You Fit into Me" (122); Rich, "Living in Sin" (501)
Fri 22: Bring 3 copies essay #2. Frost, "The Silken Tent" (124); Shakespeare, "When in Disgrace" (506); Shakespeare, "My Mistress's Eyes" (508)

Mon 25: workshop. Pick groups and writers for group presentation.
Wed 27: conferences
Fri 29: conferences

Mon March 3: Hand in final version essay #2. Midterm

III. Bodies and identity
Wed 5: Conrad, "Secret Sharer" (Pickering, 378) Post to WebCT#6 W or F
Fri 7: Conrad

Spring break

Mon 17: Susan Bordo, hand-out; Boland, "Anorexia" (432); Clifton, "Homage" (439); Yeats, "Crazy Jane" (533), Sexton, "Cinderella" (267)
Wed 19: McKay, "America"; Lovelace, "To Lucasta" (42); Owen, "Dulce" (42); Brooks "We Real Cool" (177); Hughes "Theme" (379),
Mon March 24: workshop
Wed March 26: conferences
Fri 28: hand in essay #3. Groups meet to discuss presentations

Mon 31: Group #1
Wed Ap 2: Group #2
Fri Ap 4: Group #3

Mon Ap 7: group #4
Wed Ap 9: Life of Pi
Fri Ap 11: Pi

Mon Ap 14: Pi
Wed Ap 16: Pi
Fri Ap 18: Pi

Fri Ap 28: Hand in essay #4. Stevens, “Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock” (79); Dickinson, “I Taste” (358); Wright, “A Blessing” (530)

There will be a noncumulative final exam during exam week.

Response questions: focus on a SINGLE question or choose your own issue:
Characterization: What is the main character like (physically, mentally, gestures, speech, values)? What parallels or contrasts do you see between two characters?
Setting: How is the setting described? Is there a contrast set up between two settings?
Significance of title?
Narrative method: What is the narrator’s relation to the action? Why is he/she telling the story? How is his/her values shaping what he/she notices?
Plot: What conflicts do you see? (within a character? Between characters? Between a character and the environment?) How does a character change during the course of the work? Is there a crucial moment or turning point when someone makes a big mistake or does something right?
Symbolism and imagery: Is there an object or moment that works symbolically, or a pattern of imagery or a key word that recurs?
Context, theme: What historical events would it be helpful to know about? Look up one allusion and explain its significance. To what extent does the ending tie up loose ends? Is there an authorial mouthpiece? If so, what are his/her values? Is the ending “happy?” For whom? Who gets left out? Are there problems in the way gender, race, sexuality, or class?
To what extent does the work as a whole reinforce values you share or don’t share?

For poems: FIRST: read in terms of punctuation, not line breaks. Read once to yourself, then read out loud. Get an overall sense of who speaker is, situation, and message. Then look up words you don’t know. Take into account ALL the word’s listed meanings before deciding how it works in context. For your posting, I
suggest you focus on a single poem and examine ONE of the following:

**Speaker:** Who is the speaker? To whom is the speaker speaking (if anyone in particular)? In what situation or context? Any hints about what’s happened immediately before the poem’s opening? Does the speaker’s tone or ideas change during the course of the poem?

**Tone:** What is the speaker’s attitude toward the audience and topic (tone)? Any irony or sarcasm? Is there a gap between what the speaker is saying and what you sense the poet wants to get across?

**Structure:** Does the poem fall into parts? How do they build on or contrast with each other? What binaries do you notice? Is it open or closed form? How does structure relate to the poem’s meaning?

**Sound:** Note use of sound, rhythm, rhyme as they relate to the poem’s meaning.

**Diction, imagery, figurative language:** Any repeated words? Words particularly rich in meanings or connotations? Clusters of related images (lots of disease references for example, or military)? What lines do you find particularly dense or confusing?

**Theme:** what does the poem as a whole seem to be saying?

Writers to consider for group presentation:

**Prose:**
Raymond Carver
Sherman Alexie
T. Coraghessan Boyle
Leslie Silko
Elizabeth Tallent
Alice Walker
Tobias Wolff
Patricia Zelver

**Poetry:**
Anyone we’ve read who’s still alive. Additional suggestions:
Rita Dove, Seamus Heaney, Cathy Song, Louise Erdrich, Ted Kooser, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Nikki Giovanni, Gary Soto, Yusef Komunyakaa, Marge Piercy, Amiri Baraka