

Fall 8-15-2016

ENG 3704-001: American Literature 1950 to Present

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ENGLISH 3704 – AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1950-PRESENT: 3 CR

Professor: Dr. Marjorie Worthington
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Class: Coleman Hall 3609, MWF, 11:00-11:50pm
Office Hours: MWF 12:00pm-1:00pm or by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: “Grotesque” literature has been defined as that which evokes both horror and humor, that which elicits both empathy and disgust. This literary category has existed for hundreds of years, but it is oddly appropriate for our contemporary moment: it is safe to say that we are living in grotesque times. As evidence, I point to phenomena like *Breaking Bad*, *American Horror Story* (empathy and disgust) and the Presidential Election competition (horror and humor). This course will explore some of those popular cultural texts along with a broad swath of literary examples of American grotesquerie.

NOTE: Not only does this course require a great deal of reading, but I also expect you to be active participants in discussion, not just by talking about the books we read, but about how the books we read connect to other aspects of contemporary American life.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES INCLUDE (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

- To read, discuss and analyze representative texts of the late twentieth century to the present.
- To familiarize ourselves with differing critical and cultural stances on some of these works.
- To learn about and engage in literary research.
- To hone skills related to writing literary and cultural analyses.

TEXTS:

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*
Shirley Jackson, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*
Edward Albee, *American Dream*
Coleson Whitehead, *Intuitionist*
Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love*
Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*
Tim O’Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*
Some short stories provided by email and/or D2L

ASSIGNMENTS:

NOTE: You must complete ALL assignments to pass this course. So, even if you could earn a passing grade numerically, you will not pass unless all assignments have been completed.

Short Essays: Over the course of the semester, you will write five, one-page, single-spaced, typed essays. They will cover the reading assigned for the particular day on which they are due. Notice that these are not “response papers” but ESSAYS; I don’t want to know how the reading makes you *feel*, but rather I want you to make a literary *argument* of some kind. So, although short, these essays should be focused and **thesis-driven**. It is my hope that these essays will: 1) help you keep up with the reading; 2) generate interesting ideas for discussion. For that reason, you **must** be in class and **must contribute to class discussion that day** in order to get credit for the essay; 3) help the other members of the class see what a good essay looks like, since you will be posting these essays in the Discussion section of D2L; and 4) help spur in-class discussion by beginning online ones, since part of your grade will involve responding to others’ essays in D2L.

Participation: This class is small. This means that it is impossible for you to hide behind your classmates when you haven't done the reading or do not have anything to say. SOOOO, do the reading and have something to say. Every day. 10% of your final grade depends on it, as does the quality of the class. If you don't contribute, this class will be boring as death. Part of this grade will also be determined by how well you contribute to the online discussions in D2L.

Grade Breakdown:

5 Short Essays	20% (4% each)
<i>Lolita</i> Reception Analysis	20%
Group Project on Pop Culture Grotesque	15%
Textual Analysis Essay	20%
Final Exam	10%
Participation (includes in-class and online)	15%

POLICIES:

Attendance: Your consistent attendance and participation are necessary to make this class the vibrant exchange of ideas it should be and I take attendance every day (even if you do not see me doing it). You are permitted no more than three unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence after three will lower your final grade by thirty points (3%). Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation.

Office Hours: The hours listed above are times when I will be in my office ready to meet with students. You can also make a special appointment to see me if you are unable to come during office hours. I encourage you to come and talk to me about your work as often as you like.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as de-fined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be re-reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined as appropriating words or ideas that are not your own without giving proper credit. The temptation to plagiarize can be great, particularly in the advent of extensive computer technology and the collaborative nature of our class. However, the consequences of plagiarism are dire and can result in a grade of F for the assignment and even for the course. It will also result in a report to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

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, 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.

Tech Support: If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Email and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available on the same page. For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours or submit a help ticket at <https://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. If you have a question regarding course content, contact your instructor.

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Emphasis on such topics as the Fabulous 50's, the Beats, emerging minority cultures, the rise of feminism, postmodernism, and minimalism. Writers may include Bishop, Ginsberg, Plath, Bellow, Vonnegut, Shepard, Kesey, Olson, Baraka, Mason, Erdrich, Morrison. (Group 3C) WI

ENG 3704 READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

August 22 M "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (email and D2L)
24 W O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (D2L)
26 F *Castle*: Chaps. 1-3

A 29 M *Castle*: Chaps. 4-10

B 31 W *Lolita*: Forward and Part One, Chaps. 1-7

C Sept. 2 F *Lolita*: Chaps. 8-12

5 M **Labor Day – no class**

D 7 W *Lolita*: Chaps. 13-33

E 9 F *Lolita*: Part 2, Chaps. 1-Chap. 3

A 12 M *Lolita*: Chaps. 4-20

14 W *Lolita*: Chaps. 21-27

16 F *Lolita*: Chaps. 28-end

B 19 M *Geek Love*, Chaps. 1-8

21 W *Geek Love*, Chaps. 9-11

C 23 F *Geek Love*, Chaps. 12-16

D 26 M *Geek Love*, Chaps. 17-20

28 W *Geek Love*, Chaps. 21-24

E 30 F *Geek Love*, Chaps. 24-28

Oct. 3 M Film: *Dog Fight*

5 W Film: *Dog Fight*

7 F Film: *Dog Fight*

***Lolita* Reception Essay drafts due**

A 10 M Albee: *American Dream*

12 W Class's choice TV show episode

14 F **FALL BREAK – NO CLASS**

***Lolita* Reception Final Essays due**

17 M Ellison: "Party Down at the Square" (in D2L)
19 W Group Presentation, Group 1
21 F Group Presentation, Group 2

B 24 M Morrison: pp. 3-77
C 26 W Morrison: pp. 78-115
D 28 F Morrison: pp. 116-153

E 31 M Morrison: pp. 154-end
A Nov. 2 W O'Brien: Chaps. 1-7
B 4 F O'Brien: Chaps. 8-12

C 7 M O'Brien: Chaps. 13-19
D 9 W O'Brien: Chaps. 20-23
E 11 F O'Brien: Chaps. 24-end

Class trip to see *Dog Fight* at Doudna

A 14 M Karen Russell "Reeling for the Empire" (in D2L)
B 16 W Karen Russell "Proving Up" (in D2L)
18 F Junot Diaz stories (D2L) **Textual Analysis Essay drafts due**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

C 28 M Whitehead: pp. 1-64
D 30 W Whitehead: pp. 65-97
E Dec. 2 F Whitehead: pp. 98-130

5 M Whitehead: pp. 130-194 **Textual Analysis Final Essays due**
7 W Whitehead: pp. 195-227
9 F Whitehead: pp. 228-end

Dec. 14 Wednesday, 10:15am-12:15pm: film showing of your favorite bit of grotesquerie
FINAL EXAMS DUE