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ENG 2011G-001: Literature, the Self, and the World--Fiction

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ENGLISH 2011G: Literature, the Self, and the World--Fiction

Fall 2001
Section 1: TTr: 1230-1345
Coleman 3691 [old 318]

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OFFICE HOURS
Tuesdays, 1100-1200; 1645-1745; Wednesdays, 1600-1645; Thursdays, 1400-1515; By Appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Who was the first storyteller? A lonely hunter consoling his fellows on a cold northern evening far from home? A mother calming a frightened child with tales of gods and demigods? A lover telling his intended of fantastic exploits, designed to foster his courtship? ... we shall never know the answer, for the impulse to tell stories is as old as the development of speech, older than the invention of writing. It has deep, psychological springs we do not fully comprehend, but the need to make up characters, and to place them in worlds that are parallel to our own or are perhaps wildly at variance with it, is part of the history of all peoples, cultures, and countries; there is no known human group that has not told tales. (Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy, "Introduction," Essentials of the Theory of Fiction)

We need not go to school to understand the importance of narrative in our lives. News of the world comes to us in the form of "stories" told from one or another point of view. The global drama unfolds every twenty-four hours--split up into multiple story lines that can be re-integrated only when they are understood from the perspective of an American (or Russian, or Nigerian), a Democrat (or Republican, or monarchist, or Marxist), a Protestant (or Catholic, or Jew, or Muslim). Behind each of these differences there is a history, and a hope for the future. For each of us there is also a personal history, the narrative of our own lives, which enable us to construe what we are and where we're headed . . . (Wallace Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative)

In this course, we will study the interactions of self and world in an important literary form: narrative. We will read, discuss, and write about stories, tales, and novels from different times and places, that illustrate the significance of narrative in human life. As we read and enjoy works of fiction, we will consider the uses of story-telling and story-writing as important means of ordering experience and sharing it with others.

Eastern's General Education Curriculum is designed to help students develop and improve their abilities to read and write, to reason, and to analyze. As a course that meets requirements in Literature and Philosophy, "Literature, the Self, and the World" will help serious students acquire knowledge of important works of literature, of developments in narrative technique, and of western and non-western cultural traditions. Designated "writing intensive," this course will offer opportunities to improve skills in written (as well as oral) communication; written expression will be an important basis of evaluation. Finally, "Literature, the Self, and the World: Fiction" will encourage critical thought and intellectual questioning as to the significance of narrative to individuals and within societies.
English 2011G: Literature, the Self and the World: Fiction

TEXTS
Achebe, Things Fall Apart; Brontë, Wuthering Heights;
Defoe, Moll Flanders; Morrison, Beloved; Twain, Huckleberry Finn;
Rubenstein & Larson, eds., Worlds of Fiction

SYLLABUS
WEEK I
Tues., Aug. 21: Introduction to Course and Assignments
In-Class Writing
Thurs., Aug. 23: From The Thousand and One Nights: "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni"
(Trans. Lane), Worlds 10 ff.
Maugham, "The Appointment in Samarra," Worlds 779 f.;
WEEK II
Assignment of Papers I and II
WEEK III
Tues., Sept. 4: Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (Read at least first seven chapters for today.)
Thurs., Sept. 6: Things Fall Apart (Have novel read by this date.)
WEEK IV
Tues., Sept. 11: Things Fall Apart (concluded)
WEEK V
Tues., Sept. 18: Defoe, Moll Flanders (Have at least 200 pages read by this date.)
Thurs., Sept. 20: MAJOR TEST I (Bring test booklets to class.)
Moll Flanders (Have 250 pages read by this date.)
WEEK VI
Tues., Sept. 25: Moll Flanders (Have the book read by today.)
(Discussion of Test I)
Thurs., Sept. 27: Moll Flanders (concluded)
PAPER I DUE IN CLASS
Be prepared to share your paper with the class: Peer Evaluations and Workshop.
(Late penalties begin at 5:00 for anyone who does not take part in the Workshop.)
Paper II assignment reviewed;
WEEK VII
Tues., Oct. 2: Wuthering Heights (Have at least twenty chapters read by this date.)
Thurs., Oct. 4: Wuthering Heights (Have the novel read for today.)
REVISION DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE
WEEK VIII

Tues., Oct. 9: Wuthering Heights
Thurs., Oct. 11: Wuthering Heights (concluded)

WEEK IX

Tues., Oct. 16: Huckleberry Finn (Have at least one half of the novel read by today.)
Thurs., Oct. 18: MAJOR TEST II (Bring test booklets to class.)
Huckleberry Finn (Have two-thirds of the novel read for today.)

WEEK X

Tues., Oct. 23: Huckleberry Finn (Have the book completed by today.)
Thurs., Oct. 25: Huckleberry Finn

WEEK XI

Tues., Oct. 30: Huckleberry Finn (concluded)

WEEK XII

Tues., Nov. 6: Morrison, Beloved (Have at least ten chapters read for today.)
Thurs. Nov. 8: Beloved (Have the first half of the novel read by today.)
Prospectus and Preliminary Bibliography for Paper II due today in class.
Schedule conferences.

WEEK XIII

Tues., Nov. 13: Beloved (Have the novel read by today.)
Thurs., Nov. 15: Beloved (concluded).

WEEK XIV

THANKSGIVING RECESS--No Class Meetings

WEEK XV

Akutagawa, "Within a Grove," Worlds 40 ff.

WEEK XVI

Thurs., Dec. 6: Above assignments concluded (Worlds)
Paper II due in class
Final Exam Review
Farewells

FINAL EXAM (CUMULATIVE):__________________________________________________

GRADE CALCULATION

Paper I = 15%;  Paper II (including Prospectus) = 25%;
Preparation, Participation, Quizzes = 25%;
Test I = 10%;  Test II = 10%;  Cumulative Final Exam = 15%
FICTION READING JOURNAL

Each student should keep a separate notebook or journal in which you write both your initial and your considered responses to reading assignments, and in which you log issues raised in class discussion. Use the journal also to record notes of your "outside" reading. From time to time, you will be asked to write responses in class, and you should add them into your journal when they are returned. Journals are very useful in reviewing for exams and in planning your formal papers and oral presentations. I will not collect or grade journals.

PAPER I

Paper I is due on Thursday, Sept. 27: Consider the "lessons" about the individual's place in society contained in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders. For your Paper I, write about what the novels suggest as to how an individual human being survives in the world and how readers respond to the means chosen. Feel free to evaluate views conveyed in the texts with reference to your own beliefs, observations, and experience.

Focus the paper narrowly enough so that your discussion can be deep and you can clearly articulate and fully support the points you make. You may wish to focus on the responsibility of the individual to society and/or society's responsibility to the individual in the area of marriage, family, and child-raising; or, you might like to discuss economic relationships between the individual and the community: the significance of wealth, money, material possessions; or, you may wish to consider social structure and its effect on the individual's situation and responses to that situation. Choose a focus that interests you. The essay should develop and support a clearly articulated "argumentative" thesis.

As you plan and write your paper, think about to what extent each text depicts realities and/or promotes specific social or political values. Do these texts (or either of them) embody recommendations about the correct relationship between an individual and his/her society?

Be sure that you illustrate the critical points you make with specific references to and quotations from the texts of the novels. (Avoid retelling plots and describing characters.) Be sure to document quotations and citations according to the "new" MLA form: give page references parenthetically and include a "Works Cited" list at the end of your paper. There is no need to refer to critical works in preparing this essay. If you wish to do so, however, be sure to document all words and all ideas that you take from any book or article. Electronic materials must be documented as well as other media; go to the Writing Center for help with documentation.

This essay should be approximately four to six pages printed or typed and double-spaced. Be sure to type your paper or use a computer. Print should be clear, dark, and letter-quality; continuous-feed paper should have the edges removed. Pages should be clipped or stapled. See instructions for submitting papers in your Course Policies.

COURSE POLICIES

Class attendance, punctuality, preparation, and participation are expected and required. Students are responsible for all material covered in class and all announcements or assignments made in class as well as for all assignments on the syllabus. Assignments are to have been completed by class time on the date for which they appear on the syllabus. The books in which the day's assignments are contained should be brought to class.
Policies continued:

Remember that "class participation" counts towards the course grade; absence from class will result in a "0" for the day's participation as well as on any graded work due or done in class. Unannounced quizzes on assigned material may be given at any time. There will be no opportunities to make up missed quizzes.

There will be no opportunities to make up a missed test or exam other than in cases of documented medical emergency; (signing in at Health Service does not constitute documentation of a medical emergency).

Major Tests and the Final Exam should be written on test booklets, available at the Union Book Store. Please write tests in ink and on the appropriate booklets.

ALL PAPERS AND OTHER WRITTEN WORK must be handed in on the date due.

1. Work turned in late without advance clearance will not be accepted.
2. Clearance does not constitute an "excuse." Work turned in late with clearance will be penalized, usually at the rate of 5 points per day of lateness.
3. Any lateness may delay the grading and return of the paper, perhaps until the end of the semester.

BE SURE TO KEEP A COPY OF EVERY PAPER YOU HAND IN. IN THE CASE OF A MISSING PAPER, THE STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPLYING A COPY.

A NOTE ON PRESENTATION OF PAPERS: Papers must be typed (double-spaced) or computer-printed on heavy or medium-weight white 9 x 11 paper. Leave adequate margins. Each paper must have a separate title sheet which includes the title of the paper, course title, instructor's name, student's name, and date of submission. Repeat the title at the top of the first page of text. Papers must be stapled or clipped.

In the case of computer-printed papers, be sure to hand in letter-quality copies printed clearly and darkly—no pale or dot-matrix documents will be accepted. Also, make sure that pages are separated, numbered, and clipped together in correct order.

ONLY PAPERS THAT ARE NEAT AND IN CORRECT FORM CAN BE ACCEPTED.

DOCUMENTATION: Use the most recent MLA system to cite both primary and secondary sources used in your papers. The system is fully explained and illustrated in the latest edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Each student should have access to a copy.

Inform yourself about documentation conventions for electronic-media information and materials. All such materials must be documented, and citation forms are illustrated in recent handbooks; go to the Writing Center for assistance. Electronic-media materials must be evaluated for quality at least as scrupulously as print materials. Please remember that you must absorb and process all materials: downloading is not research.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All written work (papers, exams, tests, quizzes) must represent your own ideas and your own style. Downloading or copying the work of others constitutes plagiarism. Make sure that all of the written work you hand is original and independent. Please make sure that you understand the meaning of plagiarism and the policy of the English Department:

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 the grade of F for the course.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: "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."