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ENG 2009G-001: Love, Hate, Obsession

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ENG 2009: LOVE, HATE, OBSESSION

Professor Christopher Hanlon
 Office: Coleman 3811
 Office hours: Tu Th 9:30-11 & by appointment

Fall 2005
 Phone: 581.6302

Required Texts

Jane Austin, *Persuasion*
 Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*
 Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* and *Passing*
 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*
 Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body*

Additional readings available through Booth Library electronic reserves

Anyone who has ever been asked the question "Why do you love me?" knows the only acceptable answer evades the question. The moment we specify that quality which, we claim, causes us to love the other ("Because of the way you laugh, because of the look in your eyes," etc.), we also render our love depressingly finite and material—in a way, false. I love you, one would rather say, because of an indefinable x, because of that certain excess or unnamable surplus in you that throws my very sense of being off balance. And don't we also hate for similar reasons? Though we may tell ourselves that the other's hateworthiness is attributable to a series of specific causes (the way s/he laughs, the look in his/her eyes ...), isn't it closer to the truth to say that we hate others simply for being *them*, for being so eminently, ineffably hateable?

In this course, we'll read works by authors who have brooded long over love and hate, who have nurtured both to blossom (sometimes darkly), who know what it means to obsess and who have left a record of this knowledge. Many of these writers have some stark things to say about our nature as human beings, and many frankly don't ask that we like them for it. All are worth listening to, considering closely, and arguing with.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES:

Final Grades will be determined in accordance with this formula:

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| First Essay | 20% |
| Exam #1 | 20% |
| Exam #2 | 25% |
| Final Essay | 25% |
| Participation | <u>10%</u> |
| | 100% |

A first essay, due on **October 11**, which will require you to engage with the subject(s) of love, hate, and obsession in some creative way and which I will outline in more detail early in the semester.

A final essay, about 6-7 pages long, on topics of your choosing. (titled, typed or word-processed, double-spaced, pages numbered after the first, one-inch margins on all sides, on 8 1/2"x11" white paper, no title page necessary. Final essays should argue a specific thesis about a narrative or a pair of closely related narratives and should call upon at least two secondary sources documented on a works cited page. I encourage everyone in the class to speak with me well before the due date (**December 8**) in order to discuss possible topics for the final paper.

Two examinations to be held on in class on **October 13** and during finals week (date and time to be announced). Each of these exams will consist of an objective section designed to assess the closeness of your reading, along with an essay section requiring you to write extended, well-crafted answers to pointed questions concerning the materials we study in class. The final exam will be cumulative.

Participation in discussion: I expect students to model strong class citizenship in this course, working hard to make our discussion run well. To make the discussion run well: (1) you should read, and as you read you should form ideas, draw connections, raise problems, and take notes; (2) you should plan on participating—at least making a comments or asking a question—every day; (3) you should be careful not to dominate discussion (i.e., those of you who are not shy should give other students an opening to participate), and you should participate with tact and civility (take other people's remarks and questions seriously, don't interrupt, respond courteously, etc.). The grade for participation will depend upon meeting all these criteria. I will tend to lavish encouragement on students who engage as strong class citizens. I will tend to become annoyed with students who never have anything to offer or who seem disengaged or feckless.

One last note on participation: Participating well doesn't simply mean talking a lot—it means frequently making comments, and responses to the comments of others, showing that you are engaged in a process of careful, close reading. *Idle talk—the kind that simply does not indicate close engagement with the materials we'll be studying—does not help move the conversation forward, and hence does not qualify as participation.*

I want to be utterly clear about this: Good participation does *not* require you to come to class knowing all the "answers," but it *does* require you to understand certain things about the texts under discussion. For instance, one cannot participate competently if one does not understand the events that make up the plot of a work of fiction, the gist of a poem, or the literal argument of an essay. Many of the readings we will take on this semester will difficult, and on some occasions you won't know quite what to make of what you've read. That's perfectly acceptable. But I *will* expect you to come to class after having *fought* to understand as much as possible. The key to success in this class will lie in your refusal to become frustrated when faced with difficult concepts—instead, become challenged.

If given, occasional reading quizzes will be brief, designed to encourage everyone to keep up with the reading, and will also help me to determine participation grades.

Attendance will be taken for each class. With three absences, students will be considered overcut. Overcutting may result in the reduction of the final course grade by a grade or more, depending upon frequency. In the case of an excused absence (as defined by EIU university-wide policy), your excuse must be made in writing, accompanied by the appropriate documentation, and given to me no later than the first class meeting following the absence. In no case may a student accumulate more than five absences, either excused or unexcused, and still pass the course – if

illness or other extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than five classes, you should petition for a withdrawal.

One last word related to attendance: I ask that students who have not read the text on the day it is to be discussed not bother coming. Such students cannot contribute anything valuable to the discussion, and in any case it is dishonest for them to benefit from the efforts of others by listening in on their conversations. Always read the assigned materials carefully, but if for some reason you have not, don't bother showing up.

Students who habitually show up for class a few minutes after it's started should find a professor who's into that and take their course instead. This professor is insulted by it and reacts badly.

Late assignments will be penalized for their lateness. If they are very late, they may not be accepted at all. I am not unbending in this policy in the case of extreme circumstances, but in order to be granted an extension, students must contact me, with a compelling case to make, at least two days before the paper's due date.

Academic honesty: Students are of course responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism, even if unknowing or accidental, can result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Please note the English Department's 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 own 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 assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me to clarify. Also, please make a point of noting the following: I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this course. If I come to suspect misconduct of any kind, I will become dogged about rooting it out, and if my suspicions are confirmed, I will dispense appropriate penalties.

Students are responsible for reading all of the material on this syllabus on the date assigned whether or not the work is actually discussed on that date. Students are cautioned that many of the readings are lengthy. I urge you to begin these readings as soon as possible. Occasionally, I will pass out brief, photocopied materials not represented on the syllabus; these are to be read by the next class.

You are not welcome to e-mail me while you are a student in this course. When you have a question, problem, or concern, I want to sit down with you and talk for as long as you need. That's why I keep office hours. I also want to talk with you about interesting ideas you have this semester, just as I want to talk with you—personally—about the readings we take on. But too many students these days use e-mail as a way to avoid their professors, a practice I resist obstinately. When you need to communicate with me, attend my office hours, make an appointment for an alternative time, call me at my office (581.6302), or if it's very important and the other avenues have not worked, call me at home (348.6144). We'll talk.

Reading Schedule (items may be added or amended)

I: With an Eye Toward the Gaze

Week 1

- Tuesday 8/23: Introductions, course outline
John Donne, "The Flea" (in-class handout)
- Thursday 8/25: G. W. F. Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage" from
Phenomenology of Spirit (e-reserves)

Week 2

- Tuesday 8/30: Nella Larsen, *Passing* pp 143-202
- Thursday 9/1: *Passing* pp. 203-end

Week 3

- Tuesday 9/6: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (e-reserves)
- Thursday 9/8: Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" (e-reserves)

Week 4

- Tuesday 9/13: Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* pp. 7-50
- Thursday 9/15: *The Bloody Chamber* pp. 51-91

Week 5

- Tuesday 9/20: *The Bloody Chamber* pp. 91-end
- Thursday 9/22: Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* pp. 9-74

Week 6

- Tuesday 9/27: *Written on the Body* pp. 74-125
- Thursday 9/28: *Written on the Body* pp. 129-end

Week 7

Tuesday 10/4: *Manhunter* (in-class film viewing)

Thursday 10/6: finish *Manhunter*

Week 8

Tuesday 10/11: **Essay #1 due**

Thursday 10/13: **Midterm Examination**

II: In you more than you

Week 9

Tuesday 10/18: Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* (e-reserves)

Thursday 10/20: continue *Oedipus* discussion

Week 10

Tuesday 10/25: Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, Book 1 chaps. 1-16, pp. 1-66

Thursday 10/27: *Lolita*, Book 1 chaps 17-27, pp 66-114

Week 11

Tuesday 11/1: *Lolita*, Book 1 chap. 28 – Book 2 chap. 13, pp. 114-185

Thursday 11/3: *Lolita*, Book 2 chaps. 14-25, pp. 185-235

Week 12

Tuesday 11/8: finish *Lolita*

Thursday 11/10: Raymond Carver, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" (e-reserves)
Carver, "So Much Water, So Close to Home" (e-reserves)

Week 13

Tuesday 11/15: reading TBA

Thursday 11/17: In-class viewing: clips from *Top Gun*, *Lethal Weapon 2*

THANKSGIVING RECESS—NO CLASS MEETINGS

Week 14

Tuesday 11/29: no class meeting—conferences in my office

Thursday 12/1: Pam Houston, "Cowboys are my Weakness," and "How to Talk to a Hunter" (e-reserves)

Week 15

Tuesday 12/6: Irwin Shaw, "The Girls in Their Summer Dresses" (e-reserves)
John Updike, "A & P" (e-reserves)

Thursday 12/8: **Final essay due beginning of class**
Reading TBA