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ENG 2009-002: Literature and Human Values: Labor, Class, and Power

Stephen Swords
Eastern Illinois University

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2009-002

Literature and Human Values: Labor, Class, and Power Fall 2005

Stephen Swords Coleman 3020

581-6984, 367-6253

cfssl@eiu.edu

Office hours—T/R-12-2 and by appointment

Books for the course:

Dorothy Allison, *Bastard out of Carolina*

Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*

Willa Cather, *My Antonia*

F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

m. Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*

Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

Studs Terkel, *Working*

What does it mean to work? What's it like to live in a society defined by money? What are the different classes that make up modern America? Is our job really who we are? What kinds of lives do people hope for? What kind do they get? Is it true that money can't buy happiness? Or is it true, as somebody said, that it can buy you a big damn car to get close to it? What difference does where you grow up make? Does class cross racial and gender lines? Is it better to be a boss or a worker? What kinds of power really matter? How do we create them? Or resist them?

These are just questions off the top of my head, but the kinds of things I'd like us to be thinking about in this class, with the books and a movie or two along the way to help us. My hope is that in the course of this semester, we can add many more questions to the list.

Basic policies for the class are as follows:

1. This is a discussion based class, and I expect and reward participation.
2. School is like work; if you don't go, you get fired. I expect and reward regular attendance.
3. There will be quizzes and other sorts of impromptu writing to make sure you keep up with the reading.
4. There will be a take home midterm and final.
5. Final grades are based on overall performance in the class.