

Fall 8-15-2005

ENG 2009-003: Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, and Gender

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Engles, Tim, "ENG 2009-003: Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, and Gender" (2005). *Fall 2005*. 68.
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Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, and Gender
English 2009C—Fall, 2005

Instructor: Tim Engles
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 Instructor's e-dress: cftde@eiu.edu

Phone: 581-6316
 Office hours: 3:30 – 4:30, TR and by appointment
 Course listserv e-dress: 2009f05@lists.eiu.edu

Required Texts:

Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (1925)
 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)
 Bobbie Ann Mason, *Spence + Lila* (1988)
 Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1999)
 Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues* (1995)
 Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (volumes I and II, 1986, 1991)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

(read the following carefully; these words constitute our contract,
 and I will request your written agreement to them)

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS: A primary goal of this course is to develop your skills in the art of textual analysis. In order to do so, we will read, discuss, and write about works that foreground issues of race, age, and gender. Another goal is to understand more fully how and why various people respond as they do to issues of race, age, and gender, and why various artists respond to these issues as they do. We will consider literature and film as both shaping and reflecting forces, asking how they seem to reflect artistic intentions and social values, and whether they help to shape social values and beliefs. Issues and ideas that many consider touchy and off limits will arise in our readings and discussions, so you will need to approach this course and its material with an open mind and a willingness to seriously consider viewpoints expressed from different perspectives.

GRADES: Your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

Exam 1	20%
Final exam	25%
First essay (3-4 pages)	15%
Second Essay (4-6 pages)	25%
Participation/quizzes/attendance	15%

Regarding Writing: The two exams will be written exams, with questions that ask for short and long essay answers. The two formal essays will be graded on how thoughtful, complete, and insightful they are; writing that has enough errors and problems in it to distract from the content will be downgraded accordingly. Both writing assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points (15%) each day they are late, beginning at the end of the class period of the day on which they are due.

When the final essay is turned in, it **MUST** be accompanied by all notes and drafts written toward it, with the final copy of the essay on top of this material. I will use these materials to gauge and offer comments on your writing process. I **WILL NOT GRADE** a final essay that is not accompanied by material that clearly demonstrates several earlier stages leading up to the final draft, so for that essay, be sure to save all such materials (if you do most or all of your writing on a computer, print out occasional drafts to include with your final copy). Final essays unaccompanied by materials that clearly demonstrate several stages of development toward the final copy will receive an automatic ZERO.

Regarding the Writing Center: Tutoring services are free at the English Department's Writing Center, and students may drop in or schedule appointments during working hours (Room 3110 of Coleman Hall, <http://www.eiu.edu/~writing/>). If you are aware of chronic problems with your writing, I strongly recommend that you make use of this service. While I will pay close attention to each student's particular writing problems, I may advise some students to seek additional help at the Writing Center.

Regarding reading: Since one skill you will be developing in this class is the art of textual analysis, you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before class, set aside enough time to read carefully. I suggest that you take notes as you read, then decide for yourself, before coming to class, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I will give frequent "pop" quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings.

Missed quizzes and late papers: Because the answers to unannounced reading quizzes come up in class after they are taken, quizzes cannot be made up (even if you come to class late). These frequent quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. Again, papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may turn in papers before their due dates if you know you must miss class that day. There will be no make-up exams—students who miss the first exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles. Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic "zero" unless arrangements are made ahead of time.

E-mail activity: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it *frequently* for messages pertaining to the course. You already have an EIU account; you're also welcome to use other types of accounts, but just be sure you use one for this course that you tend to check frequently. We will use our course listserv (or "e-mail discussion list") for occasional assignments and for extension of in-class discussion. E-mail is also the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Using e-mail is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message (cftde@eiu.edu) by Friday, August 25 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, (1) tell me which course you're in (English 2009); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; and (3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree (or perhaps disagree with) with these course policies and requirements. Sending me this message will constitute your "signature" of our course contract, that is, these policies and procedures that you are reading.

Classroom Environment: In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade). The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question. Sensitive issues tend to arise within a course of this sort, so we must respect the opinions of others—it will help if we try to respond to ideas, rather than to the particular person stating them. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. (Also, please do not chew gum, eat food, or read outside materials during class, activities which are too distracting to others—drinking beverages is okay. Finally, no caps, please, but if you must wear one, turn it backwards so we can see your eyes.)

Academic Honesty: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department's policy 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 course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office." If you are uncertain whether something you have written is an example of plagiarism, just ask me to look it over before you turn it in.

ENGLISH 2009: DAILY SCHEDULE

This schedule may change; any changes will be announced in advance. Reading and writing assignments are to be completed by the dates on which they appear on the syllabus. BE SURE to bring the appropriate book or books to class if a reading assignment is listed for that day; students who show up without a copy of the day's reading assignment may be marked absent.

T AUG 23 Introduction to the course and to each other

R AUG 25 Read for today: Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) (handout from Tuesday); in-class film screening: *The Smell of Burning Ants*, written and directed by Jay Rosenblatt (1994)

F AUG 26 3 p.m. – deadline for sending an e-mail message to Dr. Engles; (1) write which course you're in (English 2009); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; and (3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and requirements (or perhaps that you disagree with some of them—which is okay, if you explain why)

T AUG 30 Hemingway, *In Our Time*; continue discussion of *The Smell of Burning Ants*

R SEP 1 *In Our Time*

T SEP 6 Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

R SEP 8 *The Bluest Eye*

T SEP 13 *The Bluest Eye*; also read before class—Lois-Ann Yamanaka, "When Asian Eyes Are Smiling" (1997); in-class film screening: *Two Lies*, directed by Pam Tom (1989)

R SEP 15 *The Bluest Eye*

T SEP 20 Mason, *Spence + Lila*

R SEP 22 *Spence + Lila*

T SEP 27 *Spence + Lila*; Paper One due at the beginning of class

R SEP 29 Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*

T OCT 4 *My Year of Meats*

R OCT 6 *My Year of Meats*

T OCT 11 *My Year of Meats*

R OCT 13 Mid-term exam

T OCT 18 Alexie, *Reservation Blues*

R OCT 20 *Reservation Blues*

T OCT 25 *Reservation Blues*

R OCT 27 *Reservation Blues*

T NOV 1 *Reservation Blues*

R NOV 3 Readings for today (handouts): Karen Brodtkin, "How Did Jews Become White Folks?" and "The GI Bill: Whites Only Need Apply" (1994); Maurice Berger, excerpts from *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness* (1999)

T NOV 8 In-class film screening: *Nobody's Business*, directed by Alan Berliner (1994)

R NOV 10 Discussion of *Nobody's Business*

T NOV 15 Writing Workshop

- Readings for today (handouts): "What Is Good Writing?" "The Writing Process" and subsequent sections, and sample student essay

R NOV 17 Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (production schedule: 1978-91)

NOV 21 – NOV 25 THANKSGIVING BREAK!

T NOV 29 *Maus I*

R DEC 1 *Maus II*

T DEC 6 *Maus II*

R DEC 8 Last Day of Class: final paper due at the beginning of class, in folder with notes, earlier drafts, and so on; tearful, heartfelt farewells, etc.

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 14, 12:30 – 2:30