

Spring 1-15-2009

# ENG 2009G-001: Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, and Gender

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## Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, and Gender

English 2009—Spring, 2009

T/R: 9:30 – 10:45

Instructor: Tim Engles  
Office: 3831 Coleman Hall  
Instructor's e-dress: tdengles@eiu.edu

Phone: 581-6316 1:45-2:45  
Office hours: ~~5:00-6:00~~, TR and by appointment  
Course listserv e-dress: 2009s09@lists.eiu.edu

### Required Texts:

Howard Cruse, *Stuck Rubber Baby* (1995)  
Gloria Naylor, *Linden Hills* (1985)  
Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer* (1996)  
Bobbie Ann Mason, *Spence + Lila* (1988)  
Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (1996)  
Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1998)  
Brian Ascalon Roley, *American Son* (2001)  
Steve Yarbrough, *The Oxygen Man* (1999)  
Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2006)

## 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 enhance your skills in the art of literary 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. Topics and ideas that some consider touchy or off limits will probably arise in our readings and discussions, so you will need to approach this course with an open mind and a willingness to 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 (5-6 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, and with character matchings. The two formal essays will be graded on how thoughtful, well-developed, and insightful they are. Clean, careful writing counts as well, and essays that have enough errors and problems in them 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 in a folder 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 and to ensure effective class discussions, I will give frequent "pop" quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings.

**Missed quizzes and exams; late papers:** We will begin many of our sessions with a brief reading quiz. 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 quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time, as well as those who read course materials diligently. 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. 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.

**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 (tdengles@eiu.edu) by Friday, January 16 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.

**Attendance Policy:** I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the “Daily Schedule.” **If you have more than three absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond three.** Also, missing a scheduled individual conference without your prior notification will result in the automatic lowering of your grade for the final essay by ten points. If you have to miss your conference, call or write to me via e-mail in advance; I will do the same if I have to reschedule.

**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 sometimes 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, if you have a cell phone, silence it before class and put it away—no checking for messages or reading or writing text messages during class. Please do not chew gum, eat food, or read outside materials during class, activities which are also 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 Spring, 2009

This schedule may change; any changes will be announced in advance.

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 JAN 13 Introduction to the course and to each other

R JAN 15 Discuss the handout from Tuesday, Joyce Carol Oates' story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Read it carefully before class, underline anything important or confusing, and bring it to class today

F JAN 16 3 p.m. — deadline for sending an e-mail message to Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu)

(1) state which course you're in (English 2009); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; (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); and 4) be sure that, as with all e-mail messages in professional settings, you "sign" it by adding your name at the end.

T JAN 20 Reading for today: film transcript, *The Smell of Burning Ants* (handout), and *Stuck Rubber Baby*

R JAN 22 *Stuck Rubber Baby*

T JAN 27 *Stuck Rubber Baby*

R JAN 29 *Stuck Rubber Baby*

T FEB 3 *Stuck Rubber Baby*

R FEB 5 *Linden Hills*

T FEB 10 *Linden Hills*

R FEB 12 *Linden Hills*

T FEB 17 *Linden Hills*

R FEB 19 *Linden Hills*

T FEB 24 In-class film screening: *Smoke Signals*, written by Sherman Alexie, directed by Chris Eyre (1998); **Paper One due at the beginning of class**

R FEB 26 finish viewing and discuss *Smoke Signals*; begin reading *Indian Killer* for today

T MAR 3 *Indian Killer*

R MAR 5 *Indian Killer*

T MAR 10 *Indian Killer*

R MAR 12 Mid-term exam (Reminder: There are no make-up exams in this course—students who miss this exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles.)

MAR 16 – 20 Spring Break!

T MAR 24 *Spence + Lila*

R MAR 26 *Spence + Lila*

T MAR 31 *Spence + Lila*

R APR 2 *Fight Club*

T APR 7 *Fight Club*

R APR 9 *Fight Club*

T APR 14 *Fight Club*

**R APR 16 Writing Workshop**

- Additional readings for today: handouts from Tuesday on writing, including model student essay
- Discussion of final essay and sign-up for conference (topic: comparison/contrast between one of our remaining books and another book listed on this Daily Schedule)

T APR 21 No class: conferences on final paper

R APR 23 No class: conferences on final paper

T APR 28 No class: conferences on final paper

R APR 30 Last Day of Class: final paper due at the beginning of class, in folder with notes, earlier drafts, and so on

Final Exam: Monday, May 4, 8:00-10:00 am (Reminder: Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic “zero” unless arrangements are made ahead of time.)