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ENG 2011G-002: Literature, the Self and the World: Fiction

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In a recent essay on teaching literature, critic and scholar Marjorie Perloff writes: “Why do we study literature anyway? To make the connections between the progress of human lives and their verbal representations. To thicken the plot.” We will do that sort of work by reading two great novels and watching one great film this semester, all works that will speak to and enlarge your sense of what it means to be a human being in the world.

TEXTS

Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*
Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*
Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*

You should have access to a hardcover collegiate (college-level) dictionary when reading.

REQUIREMENTS

The course will require dedicated daily work (reading, talking, quizzes), several pieces of writing, and a final examination.

QUIZZES

Why quizzes? Michael Bérubé, who teaches English at Penn State, gives a good explanation: “Most of my students do most of the reading. How do I know? Loath as I am to admit it, I have begun giving quizzes.”

And here’s Barack Obama, from a University of Chicago Law School syllabus: “I know a quiz seems a bit demeaning, but everyone needs motivation once in awhile.”

As I think you’ll agree, quizzes are easy if you do the reading.

ATTENDANCE

Be here, on time, every time. You’re responsible for all assignments, whether or

ENGLISH 2011 LITERATURE, *the* SELF, *and the* WORLD: FICTION PROFESSOR M. LEDDY

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not you’re here when they’re announced.
Frequent absences will affect your grade.

If you must miss a class, you should get in touch with me beforehand to find out what you will miss. Photocopied pages to go with our reading will be available from an envelope on my office door.

LATE WORK, MAKE-UP WORK

Missed quizzes and writing cannot be made up. Late writing is acceptable only if you have my approval in advance. If you have a “properly verified absence” for illness, emergency, or participation in an official university activity, I’ll record a blank for a missed quiz, not a zero.

DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability and would like to receive academic accommodations, contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581–6583) as soon as possible.

OFFICE HOURS

Talking to professors is one of the smartest things a college student can do. Please, come in to ask questions and talk about your work in the class. If you feel uneasy about talking to your professors, read “How to talk to a professor” for potentially helpful advice: <http://bit.ly/6u0IcD>

E-MAIL

Before you e-mail me, please read and follow the guidelines in “How to e-mail a professor”: <http://bit.ly/x379y>

One guideline that you don’t need to follow: you need not add your class number and meeting time to your signature. But do include ENG 2011 in your subject line. That

makes it easier for me to sort mail and respond to it in a timely way.

DECORUM

The atmosphere in our class should be serious—not somber or pretentious, but genuinely intellectual. No eating, talking, sleeping, sketching, knitting, wandering, texting, drumming, wearing headphones or hoods, or doing work for other classes. No private business. Phones and other devices should be turned off and kept out of sight. Please show proper respect in our small community of learning. Any student who establishes a pattern of troublesome behavior will be asked to leave on a class-by-class basis.

DISCUSSION

Consider what the writer Thomas Merton says about a teacher he admired:

Most of the time he asked questions. His questions were very good, and if you tried to answer them intelligently, you found yourself saying excellent things that you did not know you knew, and that you had not, in fact, known before.

I like to ask questions that make people think. I also like it when people ask me such questions. If you say something and I then ask you a question, I’m doing so in the spirit of dialogue. You should be asking questions too, of me and of one another. Asking questions is what’s involved in critical inquiry. Think of a question not as something for which there’s a ready-made answer but as an invitation to think.

GRADING

Your grade will be based on your written work (30%), quizzes (40%), a final examination (20%), and participation (10%).

Writing assignments receive letter grades. Missing writing receives a zero. Quizzes receive numerical grades. A quiz average of, say, 108% counts as 108 and not as an A (95); a quiz average of, say, 40% counts as 40 and not as an F (55).

Participation in the course receives one of five grades: 100 (consistent, relevant, informed), 85 (frequent, relevant, informed), 75 (less frequent, less relevant, less informed), 50 (occasional), 0 (little or no

participation).

Informed participation is simply participation that comes from having done the reading. You may check on quizzes and participation at any time.

To calculate semester grades, I use numerical equivalents for letter grades:

A 95 A- 92 B+ 87 B 85 B- 82 C+ 77
C 75 C- 72 D+ 67 D 65 D- 62 F 55

Sometimes when I grade an essay I'll give a grade that falls between two grades—e.g., B+/A- (89.5).

For semester grades, 90 or above is an A; 80 or above, a B; 70 or above, a C; 60 or above, a D; below 60, an F.

EWP

Please make sure that you understand the requirements for the Electronic Writing Portfolio and that you fulfill them in a timely way. For more information, visit the university's website: <http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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 the representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and 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 my statement concerning academic integrity:

Any breach of academic integrity—from cheating on a quiz to lifting words or ideas without attribution to submitting a wholly unoriginal essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty. The Student Standards office recommends an F for the course. You will also be required to take a course in ethics administered by Student Standards, whose staff will keep your misconduct on record and notify your other professors that one of their students has

violated academic integrity.

You should be familiar with Eastern's statement on academic integrity (posted in classrooms) and should ask if you have any questions about quoting from and/or documenting sources. But because the work of the course is to be an expression of your ideas in your words, questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise. Do not "borrow" work or give your work to anyone (allowing someone else to make use of your work is also a breach of academic integrity and will also get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course).

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE (WEEKS)

1: Introduction to the course

2–4: *Mansfield Park*, in eight installments: Chapters 1–5, 6–10, 11–18, 19–23, 24–31, 32–36, 37–43, 44–48

5–13: *Bleak House*, in twenty-one installments: Chapters 1–4, 5–7, 8–10, 11–13, 14–16, 17–19, 20–22, 23–25, 26–29, 30–32, 33–35, 36–38, 39–42, 43–46, 47–49, 50–53, 54–56, 57–59, 60–63, 64–65, 66–67

14: *Smoke* (dir. Wayne Wang)

15: Last things

Due dates for essays: February 11, April 14. Further, very modest pieces of writing will be assigned as in-class writing and on a due-next-class basis.

Final examination: May 5, 10:15–12:15