ENG 2009G-004: Studies in Passion: Literature of Love, Hate, and Obsession

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Studies in Passion: Literature of Love, Hate, and Obsession

[The study of literature can provide us with] a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us.

- Adrienne Rich

This course will examine texts that negotiate and explore the complex, contradictory realm of human desire. We will consider how understandings of meaning, ourselves, our wants, and others are bisected by cultural notions of gender, sexuality, race, politics, identity, technology, aesthetics, and notions of history. Toward that end, the course will explore tropes of “love” “hatred” and “obsession” in prose, dramatic, and cinematic works as they reflect anxieties about cultural politics (race, class, gender), epistemology (our ability to understand or represent the world), and ontology (our theories about what the world consists of, who created it, whether it has any meaning, etc.).

The syllabus is made up of texts that span genres and time periods, and, among the authors, you may recognize some of the usual suspects (William Shakespeare, Scott Fitzgerald, Mary Shelley) side by side with less familiar names (Jeanette Winterson, Patrick Marber). Although not conceptualized as a survey, the course is reading and thinking intensive, necessitating a commitment to class discussion (beyond merely showing up) and courageous consideration of ideas about art, interpretation, culture, existence, and desire. The format of each class will be relatively fluid, changing with regard to the material, my ideas, and your interests. There will be some discussion as well as the occasional informal lecture. However, this course should focus primarily on you, your questions, and opinions. Remember this is not MY class but ours and should be understood as an ongoing conversation. The learning outcomes for the course are as follows:

1. To provide strategies for reading, viewing, and appreciating works of art for the insight they provide about history and our own time.

2. To allow each member of the class to engage the significant issues and questions raised by the texts through writing, performance, and class discussion.

3. To assist in the development of skills of critical thinking and argumentative writing.

Due to its class size, we will run the course as a seminar. As such, energetic commitment and engaged participation are crucial to its success and required of every member. As it is a writing-intensive course, you may elect to submit essay from it to your university-required portfolio.

Assignments:
Two critical papers (4 pages) that focus on a particular issue that has provoked, challenged, or disturbed your thinking during the course and can be generated from seed papers. Writing guidelines will be handed out in advance.

Manifesto paper (4 pages)----details to come.

Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion --- defined as TALKING productively.

Two short pieces of writing (2-3 pages) called “seed papers” in which you pose a productive question which relates to the inquiry issues of the course about the text and then attempt to answer it. You may be asked to present and stimulate class discussion with your question during the semester. No late seed papers will be accepted.

Final Exam

**During the final week of classes, you will be assigned to a smaller group who will take part of the final exam together. That time will be used for group meetings as you review and prepare for the in-class portion of the exam.

Other sundry ground rules:

Attendance
Your regular attendance is expected; be advised that exams and paper topics will draw heavily from material discussed in class. More than three unexcused absences will result in your term grade being lowered by a third for each session missed beyond three. Since coming late or leaving early is extremely disruptive, habitual lateness will also negatively affect your term grade. Please notify me by email if there is unexpected illness or an emergency that causes you to miss class. Do not get in touch asking “for the assignment” or a “rundown of what you missed.” My responsibilities as an instructor lie with the students who do come to class.

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Class Participation
You should come to class having completed and prepared to talk about the reading for that day. Your own questions and comments about the plays are integral to the success of the course. If you have not done the reading or are not prepared to discuss, it is better not to come to class.

Email
You should get into the habit of checking your email daily. There will be a class list on which I will post changes in assignments (if they arise), course-related announcements, and ideas which expand upon what happens in class. This list is also a great way for all of us to interact outside of class; that is to say, if you have a question or query, the miracle of technology offers us a way to discuss and address it.
Lateness
Since coming late or leaving early is extremely disruptive, I request that you do not come to class if you are more than ten minutes late or if you plan to leave early.

Conferences
I am regularly available to meet with you during my scheduled office hours or by appointment. To make an appointment, speak to me after class or contact me via email.

Grading
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Papers</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifesto</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two seed papers</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plagiarism
Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author--that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of others' materials (words and ideas). We will discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the dean.

Class Participation
You should come to class prepared to talk about the reading for that day. Each class session will be a mixture of informal lecture and discussion; thus, your own questions and comments about the plays are essential to the success of the course. You will also need to have completed the assigned reading and (when noted) your typed “seed paper.” If there are no questions or a lagging discussion, I will assume that you understand the text perfectly and will give a quiz worth as much as a seed essay.

**For extra credit, you may choose to “review” the fall production of Shakespeare’s Othello at the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana. If there is enough interest, we can go to the performance as a group. Specific details will be provided as we get closer to the show dates.

Texts: William Shakespeare Othello
Patrick Marber Closer
Mary Shelley Frankenstein
Jeanette Winterson The Passion
F. Scott Fitzgerald The Great Gatsby
Sam Shepard Fool for Love
Euripides Hippolytus

Schedule of Reading and Writing Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 27</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Krutch and Winterson handout</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
September
3   Shakespeare’s *Othello* Act One **Seed #1 Due**
5   *Othello* Acts Two and Three **Seed #2 Due**
10  *Othello* Act Four **Seed #3 Due**
12  *Othello* Act Five **Seed #4 Due**
17  Winterson’s *The Passion* **Seed #5 Due**
19  *The Passion* **Seed #6 Due**
24  *The Passion* **Seed #7 Due**
26  Marber’s *Closer* **Seed #8 Due**

October
1   Marber’s *Closer* **Seed #9 Due**
3   *Essay #1 Due / Closer*
8   Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* **Seed #10 Due**
10  *Gatsby* **Seed #11 Due**
15  *Gatsby* **Seed #12 Due**
17  *Gatsby / Shelley’s Frankenstein opening*
22  *Frankenstein* **Seed #13 Due**
24  *Frankenstein* **Seed #14 Due**
29  *Frankenstein* **Seed #15 Due**
31  *Essay #2 Due / “Sex and the City”*

November
5   “Sex and the City” **Seed #16 Due**
7   View Film TBA
12  Film Discussion TBA
14  Euripides’ *Hippolytus* **Seed #17 Due**
19  *Hippolytus* **Seed #18 Due**
21  *Hippolytus* **Manifesto Due**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

December
3   Shepard’s *Fool for Love* **Seed #19**
5   *Fool for Love* **Seed #20 Due**
10  Group Meetings
12  Group Meetings
   Exam Review

FINAL EXAM: TBA