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ENG 2009G-004: Literature and Human Values: Faith, Survival, Progress

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English 2009G-Section 4: LITERATURE AND HUMAN VALUES: FAITH, SURVIVAL, PROGRESS

Spring 2009 / MW 3:00-4:15 pm / Coleman 3160

PROFESSOR SUZIE PARK**Office: 3030 Coleman, 217-581-6285****Office Hours: Mondays 2:15-3, 6-7; Wednesdays 9:45-1****Course Description**

This course is writing- and *reading-intensive*. It emphasizes practice in two things: composing essays and responding thoughtfully to literary works. We will spend a good deal of time reading works that will help us consider issues of faith, survival, and progress. You will exercise your skills in interpreting and discussing narratives that invite you to contemplate the meaning of “having morals” in a secular modern world that privileges wealth, conspicuous consumption, easy entertainment, self-gratification, and efficiency. What does it mean for an individual to have values—let alone exercise these values—when objects surrounding the individual are invested already with seemingly limitless, almost magical value?

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is a **writing-centered, writing-intensive** course. You will do a lot of writing and responding. If you foresee difficulty in attending class regularly this semester, you should reconsider taking this course. **You also must be present on the scheduled mid-term and final exam dates in order to complete your exams. I do not schedule make-up exams.** See the attendance policy below.

TextsTheodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy*Jane Jacobs, *Systems of Survival*Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*Andrea Lunsford, *Easy Writer* (3rd edition)**REQUIREMENTS: BEFORE YOU COMMIT TO THIS CLASS**

The primary aim of this course is to help you to become a sharper, more persuasive, and more self-reflective writer. Now that you are writing at the university level, you should be able to:

- know your audience, and to write persuasively for different audiences and purposes
- communicate and collaborate effectively in both oral and written encounters
- review and understand scholarly literature in your field of expertise
- economically incorporate and correctly document outside sources of ideas and information
- revise, revise, revise your writing so that it is grammatically sound and logical

PLAGIARISM (using another writer’s written words or ideas without giving properly documented credit) will not be tolerated and will result in a FAILING GRADE on the assignment, if not for the course. I will follow the departmental 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 own 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 assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

Always submit your assignments using correct MLA format.

CONFERENCES: As I get to know your writing better throughout the semester, I will require that you meet with me on an individual basis. In these conferences, we will discuss where you think your writing and critical skills are improving or need more work.

LATE POLICY: For the purposes of your class participation grade, being late for class is the same as being absent. In addition, all take-home papers and assignments are due at the beginning of class. You will NOT be able to make up any missed in-class assignments and quizzes. More details:

- 1) Late assignments will be marked a full grade lower for every day (not class day) late. Assignments turned in a week past the deadline will be given a “zero.”
- 2) In-class writing assignments must be turned in by the end of class, and cannot be made up at a later date.

ABSENCE POLICY: When you are absent—especially when you are frequently absent—two things happen. First, your participation grade drops substantially. Second, you naturally fall behind in understanding course material and neither the class nor the Professor can catch you up on everything missed in a day’s class. YOU need to decide when it is absolutely necessary to miss class. Be wise. It bears repeating: you cannot make up missed work and you will be penalized for late assignments. Whether these are excused or unexcused absences does not matter for this course. The Professor does not need to have your absences documented or explained. You must complete your Mid-Term and Final Exams on the scheduled dates. **NO MAKE-UP EXAMS**.

EMAILING POLICY: I want to get to know you and your work this semester. Thus I ask that you call me or stop by my office during office hours (or scheduled times) so that we can talk. **DO NOT EMAIL ME TO ASK FOR AN “UPDATE” ON MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, OR TO EXPLAIN AN ABSENCE**. I will assign working groups so that you can contact group members for notes and missed work.

ESSAY FORMAT: Your paper should be paper-clipped or stapled. It must include page numbers. Format: 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins.

PARTICIPATION: This means more than simply being present in class. It means being on-time, prepared (**BRING THE CORRECT TEXTBOOKS TO CLASS**), thoughtful, respectful of others, engaged, and fruitfully open to criticism. **While you’re in class, act like it and respect your teacher and fellow students: no cell-phone rings, no text-messaging, no iPods or headphones.**

GRADES

Participation (10%)

Essay 1 (10%)

Essay 2 (20%)

Response papers, in-class assignments, tests (30%)

Mid-Term exam (20%)

Final exam (10%)

For in-class writing assignments, group exercises, and response papers, you will be graded on a scale of $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, or $\sqrt{-}$. Work that is strongly engaged and on-topic will receive a $\sqrt{+}$ (or A). Satisfactory work that is on-topic will receive a $\sqrt{}$ (or B). Work that shows little engagement or is off-topic will get a $\sqrt{-}$ (or C), and so forth. Essay assignments will receive letter grades. See the attached **GRADING RUBRIC** for details of the grading criteria I will use.

Professor Park
English 2009.4: Faith, Survival, Progress

Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925)

Reading Schedule

DISCLAIMER: This is an 814-page novel, densely written and ponderous. But it is also an enjoyable read. Let yourself become lost in this novel, and make it your best friend. Remember to take notes, or at least jot down page numbers so that you have select passages to discuss in class and to quote in papers. Normally, you will have more reading to complete on Mondays than on Wednesdays since we have a long break over the weekends. In any case, KEEP UP WITH THE READING.

NOTE: Unfortunately for some of you, the pagination will be different in the newer, 2000 Signet edition of the text. Follow the chapter divisions.

W 1/14/09— Book I. Chapters 1-8 (pp. 7-57); SKIP Chapters 9-11 (pp. 58-79)

M 1/19— MLK—no class—READ!

W 1/21— Book I. Ch. 12-19 (pp. 80-145)
Book II. Ch. 1-11 (pp. 146-234)

M 1/26— Book II. Ch. 12-22 (pp. 234-302)
DEADLINE TO DROP CLASS WITHOUT GRADE

W 1/28— Individual conferences to be scheduled in lieu of regular class—READ!
Book II. Ch. 23-35 (pp. 302-388)

M 2/2— Book II. Ch. 36-42 (pp. 389-442)
Book II. Ch. 43-47 (pp. 443-494)

W 2/4— Book III. Ch. 1-12 (pp. 495-585); PAPER ONE DUE

M 2/9— Book III. Ch. 13-18 (pp. 585-629)
Book III. Ch. 19-24 (pp. 629-702)

W 2/11— Book III. Ch. 25-34 (702-814)

GRADING CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENTS — FOR YOUR REFERENCE

→ "A" Range: Outstanding. Original and creative ideas developed exceptionally well. Assignment is flawlessly revised and proofread.

Content:	a persuasive, insightful presentation of your own ideas that excels in responding to the assignment identifies and responds to the needs of the audience
Organization:	clearly sets up reader expectations (frontloads main ideas and information) clearly stated and specific thesis or central idea introduction sets up argument and direction of the report succeeding paragraphs or sections follow logically from the central idea body paragraphs are unified, organized, and coherent written and graphical cues provide a road map and signal the information that follows conclusion considers the ramifications of the central idea (answers the question, "So what?")
Evidence:	appropriate use of evidence to prove and flesh out the central idea evidence followed by a thorough analysis that shows how it is critical correct documentation of sources
Style:	language is clear and concise with few grammatical or stylistic errors word choice is precise and appropriately specific strong, lively, and distinctive tone and voice throughout sentence structure fit for complexity of ideas (variety suited to sense: appropriate coordination, subordination, modification, and parallelism) use of passive constructions only when necessary correct use of conventional format for the assigned genre of the report body paragraphs or sections blocked properly

→ "B" range: Displays sound understanding of the topic, some originality, and a sense of the issues involved in writing a persuasive report, rather than mere exposition; proofreading needed, mostly finished; may have one or two of the following problems:

Content:	structure and argument are clear, but ideas lack depth and/or detail does not progress much beyond clichéd ideas covers topic adequately, but not thoroughly topic needs more analysis
Organization:	does not adequately or consistently set up reader expectations <u>important ideas and information are not frontloaded</u> — very important <u>central idea is vague, difficult to understand and/or to prove</u> introduction does not set up direction of argument clearly body paragraphs do not follow logically from central idea body paragraphs are not unified, organized, coherent written and graphical cues are too vague or too general conclusion merely restates or summarizes the central idea
Evidence:	too little evidence to prove and flesh out the central idea <u>evidence is not integrated</u> — a useful skill to practice <u>evidence needs to be analyzed more thoroughly</u> — the mark of a thoughtful writer <u>evidence is not cited properly</u>
Style:	a number of grammatical or stylistic errors (including vague, repetitious, or colloquial word choice; shifting tenses; wordy or convoluted sentences; punctuation problems) tone and voice either too stilted and formal or too casual for a college-level report

you must cite sources and pages

work on very common problem

→ "C" range: Displays either an uneven performance (serious flaws of comprehension and/or presentation); competent exposition without a real attempt at thinking through the assignment; further revision needed; essay has not been proofread; may have three of the problems outlined in the "B" range and/or:

Content:	<u>no thesis or discernible argument</u> — must have clear, arguable thesis. depends on clichés, rather than analysis, of the topic inadequate coverage of the topic; does not clearly address needs of the audience
Organization:	<u>introduction too vague, dull, confusing</u> — Focus on the INTRODUCTION no roadmap or written and graphical cues conclusion overly general, repetitious, obvious, weak <u>body paragraphs demonstrate problems with development/organization, which interfere with development of main ideas</u>
Evidence:	<u>few relevant pieces of evidence; little actual analysis</u> — USE EVIDENCE → ORGANIZE AND DEVELOP EACH POINT <u>too much irrelevant evidence; no actual analysis</u>
Style:	<u>stylistic and grammatical errors interfere with the content of the report</u> <u>sentences demonstrate problems with sentence boundaries (fragments, comma splices, run-ons)</u> word choice often imprecise inconsistent tone and voice

VERY "DRAFTY" AND NEEDS REVISION pages

→ "D" range: Paper is off-topic; does not answer an assigned or approved topic; displays fundamental misunderstanding of the topic; major revising needed; reads like a first draft; has three or more of the problems outlined in the "C" range; or does not fulfill page requirements.

→ "F": no report submitted; report has been plagiarized (incorporates another author's ideas or language without acknowledgment; or actually written by someone else).

COMMENTS: