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ENG 2099G-099: Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, Gender (Honors)

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English 2099-099
“Literature and Human Values: Race, Age, Gender” (Honors)
 Fall 2007/Coleman Hall 3150
 Class Meeting: 3-4.15pm

Dr. Dagni Bredeesen

Office Hours: Mon/Wed 1.30-2.45p or by appointment
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Course Overview: In this honors humanities course, we will be reading literature—both fiction and non-fiction—that grapples with markers that crucially define who we understand ourselves to be and how society views us: our age, our race, our gender. One objective of this course is to develop further a critical appreciation of and a confidence in reading and discussing literature and the ways literature speaks of and to the human condition. Furthermore, in this course, you will have many opportunities for extending and enhancing skills in reading, writing, and speaking in general, in ways that will benefit you throughout your University career, and, indeed, your life.

Please note that this class is DISCUSSION-DRIVEN. This means that there is an expectation that each student will be fully prepared for each meeting having read and thought about the text assigned for the day and able to initiate or contribute to discussion with relevant and meaningful questions or comments that indicate a serious effort to grapple with the readings and the questions that frame this course.

Texts:

Cisneros, Sandra	<i>House on Mango Street</i>
Fuller, Alexandra	<i>Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight</i>
Walker, Alice	<i>The Color Purple</i>
Kingston, Maxine Hong	<i>The Woman Warrior</i>
Baldwin, James	<i>Go Tell it on the Mountain</i>
Robinson, Marilynne	<i>Gilead</i>
Lahiri, Jhumpa	<i>The Namesake</i>

Please note: You will also need a College Level Dictionary to succeed in this course.

Course Assignments: To achieve the objectives described above students will need to keep up with the rigorous reading schedule and actively participate in the class discussion. The following assignments will foster the active engagement necessary to make this a productive and exciting learning experience.

I. Exams and Quizzes: *There will be a mid-term (15%) and a final examination (15%). I reserve the right to give pop quizzes as warranted if I sense students are not keeping up with their readings.

II. Papers: *Two essays 5-6 pages (15% each)

III. Response Papers: (20%) We will be reading seven texts, some fiction, some non-fiction. On four of these seven texts you will write single-page, single-spaced response papers in which you analyze a passage from the text by looking at one of the literary terms we are studying. Again, you only have to do four, not seven but that means that the longer papers should focus on the text you have not written your response paper on already. The response paper for a particular text will be due the NEXT CLASS MEETING following the end of our discussion of the novel or autobiography.

IV. Extending Your Map: (15%): The word “university” carries with it the idea that part of your education includes an exploration of the universe, that is, the world around you. This course “Literature and Human Values” offers you the opportunity to gain credit for participating in activities in ways that stretch you intellectually, politically, personally. For this assignment you are encouraged to go to an event or, a lecture, a concert that in some way that extends you beyond what you have previously experienced. Given the focus of the class, I’d like you to look for ways that you can extend your experiences in the categories of race, age, and gender. Thus for example, most of you have been to movies or concerts but perhaps you have not watched a film made entirely in another language.

I would like you to do things you would not ordinarily do, I would like each one of your personal field trips to be different. Here are some ideas 1) go to an art museum and look at an exhibit then focus on one particular painting for 15 minutes. 2) go to an ethnic restaurant that serves food other than Mexican, Chinese, Italian, or any other food you are familiar with. Pay attention to the ambience, décor, what you order, how it tastes, etc. 3) attend a lecture or presentation in a field that is different from the one you are studying in and perhaps put on in association with Latino History Month this Fall or by international programs. 4) other—clear with me.

In the past, students have seen this assignment as an opportunity to really stretch themselves. One young woman told a co-worker about the assignment and she was invited to attend a Vietnamese wedding. Another student committed himself to visiting a home for the elderly during the semester. Still others, who live in Chicagoland, made a point of taking advantage of the diverse cultural events that a metropolis can offer. If you draw a blank please come and see me. Remember whatever you choose has to be something that you have not done before.

The experience itself is part one of this assignment.

Part two is writing it up in a **thoughtful, well-crafted** way that clearly describes what you did and explains how this experience has helped you understand in a fresh way some aspect of the material we focus on in class—either the subject matter itself or in what ways this experience has taken you beyond your usual realm of experience, and finally reflects on this experience in relation to something we have discussed in class. This paper should be type written, carefully proofread and its length should run 3 to 4 double-spaced pages. You will write three of these papers.

IV. Participation (10%) Participation means first of all showing up physically for class (see attendance policy below) with your textbooks or handouts/homework due that day and without a copy of the DEN or other non-course related material, your cell phone turned off (not just on vibrate) and your attention fully focused what we are doing in class. Secondly, it means having read and thought about the required reading for the day. Thirdly, it means participating in the day’s discussion by preparing your own comments or questions and responding to other people’s comments or questions. It also means looking for ways to identify links between what one person is saying and your own or another’s comments. In relation to questions, I expect that you will look up words you don’t understand and try to find out the answer to your question on your own to the best of your ability and to be able to say if you haven’t been able to come to a satisfactory answer why the question matters to our understanding of the text.

Attendance Policy: You may miss 2 classes no questions asked, no excuses needed. After 2 classes your grade will drop one level. For example, if you were earning a B, and you miss a third class your grade would be dropped to C. If you miss 6 or more classes you will receive a failing grade for this class. This means you will probably not want to squander your allowable absences but save them for when you need them.

Course Schedule:

Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to change. Also, students should read assigned text(s) prior to the class in which the text(s) will be discussed.

Week One:

- 8/20 Introduction to course
Homework (HMWK): Pick up course texts and begin reading *House on Mango Street* chapters
- 8/22 Discuss readings
HMWK: Finish *HMS* for Monday

Week Two:

- 8/27 Discuss *HMS*
HMWK: **Read to page 50 in *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight***
- 8/29 Discuss beginning of *DLG* including historical and generic contexts
HMWK: *DLG* read to p200

Week Three:

- 9/03 **LABOR DAY/NO CLASS**
- 9/07 HMWK: Finish reading *DLG* for Monday

Week Four:

- 9/10 Discuss last section of *DLG*. Introduction to first essay
Email introductions with your thesis statement in **BOLD** by noon Wednesday
Bring *The Color Purple* to Class on Wednesday
- 9/12 Intro to *The Color Purple*
Writing Workshop

Week Five:

- 9/17 **First Paper Due Bring 3 copies of your paper to class**
HMWK: Read *The Color Purple*
- 9/19 HMWK: Finish reading *The Color Purple* for class

Week Six:

- 9/24 Film
- 9/26 Film
HMWK: Read chapters 1 "No Name Woman" and chapter 2 "White Tigers" of *The Woman Warrior*

Week Seven:

- 10/01 Discuss assigned readings HMWK: Chapter 3 "Shaman" (*WW*)
- 10/03 Discuss assigned readings HMWK Finish reading *The Warrior Woman*
Hand out Midterm Prep sheet. and Form Study Groups

Week Eight:

- 10/08 In class study groups
- 10/10 **Midterm**

HMWK: Read Part One "The Seventh Day" and Part Two "Prayers of the Saints: Florence's Prayer" *Go Tell it on the Mountain*

Week Nine:

10/15 Discuss *GTM*
HMWK: Part Two "Gabriel's Prayer"
10/17 Discuss reading
HMWK: Part Two "Elizabeth's Prayer" and Part Three "The Threshing Floor"

Week Ten:

10/22 Discuss reading
HMWK: *Gilead* to end of second page break p52
10/24 Discuss reading
HMWK: *Gilead* to page break p146

Week Eleven:

10/29 Discuss reading
HMWK: *Gilead* to page 194
10/31 Discuss reading
HMWK: Finish reading *Gilead*

Week Twelve: CONFERENCES

11/05 Discuss reading/ Introduce *The Namesake*
HMWK: Read *Namesake* chapters 1 and 2
11/07 Discuss reading Introduce Second Paper
HMWK: Read chapters 3, 4 and 5

Week Thirteen:

11/12 HMWK: Read chapters 6 and 7
11/14 HMWK: Finish reading *The Namesake*

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Week Fourteen:

11/26 Discuss Conclusion

11/28 **Second Paper Due**

Week Fifteen:

12/03 Final Exam Prep sheet distributed
12/05 Course Wrap up and Evaluations

Final Exam: Wednesday Dec. 12th, 2.45-4.45 pm

Literary Terms

Narrative

Novel

Autobiography

Voice

Point of View

Verisimilitude

Representation

Beginnings

Closure

Narrative Temporality

First-person narration

Third-person narration