

Fall 8-15-2016

ENG 5061-001: Topics in Literature Literary Theory

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**Marked Men:
Race, Ethnicity and Masculinity
in Contemporary American Literature**

English 5061—Fall, 2016
Thursday, 7:00 - 9:30, 3159 Coleman Hall

Instructor: Tim Engles
Office: CH 3831

Email: tdengles@eiu.edu
Office hours: 12:30 – 1:30, Tues/Thurs &
by appointment

Texts from EIU's Textbook Rental Service:

Savage Holiday, Richard Wright (1954)
The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, Sloan Wilson (1955)
M. Butterfly, David Henry Hwang (1988)
About Schmidt, Louis Begley (1996)
The Oxygen Man, Steve Yarbrough (1999)
Erasure, Percival Everett (2001)
The People of Paper, Salvador Plascencia (2005)
Shortcomings, Adrian Tomine (2007)
The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P., Adelle Waldman (2013)
10:04: A Novel, Ben Lerner (2014)

Course Description and Goals*

Recent cultural, political and demographic changes in the United States have challenged the ways that men have traditionally thought of themselves and their social status. These challenges especially confront those who have long occupied the dominant norms of straight, able-bodied, middle-class and white, marking such norms and in many cases, throwing those who embody them into crisis. We will study literary works that depict how social forces have been pushing white men to acknowledge that they are not what they are more likely than others to think and feel they are—free-floating individuals without significantly raced and gendered identities. Recent scholarship has highlighted how stories about normal men written by authors who are not themselves normal men often reveal more about how such men tend to think, feel and behave than do stories about them that are written by such men themselves. We will compare both sorts of differently authored narratives, especially those that depict the travails of men confronted by conditions that raise insistent questions about who and what they are, and about what their genuine connections to others are. We will also consider depictions of non-white modes of manhood in crisis, comparing them to the hegemonic norm of middle-class white masculinity.

Our course will be conducted as an inquiring conversation, with your active participation central to our work. Because the success of our conversations will depend so heavily on everyone's participation, it is *crucial* that you keep up with the reading, and that you do so with careful attention. At the same time, those of us (including me) who feel comfortable and even enthusiastic about speaking in seminar settings should keep in mind the value of letting others speak, including those who tend to take more time to gather their thoughts before doing so.

Also, the rule regarding attendance is: be here. If you have more than two undocumented absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond two.

*Here is EIU's Graduate Course Catalog description:

ENG 5010 - ENG 5061A - Special Topics in Literature and Literary Theory
Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature

(3-0-3) Special topics in language and literature not ordinarily treated in standard courses. The topic will vary from semester to semester.

Prerequisites & Notes

Graduate standing. Undergraduate students seeking departmental honors may use this class to fulfill their graduate course requirement with approval of the instructor and Dean of the Graduate School.

Credits: 3

Graded Course Requirements

1. Response Papers (20% of final course grade) three to four typed, edited, proofread, and double-spaced pages (more is okay, but don't get carried away), due at the beginning of class when assigned on Daily Schedule. Grades will be based on insight, sincerity, care, and thoughtfulness.

For each response paper, quickly summarize your understanding of the reading's content, in about three sentences. For the rest of the paper, choose one of the following options:

- Write a thoughtful response to the reading that demonstrates why and how you find it enlightening, engaging, and/or confusing. You can quote a sentence or two if that helps, but just refer to page numbers in the reading for anything longer.
- Write a creative response that demonstrates your understanding of, or your confusion about, something in the text. Potential examples: a letter from one character to another; an extensive poem about one or more of the characters; a scene that could have taken place in the book; a short story that works with themes in the book; or another creative mode of your own.

2. 15-18 page research essay (25%) This paper will be a **focused** comparison/contrast of one primary work on Daily Schedule and one creative work that is not listed there (if you have any questions about “primary,” “secondary” and “creative” works, be sure to ask). This essay will be an analysis of these works in relation to our broader course theme of “marked men,” and/or theoretical concepts we have discussed. A 250-400 word proposal will be required beforehand. The essay should reflect your close attention to and understanding of insights and interpretive concepts that will have arisen throughout the semester, and of course, it must be an entirely new essay (not something that contains material you wrote for a previous course).

A bit more about essays: All writing assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due, whether the student is in class or not. Late-paper penalty: fifteen points each day late.

3. Project presentation (10%) Last day of class. Details and options to be announced.

4. Final exam (25%) This will be a take-home—details to be announced.

5. Active, thoughtful class participation (20%) Be aware that most of our works are intense, concentrated, demanding readings, and schedule your study time accordingly, partly so that you can be an attentive, active class participant. I will not deliver lectures in this class; because we are a relatively small group, we must all contribute to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Doing so will call for your careful concentration before class on each assigned reading, and your willingness to share your thoughts, questions, and feelings with others about what you read and hear. Class participation also includes thoughtful participation in our D2L online forums, as listed on the Daily Schedule. You are required to participate when listed on the Daily Schedule, and you may also participate at any other time. In addition to the available prompts from Dr. Engles, feel free to use our D2L Discussion Forums for any additional thoughts or questions you have about our readings. You can also, of course, contact or meet Dr. Engles any time with questions or concerns.

Other Matters

Email: Enrollment in this class requires an email account, and I strongly recommend that you use your free EIU account or another account (be aware that Yahoo, Hotmail, and other free accounts are sometimes too limited for professional purposes). Email is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments.

You also have an email assignment: By Friday (August 26) at 3 p.m., send an email message to Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu). In your message, (1) identify which course you're in (English 5061); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; and (3) write a statement to the effect that you have carefully read and agree with the above course policies and requirements (or perhaps that you

disagree with or anticipate having trouble with some of them—which is okay, if you explain why).

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 (once again) 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."

Students with disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583.

The Student Success Center: Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

ENGLISH 5061: DAILY SCHEDULE
(this schedule may be subject to change)

Note: This schedule may change; any changes will be announced in advance. Reading assignments are to be completed by the dates on which they appear on the syllabus. BE SURE to bring the appropriate book and any handouts to class that are listed for that day.

T AUG 23 Introduction to the course and each other; discussion of James Baldwin, “The Man Child” (1965; emailed short story)

T AUG 30 Hwang, *M. Butterfly* and excerpt from Peter Ferry, “Writing Men: Recognising the Sociological Value of Counterhegemonic Masculinities in American Fiction”

T SEP 6 Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and excerpt from Jürgen Martschukat, “Men in Gray Flannel Suits: Troubling Masculinities in 1950s America”; Response Paper due at the beginning of class

T Sep 13 *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and at least two D2L Discussion Forum responses due by the beginning of class

T Sep 20 Wright, *Savage Holiday*; Response Paper due at the beginning of class

T Sep 27 *Savage Holiday* and additional reading to be announced; at least two D2L Discussion Forum responses due by the beginning of class

T Oct 4 Tomine, *Shortcomings* and excerpts from Jinqi Ling, “*Identity Crisis* and Gender Politics: Reappropriating Asian American Masculinity”; at least two D2L Discussion Forum responses due by the beginning of class

T Oct 11 Yarbrough, *Oxygen Man*; Response Paper due at the beginning of class

(W OCT 12 Midpoint of the semester)

T Oct 18 *Oxygen Man* and additional reading TBA; at least two D2L Discussion Forum responses due by the beginning of class

T Oct 25 Lerner, *10:04: A Novel*; Response Paper due at the beginning of class

T Nov 1 *10:04: A Novel* and additional reading TBA; at least two D2L Discussion Forum responses due by the beginning of class

T Nov 8 Final Project Proposal Due; **No class**—Dr. Engles will meet with students individually in his office (CH 3831) to discuss their final projects and presentations

T Nov 15 Waldman, *The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.*

Nov 21- 25 – Thanksgiving Break!

T Nov 29 Waldman, *The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.*; at least two D2L Discussion Forum responses due by the beginning of class

T Dec 6 Project Presentations; discussion of take-home final exam

Our final exam period → Tuesday, December 13, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.