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ENG 4742-600: Studies in Genre

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Studies in Genre: The Art of Adaptation

ENG 4742, Section 600

Online/Fall 2021

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Caldwell

Email: mcaldwell@eiu.edu

Office Hours: M, T, W, F: 1-2pm, and by appointment

Office Hours sign up: <https://calendly.com/mcaldwelleiu/fall-2021-office-hours>

Required Course Texts**

Atwood, Margaret. *Penelopiad*. (2015)

Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. (1979)

Duffy & Jennings. *Kindred: The Graphic Novel*. (2018)

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Fagles. (8th century BC ?)

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*. (1976)

Kurosawa, Akira. *Ran*. (1985)

Miller, Madeline. *Circe*. (2018)

Mulan. (various text and film versions)

Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Ed. Hunter. (1608)

Smiley, Jane. *A Thousand Acres*. (1991)

**All films will be available via D2L. Other materials, as noted in the course calendar, will also be made available via D2L. Suggested additional reading listed below is *not* required.

I. Course Description and Expectations

Course Description

Adaptation has long been viewed as a lesser, derivative art form. No doubt at one time or another you have been disappointed by a film, graphic novel, stage, or other adaptation of one of your favorite texts. But what happens when we reject the idea that an adaptation can only be viewed in light of its predecessor? What happens when we view adaptation as a rich genre that can develop texts that hold value and meaning as works of art unto themselves? Or when we see adaptation as a kind of literary evolution or as part of an extended literary family, not less than but simply different than an earlier text that it is related to?

Both film and written adaptations are often criticized for not being as good as “the original.” Yet as scholars of adaptation studies have recently shown, such a distinction is highly problematic, especially since adaptation is an old practice and often the “original” itself was originally...well, an adaptation! Moreover, many adaptations can be read on their own without any reference to a source text, while others develop a kind of symbiotic relationship with a prior text (or texts), providing new relevance and insight into their source text. In this way, adaptations offer their pretexts new power and perspective in our contemporary world.

Our exploration of adaptation this semester should be valuable to students from a wide-range of concentrations including, but not limited to, literary study, creative writing, multimedia and cultural studies, pedagogy, and rhetoric. Students will be encouraged to develop a final project on adaptation suited to their individual interests.

Questions we explore will include the following:

- What is the difference between allusion and appropriation? When does an analogue take on a life of its own and gain an independence from its antecedent?
- How are we to understand and theorize the relationship between the “original” story and its successors? Does the former have a purity that is lacking in the latter? What is the line between literary hack-work (not to say plagiarism) and imitation?
- What gets sacrificed in translation between media? Between genres? Between high culture and pop culture? Do these distinctions matter anymore?
- Does appropriation speak to literature’s universal qualities or its limitations? Its situatedness in time and place? Do retellings suggest that something is “broken” about a story or text that needs to somehow be repaired so as to make it relevant again, to let us see it “anew”?
- What affects do capitalism, a gimmick-driven contemporary marketplace, and/or a publisher’s desire to acquire works that will sell have on creative endeavors and literary production? Is the vogue for adaptation ultimately driven by consumerism and if so, is this a spur or a threat to creativity?
- What happens when works deviate from the comfort of generic conventions? Where/how does that deviation take place and to what end? And why does this deviation sometimes make us uncomfortable and sometimes delight us (and sometimes both at once)?
- What are the ethics of appropriation? To what social and political ends have writers and artists appropriated texts to repurpose seemingly antiquated or to restore marginalized narratives?

Minimum Technological Requirements for English 4742**

- Reliable access to the Internet
- Ability to navigate various aspects of D2L, our learning management system
- Ability read documents using Word, PowerPoint, and Adobe Acrobat
- Ability to create and post documents using Microsoft Word or a comparable format
- Ability to record and post a short video of yourself and/or create PowerPoint with voiceover

**If you need help with any of these technological requirements, please contact me ASAP.

Course Expectations and Netiquette

Please note that while the timeline for this course offers some flexibility, there are weekly deadlines for coursework. Please be prepared to devote considerable time to the reading,

writing, and other assignments listed below. If you need help, you have several options for contacting me. I will answer queries both via D2L email and Panthermail (mcaldwell@eiu.edu), typically within 24 hours, sometimes sooner. You may also ask me questions during my virtual office hours via the Chat function in D2L (see your navigation bar). If you have questions, concerns or find yourself falling behind, please **do not wait** to contact me.

Regarding course netiquette, I ask you to observe the following policies:

- 1.) Be considerate of other discussion participants when interacting via the discussion board or any other electronic form for the duration of this course. Remember that often a writer's intention and tone can be lost in electronic formats. Err on the side of too much courtesy rather than too little.
- 2.) Dismissive, malicious, or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.
- 3.) You are *absolutely* welcome to express your own ideas and opinion *and* to agree *or* disagree with your peers, I ask only that you do so courteously.
- 4.) If you do not respect your classmates or your tone is inappropriate, you may be asked to redo an assignment and/or lose credit for the assignment entirely. In particularly severe cases, you may fail or be dismissed from the course at my discretion.
- 5.) Read all feedback you receive from me and discuss any questions you have about your feedback. If you are ever in doubt about whether a post violates course netiquette, please email me *before* you post it.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the students will be able to:

1. Identify, critique, and apply effectively genre theory or applicable theory. Develop ability to analyze and contextualize textual and cultural artifacts in terms of genre expectations, applications, and historical trends.
2. Evaluate and recognize effectively the characteristics of the genre(s) and texts.
3. Demonstrate understanding of how genre influences comprehension, production, consumption, and/or reception of texts.
4. Speak and write analytically and effectively about genre-related concepts/debates.

II. Course Assignments and Grading Distribution and Scale

Brief Descriptions of Assignments (detailed descriptions and rubrics on D2L)

1. *Discussion Forum*: For 8 weeks over the course of the semester, you will be required to post a response to a question I will pose to you in my weekly online presentation. Your response should engage substantially with the texts we are reading or viewing that week. Whenever possible, bring specific ideas/evidence into your posts. Posts can make an argument, raise a question, point out an ambiguity, challenge an idea you encountered during the week, etc. The best posts and responses create conversations that help us better understand what we are reading.

Original posts are due by Thursday by 11:59 pm; responses are due by Sunday by 11:59pm. If I respond to your post (and I will at least once during the semester), you are required to respond to me. While quality is infinitely more important than quantity, original posts should be roughly between 500-750 words; responses should be at least 150 words.

2. *Writing Group Tasks*: Around the 5th week of the semester, you will be put into writing groups. The purpose of this group is manifold: to provide you with a resource or sounding board as you develop and craft your independent project for the semester, to keep you motivated and on task to complete your project, and to give you an opportunity to hone and reflect on your own writing process. For detailed description of these tasks, which will occur in weeks 6, 8, and 10, see the Independent Project Assignment.

3. *Independent Project*: You will complete an independent project this semester. You are responsible for your project design, but you will meet with me at least once this semester to discuss your project. You will also turn in a rough draft of your project to me and will revise your project based on my feedback. See the Independent Project Assignment for full description.

4. *Presentation*: You will create a presentation for your project (a screencast or some other presentation format that works best for your project) that will be viewed by the entire class. You will also be responsible for viewing and offering feedback other participants' projects using a rubric that I will give to you.

Grade Distribution

Grades will be made available via D2L Gradebook. If you have any questions about your grade at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Assignment	Points	Final Grading Scale	
Discussion Forum Posts and Responses (8 total, 5 points each)	40	180-200	A
Writing Group Tasks & Rough Draft (3 tasks + rough draft), 10 points each)	40	160-200	B
Independent Project	80	140-200	C
Presentation on Final Project	40	120-200	D
Total Points possible	200	Below 120	F

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). The English Department's policy on plagiarism states the following:

“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 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 Office of Student Standards.”

To put this another way: plagiarism absolutely will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarists will be reported to the Office of Student Standards and will fail the course. If you are confused about plagiarism at any point in the semester, it is your responsibility to ask me about it before you turn in an assignment.

Student Resources

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 McAfee Gym, Room 1210, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Student Success Center and The Writing 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 McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

The Writing Center

This fall, the Writing Center will be offering **face-to-face consulting sessions on weekdays and online sessions evenings and Sundays**. Students will be able to book either a face-to-face or online appointment through the Writing Center website (www.eiu.edu/writing).

English Teacher Education Majors

Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should request each of their English Department professors to complete the "Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach" before the end of the semester. These forms are available in a rack outside the office of Dr. Melissa Ames (CH 3821) and online: <https://www.eiu.edu/english/machform/view.php?id=19831>.

Mental Health

Transitioning to college can be a stressful time. The EIU Counselling Center offers individual and group services to help students manage stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. You can find more information at <https://www.eiu.edu/counscctr/appointments.php>.