

Spring 1-15-2016

## ENG 5010-001: Studies in 20C American Lit

Melissa Ames

Follow this and additional works at: [http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english\\_syllabi\\_spring2016](http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2016)



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ames, Melissa, "ENG 5010-001: Studies in 20C American Lit" (2016). *Spring 2016*. 84.  
[http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english\\_syllabi\\_spring2016/84](http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2016/84)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2016 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2016 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).

**English 5010 – Studies in 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Literature & Culture**  
***Engaging in Temporal Play: Nonlinear Narratives in Contemporary Literature & Media***  
ENG 5010 – Thursdays – 3:30-6:00pm – 3159 Coleman Hall

**Instructor:** Dr. Melissa Ames

**Office:** 3821 Coleman Hall

**Office Hours:** M 12:00-3:00pm

W 2:00-3:00pm & 6:00-7:00pm

Or by Appointment

**Email:** mames@eiu.edu (please do not use the email provided by D2L)

**Course Description:** Time is one of the most fundamental parameters through which narratives are organized and understood. Because this age is one of unprecedented flourishing for alternative ways of understanding and inhabiting time, it is not surprising that the cultural narratives of the last half century have been obsessed with time itself. Non-linearity, or temporal distortion, is one of the most common features of modern and postmodern fiction. This course focuses on the temporal play found within various postmodern and contemporary novels, reading this stylistic device as a way of dealing aesthetically with an altered culture of time. Beyond reading a range of fiction (canonical, mainstream bestsellers, and some experimental digital texts), course study will also include media analysis (television and film) and scholarly research (delving into theories of temporality and narrative study more broadly). The class will consider how certain technological inventions, media influences, and national tragedies may have contributed to these new conceptions of temporality.

**Course Objectives:** After the completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Analyze time-related themes (e.g. life, death, memory, history) across a variety formats,
2. Critique how temporality is presented in literature and popular culture,
3. Note how nonlinear and temporal play are utilized by different authors/producers for different purposes & effects,
4. Analyze how the form a cultural artifact takes on affects its social/political utility,
5. Study cultural trends (i.e. the popularity of various genres) in light of historical events;
6. Situate texts within their historical context and understand how this impacts their production and reception,
7. Integrate diverse studies through an interdisciplinary framework,
8. Contribute to current narrative scholarship in the Humanities, and
9. Defend these contributions through composition and oral presentation.

**Required Texts and Materials:**

Abrams, J.J., and Dough Dorst. *S*. NY: Mullholland Books, 2013. Print.<sup>1</sup>

Alvarez, Julia. *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*. NY: Penguin, 2005. Print.

Atkinson, Kate. *Life after Life*. NY: Back Bay Books, 2013. Print.

Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. NY: Vintage Books, 2011. Print.

Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. NY: Nascorp, 2004. Print.

Cleave, Paul. *Trust No One: A Thriller*. NY: Atria Books, 2015. Print.

Egan, Jennifer. *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. NY: Anchor Books, 2010. Print.

---

<sup>1</sup> Students will obtain this book on their own – not available through Textbook Rental.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. NY: HMH, 2005. Print.  
Morrison, Toni. *Jazz*. NY: Random House, 1992. Print.  
Piercy, Marge. *Woman on the Edge of Time*. NY: Fawcett, 1985. Print.  
Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. NY: Random House, 1999. Print.

[Note: Additional Readings Will Also Be Available Through Desire2Learn – noted on syllabus as (D2L)]

## **Course Requirements:**

### **Participation (300pts):**

As a graduate level course this seminar requires active participation and high-level involvement in the discussion of weekly readings. Students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned reading and to be ready to contribute to an intellectual conversation connecting these to the course theme. In preparation for active classroom dialogue, the conversation concerning assigned readings will actually begin before class via required posts on the class blog. (See separate assignment sheet for specific requirements and protocol.) In-class work will also consist of collaborative work, peer evaluation/feedback, informal presentations, and written responses to the media critiques presented throughout the term. This portion of the overall grade equals 30% and should not be underestimated. Attendance problems will greatly lower this portion of one's grade.

### **Required Assignments/Essays (700pts):**

Explication – Students will complete a short explication of an assigned article (or set of readings) grounded in narrative theory. This explication will be distributed and presented to the class on the appropriate class period. (100pts)

Annotated Bibliography – In pairs, students will compose an annotated bibliography that houses abstracts of crucial literary criticism/readings that their assigned literary text received. Students will then distribute these annotated bibliographies to the class and provide a brief presentation discussing the critical reception this author received for this specific work and other relevant ones. (100pts)

PechaKucha Presentation – As part of our unit on the prevalence of nonlinear narratives among contemporary best-selling novels, students will each read and present on one such novel at the English Studies Conference. In line with our thematic focus on time, these panel presentations will take the form of timed PechaKucha-style presentations. (100pts)

Midterm Essay – Students will compose an 8-12 page essay analyzing one text/author that we have studied throughout the first seven weeks of class. Applying the relevant theory studied in class and/or outside research to this text/author and utilizing it to formulate an argument and further discussion on the course theme will be a requirement. (150pts)

Seminar Paper & Multimedia Conversion Project – This final project allows students an opportunity to direct the course content to their particular interests and apply the sort of analysis we have been conducting to a new text/textual set. This 15-20 page essay will showcase the student's mastery of the subject matter and ability to conduct an in-depth study of a cultural artifact with an attention to temporality. At the completion of this project, the student's research will be presented to the class in a showcase forum. This project accounts for one third of the student's course grade and it should be regarded as very serious scholarly endeavor – one that will require much time, effort, and research. Preparation for this assignment will require an approved proposal and an student conference. (250pts)

**Course Grade:** Your grade in this course will be calculated using a straight point system and standard grading scale. Your final grade will be determined by the following breakdown and grading scale:

Required Assignments/Essays:	700pts
<u>In-Class Work/Participation:</u>	<u>300pts</u>
Total Points Possible:	1000pts

A	100% - 90%	D	69% - 60%
B	89% - 80%	F	59% - 0%
C	79% - 70%		

**Instructor Class Policies:**

Submitted Assignments: All documents should be submitted on time and must have a professional appearance. Every assignment should be typed on white, 8.5 x 11 paper and formatted according to MLA 2009 guidelines and standards. You must staple the pages together if an assignment is more than one page long. For your own protection, keep copies of all completed and returned work.

Assignment Due Dates: **LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF ZERO (0).** Assignments, including drafts, are due at the beginning of class. E-mail attachments will not be accepted as substitutes for hard copies of your work. Computer and printer problems are not an excuse for turning in late work, so draft and print well in advance.

Class Attendance: Because this course emphasizes discussion, attendance is essential. During the various presentations, your classmates will rely on your feedback. Class discussion, peer interaction, and the in-class media analysis cannot be made up and their lack of completion will negatively affect your in-class work/participation grade. After two absences, an additional absence will also result in a penalty of one full letter grade subtracted from your final course grade. A student who accrues more than three absences will not be eligible to pass the course. For an absence to be excused it must be considered a legitimate and verifiable emergency and documentation must be provided. Legitimate and verifiable emergencies include those instances for which you can provide documentation for why you had to miss class. Acceptable documents include accident reports, doctors' notes, hospital forms, and employer notices. Although these documents will be accepted, any pattern of documented absences will be questioned and addressed.

Proper Documentation of Emergency: Assignments may only be turned in late if the student provides documentation of an emergency that prevented him/her from attending class. Proper documentation must be an original document (no photocopies), containing the student's name, cover the date(s) in question, and be signed by a professional (i.e. doctor). An email is not proper documentation.

***Presentations:*** Please be present when you are scheduled to give a presentation. **If you miss class on the day of a scheduled presentation you will receive a zero and will not be able to make up the presentation.**

*Plagiarism:* In accordance with English Department and University policies, “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 such as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*) – has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to and including an immediate assignment of the 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.” The best argument against plagiarism is that you cheat yourself out of the education you are here to obtain when you copy someone else’s work. If you believe that a specific instance in your writing might constitute plagiarism, please consult me prior to turning in the final draft.

*Students with Disabilities:* If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services.

## English 5010 Course Schedule

### Unit I. Analyzing the Aesthetics & Thematics of Nonlinear Narratives across Genre

#### W 1/13 - Week #1: Various Forms of Temporal Play

##### *Narrative Inheritance from the Modernist Era*

Prepared Reading: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot (D2L); "Benjamin Button," Fitzgerald (D2L); "A Little Something for us Tempunauts," Dick (D2L); "The Elevator," Coover (D2L); "How," Moore (D2L); "Composition as Explanation," Stein (D2L); "Happy Endings," Atwood (D2L)

#### W 1/20 – Week #2: Reverse Chronology

##### *Memory, Identity, & Narrative*

Prepared Reading: *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Alvarez; *Time's Pendulum*, Barnett (excerpts, D2L); *Time After Time*, Wood (excerpts, D2L)

#### W 1/27 – Week #3: Narrative Rhythm, Repetition, & Variation

##### *Musicality & Temporality*

Prepared Reading: *Jazz*, Morrison; *About Time*, Davies (excerpts, D2L); *A Watched Pot*, Flaherty (excerpts D2L)

#### W 2/3 – Week #4: Constructed Time

##### *Fiction's Role in Revising/Revisiting History*

Reading: *Kindred*, Butler; "Storyteller," Benjamin (D2L); *The Nick of Time*, Grosz (excerpts, D2L)

#### W 2/10 – Week #5: Psychological Time

##### *Science Fiction, Temporality, and Social Commentary*

Prepared Reading: *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Piercy; *Studies in the Theories of Fiction*, Kermode (excerpts, D2L); *Narrative Dynamics*, Richardson (excerpts, D2L)

### Unit II. Temporal Distortion in Narratives of Trauma & Tragedy

#### W 2/17 – Week #6: Multiple Futures & Parallel Lives

##### *Narrative Disruption & Fictionalizing WWI*

Prepared Reading: *Life After Life*, Atkinson; "Time & Postmodernity," Dickens & Fontana (D2L); *Chronoschisms*, Heise (excerpts, D2L)

#### W 2/24 – Week #7: Time & Perception

##### *Time Travel & Critiquing WWII*

Prepared Reading: *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut; "History, TV & Popular Memory," Anderson (D2L); *Premediation*, Grusin (excerpts, D2L)

**Assignment Due: Midterm Essay**

**W 3/2 – Week #8: The Terror of Traumatic Time**

***Temporal Play in Post-9/11 Narratives***

Prepared Reading: *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*; “Regarding the Pain of Self and Other,” Saal (D2L); “Postmodernity, and Digital Memory versus Human Remembering,” Hanson (D2L)

**Assignment Due: Proposal for Seminar Paper/Project**

**Unit III. The Pleasures of Temporal Play in Popular Culture**

**W 3/9 – Week #9: Temporal Play on the Big & Small Screen**

***Experimentations with Narrative Time in Film & TV***

Prepared Reading: “Change the Structure, Change the Story,” Brost (D2L); *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Doane (excerpts, D2L); “Time, Knowledge, & Temporal Critique,” Pape (D2L); *Time Travel in Popular Media*, Matthews & Ormond (excerpts, D2L); Independent Film Viewing

**Assignment Due: Film Reviews (required Blog Post)**

**W 3/16 – No Class – Spring Break**

**W 3/23 – Week #10: The Role of Time in Postmodern Fiction**

***Temporality & Intertextuality***

Prepared Reading: *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Egan; “Television’s Paradigm Shift,” Sodano (D2L); “A Stretch of Time,” Kelly (D2L); Temporality & Time in American Sci-Fiction Television, Mousoutzanis (D2L)

**W 3/30 – Week #11: Multiple Narratives/Narrators, Multiple Times**

***Exploring Temporality through Texts-within-Texts***

Prepared Reading: S., Abrams & Dorst; “Two Days before the Day after Tomorrow,” Buel (D2L); “Lost in Time?” Bennett (D2L)

**Assignment Due: Early Draft of Seminar Paper Submitted Prior to Conference**

**W 4/6 – Week #12: Prevalence of Nonlinear Narratives in Contemporary Bestselling Novels**

***Active Reading & Audience Reception***

Prepared Reading: Individual Novel Selection

**Assignment Due: PechaKucha Presentation Practice (shortened class period due to required attendance at English Studies Conference Panel)**

**F 4/8 – English Studies Conference (Required Attendance/Presentation)**

**W 4/13 – Week #13: Time & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Reading/Communication Practices**

***Temporality and/in Digital Literature & Social Media Archives***

Prepared Reading: “Getting Things Done,” Gregg (D2L); “Accumulating Affect,” Pybus (D2L); 253, Ryman (D2L); “Lies,” Pryll, available:  
<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies.html>

**W 4/20 – Week #14: Pulp Fiction & Narrative Play**

*Time's Role as a Universally Appealing Theme*

Prepared Reading: *Sense of an Ending*, Barnes; *Trust No One*, Cleave

**Assignment Due: Seminar Paper**

**W 4/27 – Week #15: Workshop Time for Media Conversion Project**

**Optional Student Conferences Available 4/25 – No Class Session 4/27**

**W 5/4 – Final Exam Week: Multimedia Presentations of Final Projects**