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ENG 5010-600: Studies in 20th Century American Literature

Tim Engles

Eastern Illinois University

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**Race and Masculinity
in Contemporary American Literature
English 5010–Fall, 2021**

Instructor: Tim Engles (he/him or they/them)

Office: 3831 Coleman Hall

Office hours: Via email, and if you like, you can schedule an appointment with me Monday – Friday, 11 am – 5 pm, here: <https://calendly.com/timengles/30min>

Books from Textbook Rental (listed chronologically by initial publication date, instead of in the order in which we will read them):

Richard Wright, *Savage Holiday* (1954)
David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (1988)
Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* (1999)
Percival Everett, *Erasure* (2001)
Adrian Tomine, *Shortcomings* (2007)
Caroline Rivers & Rosalind C. Barnett, *The Truth about Girls and Boys: Challenging Toxic Stereotypes about Our Children* (2011)
Adelle Waldman, *The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.* (2013)
Patti Laboucane-Benson & Kelly Mellings, *The Outside Circle* (2015)
Chen Chen, *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities* (2017)
James Brinkley, *A Lucky Man: Stories* (2018)
Maia Kobabe, *Gender Queer* (2019)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

(these words constitute our contract; much of the following may seem familiar or tempting to skim over, but you really do need to read it all carefully)

Recent cultural, political and demographic changes in the United States have presented new challenges to the ways that men have traditionally thought of themselves and their relations to others. Such challenges confront not only those who have long occupied the dominant norms of straight, able-bodied, middle-class and white male, but also members of other races and ethnicities. We will study literary and other works that depict how social and cultural shifts have been pushing men to consider their gendered and racialized selves in new ways. The revealing lens that literature can be will also help us further understand men who are confronted by conditions that raise insistent questions about themselves in terms of race and masculinity, and about what their connections to others.

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 develop your own schedule for keeping up with the readings, and that you do so with careful attention.

For the record, here is EIU's Graduate Course Catalog description of our course:

ENG 5010 - Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature

A study of some thematic preoccupation, literary movement, major figure(s), or genre connected with the period. The topic will vary from semester to semester.

Note that while you can to some extent work at your own pace, we of course have deadlines for various assignments (which are always due by 11:59 p.m. on their due date). For those looking ahead, I have provided an outline of our activities in the Syllabus Module, and all activities and assignments are also posted in the Course Calendar.

Learning Objectives: The following objectives apply to all of the biweekly Modules. More generally, upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Better interpret literary works in terms of the characters' membership in significant social categories, especially race and gender.
2. Better interpret literary works that express a wide range of cultural perspectives and values, and think more critically and write more analytically about them.
3. Participate effectively in discussions of literature, the issues it raises, and scholarship related to it.
4. Demonstrate an increased understanding and appreciation for varied social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic ideas and methods.
5. Better apprehend academic scholarship and its conventions, and better utilize concepts and terminology drawn from it.
6. Produce effective written critique of literature and the issues it raises.
7. Use improved research skills to find useful scholarly materials, and properly apply the principles of documentation.
8. Apply concepts and terminology from other fields of research to the study of literature, and vice versa.

Technical requirements: Students in this course should already have taken the D2L Student Orientation. Students must have regular access to the Internet while using a laptop or desktop computer—note that our learning site does not work especially well on a phone. Papers must be submitted in Microsoft Word. D2L cannot open papers submitted, for example, with Apple's word processing program, Pages, and PDF versions do not allow me to insert useful commentary. EIU students can download Word for free here, as part of Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus: <https://www.eiu.edu/panthertech/software.php>

A note about reading: Since one skill you will be further developing in this course is the art of textual analysis, you must give our readings and viewings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down and rushing to complete them, set aside enough time on a regular basis to read and view carefully. Consider taking notes as you read, and then decide for yourself what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. In an online course, because we will not meet regularly in a classroom, you are also more responsible for pacing yourself as you read,

establishing your own schedule so that you complete reading (and other) assignments on time.

Grades, assignments, and deadlines: Unless otherwise indicated, I will grade assignments within three days of their due date. All assignments in this course will be graded on a 100-point scale (90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, etc.), and your final course grade will be determined in the following way. Note that “class participation” includes not only written Discussion forum posts, but also the reading of significant numbers of posts by other students, the reading of instructor comments on your graded Response Papers, and the complete viewing of each of the instructor’s online PowerPoint presentations (remember, I have background ways of seeing whether you are regularly doing each of these activities).

Class participation	25%
Average of Response Papers (usually 1000-1200 words each)	25%
Semester Project Proposal (300-400 words)	5%
Semester Project (4000-5000 word essay)	25%
Final Exam (2000-2500 words total in response to essay questions)	20%

Given the possibility at any point that software and internet connections may be down or working slowly, I *strongly* recommend against waiting until just before deadlines to complete assignments. Also, you will see that some assignment deadlines land on a Saturday. I do not mean to encourage you to work on Saturdays, but I do recognize that some of you may well appreciate having until the end of a Saturday to complete some of our assignments.

Back it up: You will need to save duplicates of your assignments with a USB Drive or online storage account, such as Dropbox or Google Drive. “My computer crashed” is not an acceptable excuse. Remember—always back up your work!

General grading rubric: Generally, your assignments in this course will be graded in the following terms; see below for a rubric specific to class participation:

A grade of A indicates work that is truly outstanding in every way. In addition to completely and promptly following the guidelines for the assignment, work that receives an A grade provides a depth of analysis that adds substantive insight to the conversation surrounding the literary text and/or related issues. This level of work engages deeply with the themes, issues and ideas involved in a particular text and often links those themes, issues and ideas to the larger ones reflected in our overall course. In this way, such work helps all who read it understand the literary text and/or related issues better and more deeply. A-level work is rare, and it should be noted that merely writing MORE than what was assigned does not necessarily merit a grade of A.

A grade of B indicates that, in addition to completing the assignment on time and completely, you have provided a depth of insight and analysis that shows that you have thought deeply about the assignment and its implications, that you have engaged actively with the reading or viewing, have thought carefully about it, and that this thought is reflected in clear, cogent and insightful writing. Such work engages with deeper meanings of the text, perhaps by connecting it to others and with some overall themes of our course. In other words, B-level work does more than simply complete the

assignment; it engages deeply with the assignment. Again, it should be noted that merely writing MORE than what was assigned does not necessarily merit a grade of B.

A grade of C indicates that you have completed the assignment as required in an adequate, satisfactory and punctual manner. All necessary components of the assignment are present and completed according to what was required. The writing is clear and grammatically correct. In other words, merely doing the assignment adequately and on time will earn you a grade of C.

A grade of D indicates that the work does not meet the requirements of the assignment in some major respect(s). Although parts of the assignment may be satisfactory, an assignment that merits a D is incomplete or does not otherwise adequately address the requirements of the assignment. In other words, work might be given a D if it does not engage adequately with the question or the literary text in question. Note that a grade of D may be given to work that partially completes the assignment, but is incomplete.

A grade of F indicates that the assignment is either extremely incomplete or that it does nothing to engage with the question asked or with the literary text being discussed.

Regarding formal written assignments: Response Papers and the major essay must be submitted in Word format, double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font, and in MLA Style. Unlike the major essay, Response Papers WILL NOT require a Works Cited page. If you have questions about MLA formatting, I recommend consulting [Purdue's Online Writing Lab](#).

Regarding assignment due dates, missed assignments, and biweekly Modules: Deadlines for assignments and discussions will be clearly labeled in each biweekly Module. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline for each assignment will be 11:59 p.m. of the listed day.

With the exception of deadlines missed due to documented emergencies, **no late assignments will be accepted**. Assignments may only be turned in late if the student provides documentation of an emergency. Proper documentation must be an official, original scanned document containing the student's name; it must also cover the date(s) in question and be signed by a professional (e.g., a doctor). An email that merely describes why you want to turn in your assignment late is not proper documentation.

Note that with the exception of the first Module—labeled Introduction—the other Modules will appear biweekly, and they will be labeled numerically as they appear (Module One, Module Two, and so on). Each two-week Module will appear by 3 p.m. on the previous Friday afternoon; if I post it earlier, I will send everyone a notification email.

Regarding Discussion Forums: Since we cannot meet in person, and since there are too many of us to arrange synchronous meetings online, our Discussion Forums will be an extremely important way for us to discuss our course materials together. Notice above that class participation is a large part of your final grade; below is a rubric that I will use for grading your participation. I will not assign a grade to each of your posts, but I will of course be closely watching, and participating in, our Discussion Forums.

Be aware that just as listening to others in an in-person classroom is important, so too is reading posts by other students. D2L allows me to see how often you do so (just as it allows me to see whether you watch the Recorded Presentations), and I can also tell when a student hastily dips in and out of Forums, merely dropping in their own posts and merely doing the minimal amount of required replies to others. On the other hand, be wary of writing overly long posts; do write enough to get your well-supported points across, but also be aware that writing *a lot* will mean that your post will largely go unread.

Discussion Forum Grading Rubric

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Grade: A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>Response to Prompt</i>	Brought new, well-supported understanding to discussion of the prompt's topic	Good response but could have been more clearly connected to prompt	Attempted adequate response but may have missed main idea or wandered too far from topic	Post(s) not made at all, or not at all connected to topic
<i>Replies to other students (when required)</i>	Clear, direct and detailed engagement with other students; specific references to others' ideas; reads most posts by others	Engaged with other students but could have been more specific or original	Engagement with other students minimal, very brief, or vague; reads very few posts by others beyond those replied to	Missing or extremely weak replies; doesn't read posts by others
<i>Language</i>	Proper use of clear, mostly error-free language; appropriately professional communication	Language could have been clearer or more polished at some points	Communication is weak, unclear, or highly inappropriate in an academic setting	Breaking of basic rules of appropriate communication in an academic environment OR post was not made
<i>Evidence</i>	Clear connections made to specific parts of texts, with solid supporting evidence	Some good evidence, but lacking in examples and specificity	Little supporting evidence from texts presented	Misunderstood nature of evidence or lacked evidence entirely
<i>Timeliness</i>	Post and any required replies met deadlines	One deadline or one component may have been missed	Deadlines were missed or did not include all requirements	Post(s) extremely late or missed entirely

Academic integrity: Remember also that this course follows the Academic Integrity policy followed by all Eastern Illinois University students. Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated, and the consequences are severe. For any concerns you might have in this area, see EIU's [Code of Conduct](#). If you have specific questions about whether any particular method you want to use might violate this code, be sure to ask Dr. Engles about it, either by email or during his online office hours.

Information for Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact EIU's [Student Disability Services](#). All accommodations must be approved through SDS, which you can call at (217) 581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Student Success Center: Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the [Student Success Center](#) 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.

Help with course content and procedures: As explained in our course's Content section, we have a "Need Help?" Discussion Forum where students can ask questions about the course that I (Dr. Engles) can likely answer. Asking a question there about course content and procedures is a good idea, because others (who may have the same question) will be able to see my answers. If you have questions that you want to ask me individually, email is of course okay, preferably outside of D2L at tdengles@eiu.edu. Unless otherwise indicated, I will respond to the "Need Help?" Discussion Forum questions and any student email within twenty-four hours (and usually much sooner).

Technical Support: As noted above, students in this course should already have taken the [D2L Student Orientation](#). In order to succeed in this online course, your skills should include (but are not limited to): navigating an online course management system (in this case, D2L), composing emails, accessing online files and web links, and submitting properly formatted assignments as Word documents via the D2L Dropbox system.

For technical support with D2L, you can contact the ITS Help Desk at 217-581-4357 or itshelp@eiu.edu or CATS Training Services for Students at 217-581-8358.

English 5010 – Master List Activities, Graded Assignments and Due Dates

*For those who would like to look ahead, this is an abbreviated list of all our assignments and deadlines. Our course will be divided into four biweekly Modules in D2L, each of which will provide a full description of activities and **graded assignments**; the latter **appear in bold print**. Articles and viewings below are available on our D2L course site. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline on any given day is 11:59 pm.*

Note that T means Tuesday and R means Thursday. Note also that the following dates and assignments are subject to change; I will announce any changes well in advance. You will notice that some deadlines are on a Saturday; I don't mean to encourage you to do our coursework during weekends, but I also know that some of you who have extremely busy lives will appreciate a longer-than-usual deadline at times.

Module 1 (8/23 – 9/3)

M 8/23 Watch an introductory video on Dr. Engles and some of our course themes

T 8/24 and R 8/26 Participate in an introductory Discussion Forum

T 8/24 Watch *The Smell of Burning Ants*

W 8/25 Read some of *The Truth About Boys and Girls*

R 8/26 Read Ferry's "Writing Men" (article excerpt)

R 8/26 and S 8/28 Discussion Forum on Gender and Masculinity

F 8/27 Begin reading Kobabe's memoir *Gender Queer*

M 8/30 Watch Maia Kobabe interview

T 8/31 Finish reading *Gender Queer*

W 9/1 Read Rider, et al's article on "Creating Gender"

W 9/1 and F 9/3 Discussion Forum on *Gender Queer*

F 9/3 Response Paper 1 due by midnight

Module 2 (9/6 – 9/17)

M 9/6 Watch presentation on Richard Wright

W 9/8 Finish reading Wright's *Savage Holiday*

R 9/9 Read Dubek's article on *Savage Holiday*

R 9/9 and S 9/11 Discussion Forum on *Savage Holiday*

M 9/13 Watch and read background materials for *M. Butterfly*

T 9/14 Finish reading Hwang's play *M. Butterfly*

All week, due by Friday: Q & A Discussion Forum on *M. Butterfly*

W 9/15 Watch and read background materials for *Shortcomings*

R 9/16 Finish reading Tomine's *Shortcomings*

F 9/17 and S 9/18 Discussion Forum on *Shortcomings*

M 9/20 Response Paper 2 due by midnight

Module 3 (9/20 – 10/1)

[M 9/20 Again, Response Paper 2 is due by the end of today]

M 9/20 Read Final Project Guidelines; begin reading Myer's *Monster*

T 9/21 Watch presentation on *Monster*

W 9/22 Finish reading *Monster*

R 9/23 Read Engles and Kory's article on *Monster*

R 9/23 and S 9/25 Discussion Forum on *Monster*

M 9/27 Begin reading Waldman's *Nathaniel P.*

T 9/28 Watch and read background materials for *Nathaniel P.*

R 9/30 Read *Nathaniel P.* to page 150

R 9/30 and S 10/2 Discussion Forum 1 on *Nathaniel P.*

M 10/4 Response Paper 3 due by midnight

Module 4 (10/4 – 10/13)

[M 10/4 Again, Response Paper 3 is due by the end of today]

M 10/4 Read sample essay and grading rubric; watch presentation on grading

T 10/5 Discussion Forum on essay grading

W 10/6 Read sections of Withers' article on white men and beer

R 10/7 Finish *Nathaniel P.*

R 10/7 and S 10/9 Discussion Forum 2 on *Nathaniel P.*

F 10/8 Final Exam becomes available

W 10/13 Final Project/Essay and Final Exam due