Spring 1-15-2002

ENG 3903-001

Ruth Hoberman
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2002

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2002/109

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2002 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2002 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
Texts:
Austen, Pride and Prejudice (1813)
Bronte, Jane Eyre (1847)
Woolf, Mrs Dalloway (1925)
Hall, Well of Loneliness (1928)
Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937)
Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea (1966)
Allison, Bastard out of Carolina (1992)
Marshall, Brown Girl, Brownstone (1959)
Kincaid, Annie John (1983)

Goals
The "romance" or "marriage" plot tells the story of a young woman who comes of age, faces conflict or indecision over what to do next, then defines herself and her course in life through the choice of a husband. The plot is as old as the novel: it emerged in the eighteenth century alongside the Bildungsroman, the novel of education and coming of age, which generally told the story of a young man's maturation and choice of vocation. The romance plot remains pervasive in our culture: if you're not convinced, go see Bridget Jones' Diary.

Since the plots we absorb from our culture inevitably shape the way we conceptualize life, it's important to read these plots critically; so goal number one is to talk about the values these novels reinforce and the problems they obscure, and to question our own absorption in them.

Goal number two: appreciating the power and complexity of the women writers who have chosen to participate in this ongoing conversation about how to live. A series of fabulous writers have used the romance plot to formulate their own ideas about what growing up and defining oneself through one's choices feels like, and how factors like gender, sexuality, race, and social class affect those choices. We'll talk about ways in which their novels challenge the assumptions and values of the cultures in which they were writing and of the romance plot itself.

Requirements:
Two papers, one short (2-3 pp.) and one long (6-8 pp.)
Group presentation
Two exams: midterm and final
Weekly reading responses

Weekly reading responses: Each week, as designated on the syllabus, you need to hand in a one-page typed response to some aspect of the assigned reading. You choose which class day to hand it in on, but no matter what, you must be in class to turn it in, and the response's topic must be the reading assigned for that day. (The point is for you to formulate your ideas about the reading before we discuss it). Ideas for responses are listed on the final page of the syllabus: I suggest you choose ONE question to respond to, and that you vary the kind of question you answer each week. Also feel free to ignore the questions and respond on your own terms. The only requirements: keep focused on a single issue for the whole response; quote directly from the text at some point; and type. Conclude your response with any questions you have about the reading.
I will occasionally ask people to read or summarize their response, so hold onto them until the end of class, when I will collect them. I will grade these on a ten-point scale, on the basis of completeness (is it a full page, does it include a direct quotation?), thoughtfulness, and development (does it go into detail about whatever issue it raises?).

Presentation: I'd like you to form groups of 1-3 and select a kind of romance movie or book to focus on. Possibilities include: romantic movies from a particular decade; high school romances; mystery/romances; gay or lesbian romances; African-American romances; Harlequin romances; multiple film versions of the same novel . . . use your imagination. Within the next week or two I'll ask for your groups/choices. Then watch or read at least 3 examples of this subgenre. Plan on taking 20 minutes of classtime to present your findings.

Questions to consider including in your presentation:
What do the lovers look like? Does their appearance change during the course of the movie/book?
What kinds of barriers do they face in coming together?
How do they change internally in the course of the movie/book?
What qualities do any "bad guys" represent? What do they look like?
What qualities allow the lovers to finally find each other?
What kind of power balance is there between the two lovers? How do both balance self-fulfillment with commitment to the other?
What issues or problems get suppressed or forgotten by the happy ending?
Who are the people who don't get to share in the happy ending? What are their characteristics?
What qualities, finally, does the book or movie as a whole seem to be suggesting make for a happy life? an unhappy one?

Grades
Papers: 35% (15/20)
Exams: 35% (15/20)
Responses and in-class writing assignments: 20%
Presentation, class involvement/participation: 10%

I try to base essay grades on Guidelines for Evaluating Writing Assignments in EIU's English Department. Note that because I grade on a 100-point scale, missing assignments affect your grade tremendously.

Grading scale: 91-100: A; 81-90: B; 71-80: C; 65-70: D; below 65 = F

Policies
English Department Statement Concerning 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 the immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course.

Attendance: I expect students to be in class, to be prepared, and to participate in class discussion. A portion of the grade will reflect your involvement in class discussions and your degree of preparation. While I don't have a specific absence policy, there are a number of things that you need to be there for: I will only accept responses handed in in class on the day for which the assignment they respond to will be discussed; I may ask that responses deal with a specific issue raised in class; I will often give page numbers for reading assignments in class; any in-class writing assignments I give may not be made up. If illness or personal emergency keeps you from class, let me know, and I'll see that you're not penalized; no matter what, it's wise to call to find out what you've missed.

Late work: Formal essays handed in more than a week late will not be accepted at all. Essays may be rewritten; if handed in within a week of my handing them back, they'll receive a new grade which will be averaged in with
the original grade.
Late responses and in-class writing will not be accepted at all.
If you're having problems with a writing or reading assignment, come see me! Stop by my office any time: on any day but Thursday, I'm likely to be there. I'm also a compulsive e-mail checker.

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Syllabus (tentative)

M January 7: introduction to course
W9: Austen, Pride and Prejudice
Fri 11: Austen. Response #1 due W or F

M14: Austen
W16: Austen
F18: Austen. Response #2 due M, W, or F

M21: no class
W23: Austen
F25: Bronte, Jane Eyre. Response #3 due W or F

M28: Bronte
W30: Bronte
F February 1: Bronte. Response #4 due M, W, or F

M4: Bronte
W6: Bronte. Response #5 due M or W
F8: no class

M11: Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea
W13: Rhys
F15: Rhys. Response #6 due M, W, or F

M18: Midterm.
W20: Group presentations
F22: No class. I'll be at a conference.

M25: Group presentations.
W27: Group presentations
F March 1: Woolf. Paper #1 due.

M4: Woolf
W6: Woolf
F8: Woolf. Response #7 due M, W, or F

Spring Break

M18: Hall
W20: Hall
F22: Hall Response #8 due M, W or F

M25: Hall
W27: Hall. For remainder of semester, pick two: Carter, Morrison, Allison, Kincaid, Marshall
F29: Hall. Response #9 due M, W, or F

M April 1:
W3:
F5: Response #10 due M, W, or F

M8:
W10:
F12: Response #11 due M, W, or F

M15:
W17:
F19: Response #12 due M, W or F.

M22:
W24: Paper #2 due.
F26: Review.

There will be a final given during final exam week.