

Fall 8-15-2005

ENG 4300-4390-002-098: Senior Seminar: Authors and Authorship

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Recommended Citation

Engles, Tim, "ENG 4300-4390-002-098: Senior Seminar: Authors and Authorship" (2005). *Fall 2005*. 128.
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4300-002/
4390-098

Senior Seminar: Authors and Authorship
English 4300—Fall, 2005

Instructor: Tim Engles

Phone: 581-6316 (it's often easier to reach me by e-mail: cftde@eiu.edu)

Office hours (Coleman 3831): Tues & Thurs, 3:30 – 4:30, and by appointment

Course listserv: 4300f05@lists.eiu.edu

Course Description:

We will begin with an historical overview of the notion of authorship, then venture through and beyond 20th-Century declarations of "The Death of the Author." Our journey will take us down many related paths of inquiry, such as the following: How do we receive or register different authors in relation to their texts? Are differently raced, classed, and gendered authors perceived differently? Do some types of authors have more implicit "authority" than others? How do we read characters in relation to their authors? What happens when authors of fictional texts insert their apparently real selves into those texts? Why are we so much more likely to identify fiction with one authorial figure than we are movies to one writer or director?

We will examine significant primary and secondary texts that are centrally concerned with such issues. More specifically, we will address these issues by using critical and theoretical texts as aids to interpreting literary texts—and vice versa. Students will emerge from this course with a solid grounding in established and recent modes of scholarly inquiry into the complex connections between authors and their works. The course will be organized as a conversation on these matters, with your daily participation central to our work. (Therefore, the rule regarding attendance is simple: be here. If you have more than three absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond four.)

Required Texts:

Andrew Bennett, *The Author*

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Graham Swift, *Waterland*

Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood
among Ghosts*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (volumes I and II)

Course Requirements:

1. Written responses and oral presentations: Each seminar member will choose one of the readings listed on our Daily Schedule and write a one-page, single-spaced response/ review. This written response will be duplicated and handed out to each of us on the day of your presentation, and it will function as your guidelines for leading class discussion of the piece for a significant portion of the session. Suggestions: focus attention on a problem or set of problems, and the writer's apparent solution(s); make connections, within the text, and/or with others; zero in on a significant or surprising aspect of the text; the written response should end with at least one question whose answer is, as you see it, a key to understanding something significant about the text. You might find it helpful to include reference to outside writings related to the day's reading, but this is not required. Don't plan on talking by yourself for long—your primary goal is to stimulate discussion. After the discussion of the day's reading, you will then revise your response (into something no more than two pages, single spaced) to include your reaction to how well the class discussion went, and how it changed (and/or verified) your response. This revision will be due one week after the in-class presentation. (15%)
2. 5-7 page critical essay: This paper will focus on any one of the writings listed on the first half of our syllabus in relation to anything regarding authorship as stated in Andrew Bennett's book, *The Author*. You can connect something on our syllabus to anything we will have read in this book, or any parts of it that we haven't read yet. Like the longer essay, this one will follow traditional conventions for academic essays (e.g., unity, coherence, proper formatting and MLA-style documentation, and so on). You are also allowed (but not required) to read, consider, and perhaps incorporate other work by either or both of these writers, or other writers. Because this essay is due right after midterm, you can think of it as a kind of take-home midterm, assigned very early. As with the longer essay, you are welcome at any point to discuss your ideas (or lack thereof) with me. (20%)
3. 10-15+ pages research essay: This paper will focus on one of the texts on our syllabus and another of your choosing, with my prior approval. The topic is open, as long as it relates directly to some of our readings and discussions and to the topic of authorship, and a 250-400 word proposal will be required beforehand. The paper must reflect your close attention to and understanding of key insights and interpretive concepts that will have arisen throughout the semester. (30%)
4. 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 for each day late. When the final essay is turned in, it **MUST** be accompanied in a manila folder by all notes and drafts written towards it, with the final copy of the essay on top of this material. I will use these materials to gauge and offer comments on your writing process. I WILL NOT

GRADE a final essay that is not accompanied by material that clearly demonstrates several earlier stages leading up to the final draft, so be sure to save all such materials (if you do most or all of your writing on a computer, print out occasional drafts to include with your final copy). Final essays unaccompanied by materials that clearly demonstrate several stages of development toward the final copy will receive an automatic zero.

5. A final, take-home exam (20%)
6. Active, thoughtful class participation: I will not deliver lectures in this class; because we will proceed in a seminar format, we must contribute together 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. Occasional reading quizzes will constitute a major portion of this part of your final grade. (15%)

Other Matters:

E-mail activity: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently for messages pertaining to the course. E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Using e-mail is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message (write to cftde@eiu.edu) by Friday, August 26 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, 1) identify which course you are in (English 4300); 2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations, and 3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and requirements.

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."

ENGLISH 4300: DAILY SCHEDULE

This schedule may change; any changes will be announced in advance. Reading and writing assignments are to be completed by the dates on which they appear on the syllabus. BE SURE to bring the appropriate book or books to class if a reading assignment is listed for that day; students who show up without a copy of the day's reading assignment may be marked absent.

- T AUG 23 Introduction to the course and to each other; Jorge Luis Borges, "Borges and I" (1956); Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) (handouts)
- R AUG 25 Before class read Bennett, *The Author*, 1-19
- F AUG 26 3 p.m. – deadline for sending an e-mail message to Dr. Engles; (1) identify which course you're in (English 4300); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; and (3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with (or perhaps disagree with) these course policies and requirements
- T AUG 30 *The Author*, 19-28, and Toni Morrison, "Home" (1997)
- R SEP 1 *The Author*, Chapter 3, 55-71
- T SEP 6 Poetry by Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen
- R SEP 8 Ryu Murakami, "I Am a Novelist" (2005)
- T SEP 13 John Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse" (1967)
- R SEP 15 Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
- T SEP 20 *A Room of One's Own*
- R SEP 22 Amy Ling, "Creating One's Self: The Eaton Sisters" (from *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*. 1992)
- T SEP 27 Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
- R SEP 29 *The Woman Warrior*
- T OCT 4 *The Woman Warrior*; Paper One due at the beginning of class
- R OCT 6 *The Woman Warrior*

T OCT 11 Graham Swift, *Waterland*

R OCT 13 *Waterland*

T OCT 18 *Waterland*

R OCT 20 *Waterland*

T OCT 25 O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*

R OCT 27 *In the Lake of the Woods*

T NOV 1 *In the Lake of the Woods*

R NOV 3 *In the Lake of the Woods* and discussion of final essay

T NOV 8 Spiegelman, *Maus I*

R NOV 10 *Maus I*

T NOV 15 No Class Meeting—Conferences on Final Essays

R NOV 17 No Class Meeting—Conferences on Final Essays

NOV 21 – NOV 25 THANKSGIVING BREAK!

T NOV 29 *Maus II*

R DEC 1 *Maus II*

T DEC 6 Reading on *Maus* (to be announced)

R DEC 8 Last Day of Class; final essay due at the beginning of class

Final Exam Period: Tuesday, December 13, 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.