

Fall 8-15-2008

ENG 4300-4390-002-098: Senior Seminar (Literature of the City: London and Chicago)

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“Town life nourishes and perfects all the civilized elements in man,” declared Oscar Wilde in 1891: ‘Shakespeare wrote nothing but doggerel verse before he came to London and never penned a line after he left’” (Porter, London 280).

“We get the cities we imagine. But first, in order to imagine new or better cities, we must learn to see the cities that we have. Imagination is rooted in past experience and perception. We see the city we have been taught to see, and literature teaches us to see cities” (Sizemore, A Female Vision of the City 1).

English 4300: Senior Seminar (Literature of the City: London and Chicago)

TR 12:30 – 1:45 pm; CH 3159

Fall 2008

Professor Richard Sylvia

Office: CH 3775

Office Hours: TR 9:30 – 10:30 am; 2:00 – 3:00 pm; and by appt.

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Course Description, Design, and Goals: London and Chicago: Great cities that have attracted the attention of some of the world’s greatest writers. This course is designed to give you an opportunity to read and discuss a variety of literary representations of both. For the most part, primary reading will come from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when urban populations began to increase dramatically, and the modern metropolis took shape. Besides literary responses we will also consider geographical, social, historical, and political background, and I will assign each of you at least one critical article to present to the class. We may even watch a film. The goal is for students to develop appreciation for the “city” as a cultural center, but also as a metaphorical place to which people attach a myriad of human emotions (i.e., awe, hope, disgust, fear).

Since senior seminar is a capstone experience in the major, the course also requires that you design, develop and complete a major research project during the semester on a subject of your choice, for which conference meetings with me and oral reports to the class will be necessary. See details below.

The overall goal of the course is to increase your knowledge of an important literary development – the literature of the city – and to provide you with an opportunity to exercise your expertise as a finishing student in English studies with dependable skills in close reading, analytical discussion of primary and secondary works, research, and writing.

Research Project Topics: You are free to design your own research project, provided I determine that it falls within the scope of the course. You may work collaboratively, with one or two others, or work alone. (For collaborative projects, everyone in the group receives the same grade.) Your project may culminate in a traditional research paper or in some other medium or form, provided I approve of your design and plans from the

beginning. I encourage creative thinking and expression, especially since this is one of your final courses as an undergraduate.

Everyone is required to turn in a brief topic statement on **September 30**, which should leave ample time to complete a superior product. Please feel free to talk with me about your ideas before that date, however. I have lots of books and other resources that I am willing to lend out, and I am always willing to help you in your search. Periodically during the semester I will ask you for an informal progress report. During the last two weeks of the semester, you will present a brief report to the class on your project. Final papers/projects are due **December 11**.

Texts: Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March*
Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*
Dickens, *Little Dorrit*
Sandburg, *Chicago Poems*
Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
other selected material (handouts)

Course Requirements and Grading:

careful preparation of the assigned readings
participation in seminar discussions – 10%
seminar report on assigned secondary material – 20%
research project report – 15%
research project – 30%
final exam (based on research project reports) – 25%

Tentative Schedule:

Aug. 26: course introduction; “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”; “London”; “Fire Sermon”

Aug. 28: “Imagining Victorian London”; “Sketches by Boz”; *The City in History*

Sept. 2: *Little Dorrit* I-IX

Sept. 4: *Dorrit* X-XVIII

Sept. 9: *Dorrit* XIX-XXVII

Sept. 11: *Dorrit* XXVIII-XXXVI

Sept. 16: “The Man of the Crowd”; “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”

Sept. 18: “The Man with the Twisted Lip”

Sept. 23: *Mrs. Dalloway*

Sept. 25: *Mrs. Dalloway*

Sept. 30: *Mrs. Dalloway*; **Research Project topic statement due**

Oct. 2: *Mrs. Dalloway*

Oct. 7: *Chicago Dreaming: Midwesterners and the City, 1871-1919*

Oct. 9: *Twenty Years at Hull House*

Oct. 14: *Chicago Poems*

Oct. 16: *Chicago Poems*

Oct. 21: *Sister Carrie* 1-10

Oct. 23: *Carrie* 11-22

Oct. 28: *Carrie* 23-35

Oct. 30: *Carrie* 36-47

Nov. 4: *The Adventures of Augie March* 1-5

Nov. 6: *March* 6-9

Nov. 11: *March* 10-12

Nov. 13: *March* 13-16

Nov. 18: *March* 17-22

Nov. 20: *March* 23-26

Nov. 25 and Nov. 27: Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 2: Research Project Reports

Dec. 4: Reports

Dec. 9: Reports

Dec. 11: Reports; **Research Project due**

Dec. 17: Final Exam (2:45-4:45 pm)