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ENG 5010-001: Authorial Intrusion In Contemporary American Metafunction

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5010-001

**ENG5010: Studies in 20th-21st-Century American Literature:
Authorial Intrusion in Contemporary American Metafiction**

Class: Tuesdays, 7-9:30pm, Coleman Hall 3159
Professor: Dr. Marjorie Worthington
email: mgworthington@eiu.edu

Office: Coleman Hall 3015
TR 2:00-3:30pm and T 5:00-6:00pm or by appt.
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DESCRIPTION

The second part of the 20th century has been witness to an extraordinary resurgence of metafiction and experimental fiction. Metafiction is the name traditionally given to works that challenge our notions of what a narrative is and how it should function. These challenges involve formal, stylistic or characterial experiments and result in the excessive, ludic self-consciousness that we associate with the term “metafiction.” This course will focus on a particular type of metafiction, popularized in recent decades, in which the putative “author” makes an appearance in the text, either as protagonist, minor character, or god-like creative force. We will examine several examples of this kind of fiction and attempt to address the following questions (among many others): why is this “authorial intrusion” so popular NOW? What do such texts have to teach us about our current culture? What effects do such novels have on us as readers? What larger questions about literature are raised by this kind of metafictional experiment?

This course will explore the ways in which contemporary metafiction and experimental fiction challenge our understandings of the uses, politics, and structures of narrative.

TEXTS: We will read the following novels, as well as several theoretical texts and whatever critical texts you require for your research. NOTE: This is a great deal of reading. Be prepared.

Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless*

Paul Auster, *New York Trilogy* (We'll only be reading the first novella “City of Glass”)

Bret Easton Ellis, *Lunar Park*

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated*

Mark Leyner, *Et Tu, Babe*

Toni Morrison, *Jazz*

Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*

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

Arthur Phillips, *The Tragedy of Arthur*

Richard Powers, *Galatea 2.2*

Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock*

Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Leading Discussion: Each of you will be responsible for two class discussions. What that will mean is that you must not only 1) do the reading for that day and; 2) come to class with possible topics for discussion, but also; 3) do a small amount of research on the text (at least three critical articles (about the author, if not the text itself), in addition to any web research you may do) in order to find out what the critical response to this text has been, the ways scholars have traditionally interpreted it and the arguments that arise out of those interpretations.

Short Essays: On the days in which you lead discussion, you must turn in a 5-7-page, double-spaced essay that outlines the issues you will raise, the topics you want to discuss, and an overview of your

research about the critical discussion that arises around this text. Along with this essay, you must turn in a Works Cited page for any and all sources you use, either critical or web.

Research Essay: You will be responsible for writing a 15-page critical paper (“conference length”) on a topic of your choice regarding one or more of the texts for and issues of this course. During the semester, you will be asked to present your thesis paragraph to the class for their feedback on your argument and ideas. At the end of the semester, you will provide another short presentation to the rest of the class where you will discuss your ultimate findings. Your essay may, if you wish, be drawn from the ideas you raised during one or more of the class discussions you led. Essays are due on our exam day, Dec. 13th.

Participation: The small size of this class affords us a rare opportunity, IF everyone takes responsibility for the quality of the course. For this reason, on days you do NOT lead discussion, you will still be expected to be an active participant in class. In order to do this, you must come to class having read and taken notes on the assignment, you must bring your reading materials with you to class and you must be prepared to discuss them, both in specific and general terms. In a class our size, it will be painfully clear who is and who is not participating. If you do not prepare regularly and participate enthusiastically, your grade will be negatively affected. Participation is worth 20% of your grade.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Discussion Leading	20%
Discussion Essays	20%
Research Essay	40%
Participation	20%

ENG 5010 READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- August 23 T INTRODUCTION
- 30 T Barthes and *Et Tu, Babe*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- Sept. 6 T *Lunar Park*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- 13 T *Operation Shylock*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- 20 T *Galatea 2.2*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- 27 T *The Tragedy of Arthur*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- Oct. 4 T Foucault and *Breakfast of Champions*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- 11 T *In the Lake of the Woods*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- 18 T *Empire of the Senseless* – **Thesis Paragraphs and Research Bibliography due**
Discussion Leaders: _____
- 25 T *Jazz*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- Nov. 1 T **Thesis-Paragraph draft presentations to class**
- 8 T *Pale Fire*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- 15 T Foster Wallace and “City of Glass” (just the first novella of *New York Trilogy*)
Discussion Leaders: _____

THANKSGIVING

- 29 T *Everything Is Illuminated*
Discussion Leaders: _____
- Dec. 6 T Film Screening, **Final Thesis-Paragraph Presentations**
- Dec. 13 T Film Screening Cont’d, **Final Essays due**