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ENG 5061B-600: Topics Literature/Literary Theory

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Twice Told Tales and Theories of Adaptation: Recycle, Produce, Reuse
ENG 5061B, Section 600
Online/Summer 2017

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Caldwell

Office Hours: Via D2L chat room, Tues. and Fri., 9-10 a.m., and by arrangement

Required Course Texts**

Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*. Trans. Ruden. (411 BC)
Atwood, Margaret. *Penelopiad*. (2015)
Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Fagles. (8th century BC ?)
Kurosawa, Akira. *Ran*. (1985)
Spike Lee. *Chi-Raq*. (2015)
Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Ed. Hunter. (1608)
Smiley, Jane. *A Thousand Acres*. (1991)
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. Vol. 1 & 2. (1991)

**All films will be available via D2L. Other materials, as noted in the course calendar, will also be made available via D2L. Suggested additional reading listed below is *not* required.

I. Course Description, Expectations, and Components of the Course

Course Description

In our instant-on culture, we have come to value immediacy, perhaps above and beyond creativity. This environment of constant stimulation has put incredible pressure on artists working in all forms of media to produce at a breakneck pace—to get the all-powerful “Like” on Facebook, or the impulse buy on Amazon, On Demand, or Netflix. The paradox of this cultural moment is that even while we crave the new, our attention span is retracting, and repetition and looping becomes comforting, perhaps even necessary. One need only to watch the endless repetition of footage in any reality television show to see the odd juxtaposition of novelty and recycling that has become the standard formula, or notice how often successful novels are quickly turned into films that are then turned into Broadway plays, or the endless streams of sequels (*Fast and Furious 8*, anyone?). Even as the internet has made the possibilities for artistic expression boundless, to some degree we live and consume art in a giant feedback loop.

In this online graduate course, we will consider the theories, conditions and results of adaptation. Examining a variety of texts and their various afterlives—whether they be canonical literary works, graphic novels, music, film, etc.—we will explore why and how adaptation is such an enduring creative mode.

Our exploration of adaptation this semester should be valuable to students from a wide-range of graduate concentrations including, but not limited to, literary study, creative writing,

multimedia and cultural studies, pedagogy, and rhetoric. Participants will be encouraged to develop a final project on adaptation suited to their individual interests.

Questions we explore will include the following:

- What is the difference between allusion and appropriation? When does an analogue take on a life of its own and gain an independence from its antecedent?
- How are we to understand and theorize the relationship between the “original” story and its successors? Does the former have a purity that is lacking in the latter? What is the line between literary hack-work (not to say plagiarism) and imitation?
- What gets sacrificed in translation between media? Between genres? Between high culture and pop culture? Do these distinctions matter anymore?
- Does appropriation speak to literature’s universal qualities or its limitations? Its situatedness in time and place? Do retellings suggest that something is “broken” about a story or text that needs to somehow be repaired so as to make it relevant again, to let us see it “anew”?
- What affects do capitalism, a gimmick-driven contemporary marketplace, and/or a publisher’s desire to acquire works that will sell have on creative endeavors and literary production? Is the vogue for adaptation ultimately driven by consumerism and if so, is this a spur or a threat to creativity?
- What happens when works deviate from the comfort of generic conventions? Where/how does that deviation take place and to what end? And why does this deviation sometimes make us uncomfortable and sometimes delight us (and sometimes both at once)?
- What are the ethics of appropriation? To what social and political ends have writers and artists appropriated texts to repurpose seemingly antiquated or to restore marginalized narratives?

Minimum Technological Requirements for English 5061B**

- Reliable access to the Internet
- Ability to navigate various aspects of D2L, our learning management system
- Ability read documents using Word, PowerPoint, and Adobe Acrobat
- Ability to create and post documents using Microsoft Word or a comparable format
- Ability to record and post a short video of yourself and/or create PowerPoint with voiceover

**If you need help with any of these technological requirements, please contact me ASAP.

Course Expectations and Netiquette

Because this is a 8-week online graduate summer course, the reading and writing requirements will be particularly demanding. Please be prepared to devote considerable time to the reading, writing, and other assignments listed below. If you need help, you have several options for contacting me. I will answer queries both via D2L email and Panthermail (mcaldwell@eiu.edu),

typically within 24 hours, sometimes sooner. You may also ask me questions during my virtual office hours via the Chat function in D2L (see your navigation bar). If you have questions or find yourself falling behind, please **do not wait** to contact me.

Regarding course netiquette, I ask you to observe the following policies:

- 1.) Be considerate of other discussion participants when interacting via the discussion board or any other electronic form for the duration of this course. Remember that often a writer’s intention and tone can be lost in electronic formats. Err on the side of too much courtesy rather than too little.
- 2.) Dismissive, malicious, or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.
- 3.) You are *absolutely* welcome to express your own ideas and opinion *and* to agree or disagree with your peers, I ask only that you do so courteously.
- 4.) If you do not respect your classmates or your tone is inappropriate, you may be asked to redo an assignment and/or lose credit for the assignment entirely. In particularly severe cases, you may fail or be dismissed from the course at my discretion.
- 5.) Read all feedback you receive from me and discuss any questions you have about your feedback. If you are ever in doubt about whether a post violates course netiquette, please email me *before* you post it.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the students will be able to:

1. discuss, examine, and debate current issues in literary theory and cultural studies;
2. apply current theories to pertinent primary texts and/or contexts;
3. demonstrate competencies in a topic or theory to enable participation in professional or public setting (such as submit a seminar paper for a conference presentation).

II. Course Assignments

Assignments, Grade Distribution and Scale

Assignment	Weight	Final Grading Scale	
Discussion Forum Posts	40%	90-100	A
Weekly progress reports (Writing Group work)	10%	80-89	B
Final Project	40%	70-79	C
Presentation on Final Project	10%	60-69	D
		Below 60	F

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). The English Department’s policy on plagiarism states the following:

“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 assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards.”

To put this another way: plagiarism absolutely will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarists will be reported to the Office of Student Standards and will fail the course. If you are confused about plagiarism at any point in the semester, it is your responsibility to ask me about it before you turn in an assignment.

III. Course Calendar

Week 1: Setting the Stage: Theoretical Groundwork for Understanding Adaptation and Appropriation

Overview and Project Work

This first week has two main goals. The first is to begin to develop a working theoretical understanding of adaptation and appropriation. To that end, I have selected 3 sets of theoretical readings for this week, two by leading scholars on adaptation theory and a third by the philosopher Walter Benjamin. Since these readings are theoretical, there will be a lot to soak in—and not all of it will (and that’s okay). Try to focus on the points that most animate or complicate your own ideas about literature and adaptation. Which leads me to the second goal of this week: defining your independent project that you will work on for the duration of this class (and maybe beyond!).

For your project work this week, you should identify a topic for your final project, write a rough abstract in which you articulate the goal of your project/research question (as you understand it at this moment). You should also begin to develop a theoretical framework/approach to your topic. Feel free to think beyond the seminar paper format. Try to develop a project that will be meaningful to you and will allow you to explore our course topic in the context of your own set of knowledge, skill sets, and professional goals. I will ask you to post your initial ideas to the discussion forum and to respond to each other’s posts. Next week, I will separate the class into smaller research and discussion groups (“Work Groups”). You will remain in these groups until the last week of class, when you will share your independent work with the entire class. In this first post, make sure you also spend some time introducing yourself to the class. Pictures welcome!

Required Readings

- Linda Hutcheon, Chapter 1, “Beginning to Theorize Adaptation: What? Who? Why? How? Where? When?” in *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2013. 1-32.
- Julie Sanders, Chapter 1, “What is Adaptation?,” and Chapter 2, “What is Appropriation?,” in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2016. 21-53.
- Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. By Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968. 217-251.

Recommended Reading

Aristotle. *Poetics*.

Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. London: Fontana, 1977.

Kristeva, Julia. "World, Dialogue and Novel." *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Rudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora. New York: Columbia UP, 1980. 64-91.

Week 2: Appropriation vs. Adaptation: *King Lear* and Its Sources

Overview and Project Work

This week begins the first of a 3-week segment, so it will be important to explore and solidify our understanding of *King Lear* during this week because it will provide the foundation for what we do in the following two weeks. In addition, we will seek to understand the cultural forces that influenced Shakespeare to adapt this play from a variety of sources and consider whether it makes more sense to think of the play as a text that appropriates (not to say copies) a multitude of other texts or whether it should be thought of as an adaptation in itself. For your independent project work this week, you should start reading primary source/s and developing a working bibliography. Write a ~500-1000 word discussion of your interest in your chosen topic/primary source/s. Post your writing to your group and discuss your findings.

Required Readings

- William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. G.K. Hunter (you are welcome to use a different edition if you have one, but you should pay attention to the editorial choices in each edition since there are some significant differences between the folio and the quarto versions of *Lear*).
- Selected readings in Shakespeare's sources: Philip Sidney, *Arcadia*; Ralph Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1577); *The History of King Leir and his Three Daughters*
- Sanders, Chapter 3, "'Here's a Strange Alteration': Shakespearean Appropriations" in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 57-61.

Recommended Reading

Francis Bacon, "*Imitatio and Its Excesses; Poetry, Rhetoric, and the Imagination (1605)*" in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Brian Vickers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 456-468.

Philip Sidney. *The Defense of Poesy* in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*. Ed. Brian Vickers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 336-366.

Nahum Tate. *The History of King Lear*. London: 1689. Available via *Early English Books Online*.

James Shapiro. *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.

Week 3: From Page to Screen: Shakespeare on Film in Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*

Overview and Project Work

During this week we will watch *Ran* and think about what happens to Shakespeare when a stage play is turned into film, a pre-1800 English play is retold in the late 20th century international context, and medieval Britain is transformed into feudal Japan. Incidentally, I also recommend you start reading our text for next week since it is the longest text we will read this semester). For your project work, you should continue reading/writing about sources for your project. Make sure to check-in with your group and report your developments. Trouble-shoot any issues you are having with your group or with me.

Required Reading

- Akira Kurosawa, *Ran* (view via D2L)
- Hutcheon, "What? (Forms)" in *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 33-52.

Recommended Reading

Samuel Cowl. *Shakespeare and Film: A Norton Guide*. New York: Norton & Co., 2008.

Yvonne Griggs, "Chaos on the Western Front," in *Screen Adaptations: Shakespeare's King Lear*. London: Methuen, 2009. p. 79-99.

William Shakespeare. *King Lear*. Dir. by Trevor Nunn. 2008.

W.B. Worthen. *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Week 4: A Novel Idea: Lear goes Pop Fiction

Overview and Project Work

During this week we will read and discuss Jane Smiley's adaptation of King Lear, *A Thousand Acres*. We will consider the perceived movement of Shakespeare's text from "high" to "low" or pop culture and Smiley's retelling of the tale. For your project work, you should circulate a working draft with your group. Invite comments and discussion.

Required Reading

- Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*.
- Ron Carlson. "King Lear in Zebulon County." *The New York Times*. Nov. 3, 1991.
<http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/04/05/specials/smiley-acres.html>

Recommended Reading:

Week 5: Representing History: Biography, Memoir, and the Holocaust in Spiegelman's *Maus*

Overview and Project Work

Maus needs no companion text because it is art imitating life in the the narrowest sense as it attempts to relate the events of the Holocaust to a wide audience over 40 years after the fact. Even as it is a historical narrative, it is also a biographical one, as well as an autobiographical one. These histories weave in and out of each other throughout the texts. *Maus* is a text heavily invested in the idea of adaptation as it takes the possibility of adaptation to task using the medium of the graphic novel (or comics). For your project work, you should continue to develop and revise your draft based on feedback from your group. During this week, you will also share a working draft with me and we will have virtual conferences.

Required Reading

- Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, volumes 1 and 2.
- Scott McCloud, “The Vocabulary of Comics,” “Blood in the Gutter,” and “Living in Line,” in *Understanding Comics*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994. 24-93, 118-137.

Recommended Reading

Art Spiegelman, “Why Comics?” *MetaMaus*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. 165-186, 203-224.

Elie Wiesel, *Night*.

Week 6: Old Places, New Voices: Atwood’s *Penelopiad*

Overview and Project Work

During weeks 6 & 7, we will examine contemporary texts that adapt texts from ancient Greece. During this week, we will examine a particular kind of retelling—namely, retelling the story of Odysseus from Homer’s epic poem in the oral tradition from the point of view of a marginalized female character—Odysseus’ wife Penelope. This epic novella is her story—and that of her maids. For your project work, you should continue to develop your project based on the past two weeks of feedback. Check-in with your group this week to discuss your project.

Required Reading

- Margaret Atwood, *Penelopiad*.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Fagles. (If you prefer/have another translation, that’s fine too). Books 1, 17-23.
- Sanders, from Chapter 6, “Constructing Alternative Points of View” in *Adaptation and Appropriation*. 123-129.

Recommended Reading

Carol Ann Duffy, *The World’s Wife*.

Tori Amos, *Strange Little Girls*.

Erich Auerbach. “Odysseus’ Scar” in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. 3-23.

"She's Left Holding the Fort." *The Guardian*. Oct. 26, 2005.

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/oct/26/theatre.classics>

Thomas Jones. "Our Little Duckie." *London Review of Books*. 27.22. Nov. 17, 2005.

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v27/n22/thomas-jones/our-little-duckie>

Walter Ong. Orality and Literacy.

Week 7: The (Mis?)Uses of Comedy: *Lysistrata* and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Spike Lee's *Chi-Raq*

Overview and Project Work

During this week, we will read the ancient Greek play *Lysistrata* and consider its adaptation into a musical by Spike Lee. You should be "finalizing" your revisions on your final project. Report your progress to your group one last time and develop your class presentation, which you will post to the class next week.

Required Reading

- Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*.
- Spike Lee. *Chi-Raq*.
- Hutcheon, Chapter 5, "Where? When? (Contexts)" in *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 141-153.

Recommended Reading

Richard Brody. "Spike Lee's Necessary, Overwhelming 'Chi-Raq.'" *The New Yorker*. Dec. 9, 2015.

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/spike-lees-necessary-overwhelming-chi-raq>

Dahleen Glanton. "'Chi-Raq' the Movie Doesn't Live Up to Real Life in 'Chiraq.'" *Chicago Tribune*.

Nov. 24, 2015. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-chiraq-glanton-talk-20151124-story.html>

Amy Ho. "'Chi-Raq' Trades Real Lives in Chicago for Cheap Laughs." *Chicago Tribune*. Nov. 8,

2015. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-perspec-chiraq-chicago-gangbangers-er-women-vaginas-1109-20151108-story.html>

Dan Hyman. "What the Controversy over Spike Lee's *Chi-Raq* is Really About." *GQ*. Dec. 3, 2015.

<http://www.gq.com/story/chi-raq-controversy-spike-lee>

Julian Mitchell. "The Truth About 'Chi-Raq': A Conversation with Spike Lee." *The Blog*.

Huffington Post. Jan. 21, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/julian-mitchell/the-truth-about-chiraq-an_b_8872438.html

Week 8: Final Projects

Overview and Project Work

The reading for this week is each other's projects. We will all post a synopsis and presentation of our work in addition to giving everyone access to your completed project (whatever that may be). Everyone in the class will watch/read the synopsis presentation. Each group will be responsible for reading and discussing each group member's final project.