EIU 4006-051: The Romantic Vision

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EIU 4006 -- The Romantic Vision
Intersession, 1997

SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: John Kilgore. Office: 314K Coleman Hall. Hours: MF 12-1. Phone: (217) 581-6313 (office); (217) 345-7395. Please feel very free to call during reasonable hours. Include date and time of call when leaving voice-mail messages at office, and don't trust voice-mail for urgent messages: try my home instead.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Two take-home essay tests, about 1500 words each (50%); final (25%); attendance and participation (25%). Each student will be required to lead class discussion for about 10 minutes at some point during the term.

TAKE-HOME ESSAY TESTS. Each will ask you to write 2-3 short essays, choosing among two or three possible topics for each one. Your answers should be written quickly but with care, with an eye to clear focus, strong and substantive content, economy, logic, and rhetorical effectiveness. (Weigh your words, respond to the question as directly as possible, support your claims, never BS, revise for clarity, and--last but not least--proofread. You'll do all right.) All papers should be typewritten (or word-processed), double-spaced, on white paper; see me if you feel you cannot meet this guideline. Please do NOT use report covers.

FINAL EXAM. Is meant to ensure that you have done ALL readings carefully and on time and have a good grasp of the issues raised in class discussion. The format will combine computerized multiple-choice with short answers and short essays. Different sections will test recognition and grasp of concepts, works, authors, characters, and key quotations. The best preparation is simply to do the reading--carefully, on time, and in full.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. Will count approximately 25% of your grade in the course. From the second meeting on, I will be passing around an attendance sheet which you must sign. The attendance grade (15 of the 25%), will be computed as follows: 1 absence -- A; 2 absences -- B; 3 absences -- C; 4 absences--D; 5 absences--F. Additional absences will result in further, proportional damage to the overall course grade.

Note that you have one "free" absence. Use this as insurance against illness and other unavoidable circumstances that may keep you from attending. Beyond this one free day, I will not normally award attendance credit for any session which you have missed, no matter how good your excuse. I will, however, assign and accept make-up work in lieu of attendance if an absence has been truly unavoidable. (Clue: it's easier just to be here. Really.)

The remaining 10% of this portion of the grade will come from your class presentation. You will choose an author from the syllabus and make a presentation on him or her, followed by questions and discussion. Presentations
will be graded on clarity, thoughtfulness, depth and relevance of research, and overall usefulness to the concerns of the course. See page 4, below, for a list of topics. We will try to synchronize the reports with class discussion of the corresponding assigned readings.

I may raise the attendance and participation grade somewhat if your contributions to ongoing class discussion have been especially good.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

From TRS:
Camus, The Stranger (Gilbert trans.)
Erikson, Childhood and Society.
Griffith and Frey, eds., Classics of Children's literature (CC)
Morris, The Naked Ape.
Perkins, ed., Contemporary American Literature (AL)
Shelley, Frankenstein

Class Handouts:
Miscellaneous works, noted in schedule below with (HO) symbol. Make sure you get all of these.

SCHEDULE

Note: Please complete the readings for each session before the class meets on the date listed. As the course gets underway, try hard to READ AHEAD of the schedule. You will have a hard time keeping up if you do not make a head start on the longer readings, Tom Sawyer and The Stranger, in particular.

Please make a habit of bringing this syllabus to class with you, as we will need to adjust the schedule from time to time.

1) Monday, May 12 COURSE INTRODUCTION

2) Tuesday, May 13
Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (HO).
Wordsworth, "Expostulation and Reply"; "The Tables Turned" (HO).

3) Wednesday, May 14
Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, Author's Introduction and Chapter 5.

4) Thursday, May 15
Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, Chapters 10-16.

5) Friday, May 16
Arnold, Dover Beach (HO).
Marx, The Communist Manifesto
FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM HANDED OUT

6) Monday, May 19
Marx, The Communist Manifesto

7) Tuesday, May 20
Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience" (HO).
8) Wednesday, May 21
   Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, CC485.

9) Thursday, May 22
   Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, CC485.

10) Friday, May 23
    Roethke, poems, AL 328-338, especially "Open House," "The Waking," "The
    Far Field," and "In a Dark Time."
    Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues," AL147.
    FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE
    NO CLASS MONDAY -- MEMORIAL DAY

11) Tuesday, May 27

12) Wednesday, May 28
    Erikson, Childhood and Society, pp. 326-358.

13) Thursday, May 29
    Camus, The Stranger
    SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM HANDED OUT

14) Friday, May 30
    Camus, The Stranger

15) Monday, June 2
    Ginsberg, "Howl," AL449.
    Cool Hand Luke (movie; extra viewing times TBA.)

16) Tuesday, June 3
    Discussion of movie.
    Morris, The Naked Ape, chapters 1-2.
    SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

17) Wednesday, June 4
    Morris, The Naked Ape, chapters 1-2.
    Milgram, "The Perils of Obedience." (HO)
    Whitehead, "A Demoralized Society." (HO)

18) Thursday, June 5
    Review.

19) Friday, June 6
    FINAL EXAMINATION

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LATE WORK POLICY: The take-home exams are timed exercises, and the exam
questions will be discussed soon after the deadline, so punctuality is
essential. In fairness to everyone, I will grant extensions only in truly
extraordinary circumstances. The normal penalty for handing in a paper late
will be two full grades (e.g., from "A" to "C") for each class meeting the test is overdue. My best advice: plan to finish early.

Please be aware that the penalty for plagiarism or cheating, which I trust I will not have to impose, is automatic failure of the course. See me if you have any questions about this policy.

I will be more than happy to make reasonable accommodations for any student with a documented disability. Please contact me if you will need such an accommodation.

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SUGGESTED REPORT TOPICS:

- Political revolutions in the nineteenth century.
- Frankenstein: Victor's story.
- Byron: Love life.
- Byron: Political career and beliefs.
- Romanticism in music: Beethoven.
- Romanticism in English art: Turner.
- Gotterdammerung: "twilight of the gods" in nineteenth-century writing.
- Marxism: the role of economic competition.
- Marxism: theory of art and ideology.
- Marxism: twentieth-century examples of Marxist states.
- Gandhi (the movie).
- Civil Disobedience in Gandhi and Martin Luther King
- Theories of childhood in Twain's day.
- Twain and Imperialism: "To the Person Sitting in Darkness."
- Leslie Fiedler on Twain: Escapism, pastoralism, sexual arrest.

Poetry and Suicide in the twentieth century
- James Baldwin: a profile.
- Hitler: the rise to power.
- Erik Erikson: a profile.
- Freudian psychotherapy: an overview.
- French existentialism: an overview.
- Albert Camus: a profile.
- Interpretations of The Stranger.
- Alan Ginsberg: a profile.
- Howl and obscenity laws.
- The Naked Ape: a true scenario of human evolution?
- The Naked Ape: correct in its theory of female breasts?

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ROMANTIC TENDENCIES

[The following list will furnish our working definition of Romanticism, as well as a list of themes and patterns we will be following through all the readings. Both exams will ask you to apply the tendencies to specific readings.]

1) Political and social radicalism; opposition to the status quo and existing power structure; specific democratic sympathies; populist respect for the common man.

2) Faith in human nature; belief that human beings are innately reasonable, compassionate, creative, and just; concomitant belief that human vice and evil are engendered by outside agents, especially society.

3) Emotionalism and expressivism; belief that feeling and spontaneous impulse are superior to reason and prudent calculation, especially in the arts; mistrust of reason as cold, alienating, repressive, unimaginative; attentiveness to "subjective" rather than "objective" realities.

4) Celebration of vision and creative imagination as central values; idealization of artists and poets.

5) Individualism; faith in the visions and desires of the independent individual, as opposed to laws, social customs, education, acquired habits, etc.; a view of the individual as generally superior to society, government, inherited institutions.

6) Moral relativism; a readiness to question traditional morals and the very possibility of an objective ethics; a distrust of rules.

7) Bohemianism: a defiance of laws and taboos, an embrace of the forbidden and the exotic in experience.

8) Utopianism and idealism; a readiness to imagine and seek a better world than this one; willingness to depart from tradition in pursuit of a higher ideal.

9) Byronism; preoccupation with alienation, despair, and inner crisis, especially when utopian and idealistic hopes have been disappointed; fascination with the figure of the outcast or Byronic hero.

10) Pastoralism; reverence for Nature, and for "naturalness" (i.e., simplicity, spontaneity, innocence) in human personality and behavior; celebration of Nature as a realm of higher spiritual values; acute sensitivity to natural beauty.

11) Sublimity; a testing of the limits of human experience; preoccupation with the extremes both of Nature and of human action.

12) Reverence for children and childhood; an awareness that "the Child is Father of the Man" (Wordsworth), that the adult personality is fatefuly determined by childhood experience; celebration of childhood as a time of spontaneity, innocence, sensitivity, and imagination, as opposed to the self-consciousness, restrictive rationality, and dulled sensitivity of adulthood.