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ENG 2011C-003: Literature, the Self, and the World: Fiction

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Telephone: 581-6983 (office) / 345-4310 (home, before 9:00 p.m.)
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The poet Muriel Rukeyser has famously written, “The universe is made of stories, not of atoms.” This course is about stories, great ones. Our focus will not be historical or technical—we will not be surveying the history of the novel or dwelling on matters of literary terminology. Rather, we’ll be thinking about fiction as what philosopher Kenneth Burke calls “equipment for living,” and we’ll examine the ways in which writers of fiction engage the deepest questions of what it means to be a person in the world. We’ll read novels in pairs: Jane Austen’s Emma and Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God (two novels of a young woman’s growing up); William Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury and Gilbert Sorrentino’s Aberration of Starlight (two novels told from multiple points of view); and Horatio Alger’s Ragged Dick and Steven Millhauser’s Martin Dressler (two very different versions of an American success story). We’ll also see three films that complement our reading—Clueless, Citizen Kane, and Smoke. At all times we’ll read slowly—for much more than “the plot”—and enjoy the beautiful complications and details of art.

REQUIREMENTS

Dedicated participation in the daily work of the course (reading, thinking, talking), quizzes, a number of writing assignments, a final examination.

POLICIES

Attendance
Attendance is essential: you should attend class as often as I do. You are responsible for all assignments, whether or not you are in class when they are announced. If you must miss a class, you should get in touch with me right away to find out what you will miss. This is not a class in which to fall behind.

Late Work and Make-Up Work
Late writing assignments are acceptable only if you have my approval in advance. Because the purpose of a quiz is to determine whether you have done the work for that day's class, missed quizzes due to lateness or absence cannot be made up. If you have a properly verified absence (illness, emergency, participation in an official University activity), I will record a blank rather than a zero.

Disabilities
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
Office Hours
Feel free to come in to talk—about a question that you didn't get to ask in class, an idea that you want to talk about, a writing problem, an assignment, a grade, etc. Oftentimes it is very easy to clear up questions and dissolve anxieties by talking about them.

Decorum
Our purposes here are serious—not grim or morbid, but genuinely intellectual. No food, talking, doing work for other classes, or other private business. No sitting in the back row unless necessary due to limited space. If you take off your hat when you come in, it’s easier for me to see you as an individual face and person.

Grading
Your grade will be based on your writing assignments (40%), final examination (20%), quizzes (30%), and participation (10%). Writing assignments receive letter grades. Missing writing receives a zero. Quizzes receive numerical grades. A quiz average of, say, 107% counts as 107 and not as an A (95); a quiz average of, say, 40% counts as 40 and not as an F (55). Participation in the course receives one of five grades: 100 (consistent informed participation), 85 (frequent informed participation), 75 (less frequent participation or less informed participation), 50 (only occasional participation), 0 (little or no participation). You may check on quizzes and participation at any time. If you have qualms about participating in class discussion, please talk to me as soon as possible.

To calculate semester grades, I use the following numerical equivalents for letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>67</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For semester grades, 90 or above is an A; 80 or above, a B; 70 or above, a C; 60 or above, a D; below 60, an F.

English Department Statement 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 the representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course.

Academic Integrity
Any breach of academic integrity—from cheating on a quiz to "getting ideas" from Cliffs Notes to working with another student on an essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course. You will also get a file in the Judicial Affairs office and be required to participate in an ethics workshop organized by Judicial Affairs. You should be familiar with Eastern's statement on academic integrity (posted in classrooms) and should ask if you have any questions about quoting from and/or documenting sources. But since the work of the course is to be an expression of your own ideas in your own words, questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise. Do not "borrow" work or have someone "go over"
your work or give your work to anyone (allowing someone else to make use of your work is also a breach of academic integrity and will also get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course).

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction to the course
Weeks 1-4: Emma and Clueless
Weeks 4-5: Their Eyes Were Watching God
Weeks 6-8: The Sound and the Fury
Weeks 9-10: Aberration of Starlight
Week 11: Ragged Dick
Weeks 12-14: Martin Dressler and Citizen Kane
Week 15: Smoke