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ENG 2009G-002: Literature and Human Values: Faith, Survival, Progress

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Course Overview:
In this humanities course, we will be reading literature—both fiction and non-fiction—that represents “life-as-journey.” As they move towards their final destination—often some kind of home—characters endure various tests. Thus, in addition to focusing on how these stories of “faith, survival, and progress” are told, we will also be studying what sustains an individual through these trials. Our texts will include: John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, Frederick Douglass’ Narrative, Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre, Yann Martel’s The Life of Pi, Mary Doria Russell’s The Sparrow. You will also need a College Level Dictionary to succeed in this course.

One objective of this course is to develop further a critical appreciation of and a confidence in reading and discussing literature and the ways literature speaks of and to the human condition. Furthermore, in this course, you will have many opportunities for extending and enhancing skills in reading, writing, and speaking in general, in ways that will benefit you throughout your University career, and, indeed, your life.

Please note that this class is DISCUSSION-DRIVEN. This means that there is an expectation that each student will be fully prepared for each meeting with the text assigned for the day read and able to initiate or contribute to discussion with relevant and meaningful questions or comments that indicate a serious effort to grapple with the assigned texts and the questions that frame this course.

Course Assignments: To achieve the objectives described above students will need to keep up with the rigorous reading schedule and actively participate in the class discussion. The following assignments will foster the active engagement necessary to make this a productive and exciting learning experience.
I. Exams and Quizzes:
*There will be a mid-term and a final examination (15% each) and I reserve the right to give pop quizzes as warranted (5%)

II. Papers:
*Three essays based on the readings (15% each)

III. Discussion Partnerships:
Discussion Partners are one more way of ensuring that everyone has a chance to be heard and play a role in shaping the directions of our classroom conversations. Students will work with each other to present for discussion a given text. As a team, you will prepare in advance for your discussion date. Together you should generate a list of possible issues to explore, topics to discuss, and passages worth close analysis.

In preparation for your discussion partnership you will need to 1) read and familiarize yourself with your assigned text...you are the experts! 2) Do some research to gain either a biographical context (find out about the writer: when were they born? What else did they write? What were they known for or distinguished by? Did they have significant influences? Most importantly, can you relate any of this information to the text in question?) OR, Historical Contexts (identify some historical information that would illuminate our understanding of the text). Whatever research you do should be presented in a handout that will serve as a useful reference tool to your classmates. NOTE: If you want me to photocopy your materials for class, I will need to have them by noon on the day you are presenting.

Since you will have a handout to distribute to other students, you should only briefly explain the information and how this knowledge enhances our understanding of the literary text, then, lead us in a discussion of the text itself. (15%)

Discussion Partnership Evaluation Criteria:
5 Excellent—demonstrates levels of critical thinking, reading, and writing that are beyond expectations for a 2000-level literature course (rarely given).
4 Very Good—work that demonstrates a solid foundation in critical thinking, reading, and writing. Strong work that demonstrates a detailed attention to language, a strong ability to read a text closely, and/or an ability to analytically relate a literary text to its historical, biographical, or cultural context.
3 Good—work that demonstrates a basic level of understanding of the critical process, and a real investment in the assignment. However, it may not yet reveal the same comfort with the analysis of the language or the context of a literary text.
2 Satisfactory—work that meets requirements, but does not yet demonstrate a strong understanding of the critical process. May indicate that you are still in the process of learning what it means to think “critically” about a literary text.
1 Below expectations—does not demonstrate a clear understanding of the requirements of the assignment or of the process of critical reading, writing, and thinking.
0 No Credit

IV. Key Passages: These assignments are intended to encourage thoughtful reading of the texts and to help stimulate class discussion. As you read the assigned texts, note passages that seem especially revealing, interesting, perplexing, or controversial in the light of this seminar’s topics. When you finish reading the texts for that week choose one passage (no more than 4 lines of poetry or 3 prose sentences) and jot it down on a 4X6 index card along with your name, the date the reading is due, and the author and title of the work in which the passage appears and the section/page number in which it appears. On the back of the card, write a paragraph explaining what you think is taking place, what you think the passage means and why it is significant to the themes of this class. Given the course focus, a good strategy would be to look for examples in
Week Eight:  Jane Eyre chapters XXIX - XXXVIII  
3/1  Discussion Partnership/key passage due  
3/3  Finish Jane Eyre  
3/5  Second Paper Due Intro to The Sparrow

Week Nine:  The Sparrow chapters 1-11  
3/8  key passage due  
3/10  Discussion Partnership  
3/12  TBA

MARCH 15-19 Spring Break

Week Ten:  The Sparrow chapters 12-22  
3/22  Key passage due/ Revision of either paper one or paper two due  
3/24  Discussion partnership  
3/26  TBA

Week Eleven:  The Sparrow chapters 23-32  
3/29  key passage due  
3/31  Discussion Partnership  
4/1  Finish The Sparrow

Week Twelve:  /The Life of Pi pages 1-93  
4/5  key passage due  
4/7  Discussion Partnership  
4/8  more on The Life of Pi

Week Thirteen:  The Life of Pi pages 94-176  
4/12  key passage due  
4/14  Discussion Partnership  
4/16  more on The Life of Pi

Week Fourteen:  The Life of Pi pages 177-286  
4/19  key passage due  
4/21  Discussion Partnership  
4/23  more on The Life of Pi

Week Fifteen:  The Life of Pi pages 286-326  
4/26  key passage due  
4/28  Third Paper Due  
4/30  Class Wrap up

Final Examination: Wednesday, May 5th, 10.15am-12.15pm
the texts in which address one or more of the three terms we are discussing (faith, survival, progress). These passages may be handed in late only in cases of excused absence (i.e. absence due to sickness for which a doctor’s note is provided, or to participate in an approved University activity).(5%)

Attendance Policy: You may miss four classes no questions asked, no excuses needed. After four classes you will drop a grade level, for example, if you were earning a B, you would be dropped to C. If you miss six or more classes you will receive a failing grade for this class.

Course Schedule:
Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to change. Also, students should read assigned text(s) prior to the class in which the text(s) will be discussed.

Week One:  
Pilgrim’s Progress Intro to page 12-37  
1/12 HMWK: Read scholarly introduction and pp and be prepared to answer the question “What is an Allegory?” Locate what you consider to be a helpful description/definition of allegory and turn in a hardcopy: typed, photocopied or printed with source clearly identified. Your first key passage should identify a section of PP that you think is interestingly allegorically and discuss what is being allegorically represented  
1/14 PP intro to page 12  
1/16 PP 12-37

Week Two:  
Pilgrim’s Progress 37-100  
1/19 Martin Luther King’s Birthday/No Class  
1/21 key passage due  
1/23 Discussion Partnership

Week Three:  
Pilgrim’s Progress 100-141  
1/26 key passage due  
1/28 Discussion Partnership  
1/29 Frederick Douglass for this class please read introduction and preface

Week Four:  
Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass chapters 1-6  
2/2 key passage due  
2/4 continue discussion of Narrative  
2/6 Discussion Partnership

Week Five:  
Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass chapters 7-10  
2/9 key passage due  
2/11 Read “What to the slave is the fourth of July?” in text  
2/13 Lincoln’s Birthday/No Class

Week Six:  
Jane Eyre chapters I-XIV  
2/16 First Paper Due/ intro to Jane Eyre (Bring Text)  
2/18 key passage due  
2/19 Discussion Partnership

Week Seven:  
Jane Eyre chapters XVI-XXVIII  
2/23 key passage due  
2/25 Discussion Partnership  
2/27 READING DAY/ NO CLASS