ENG 5000-001: Intro Methods in Eng Studies

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Cultures of “Health” and “Death”

This course is designed for the advanced study of current methods and issues in literary studies in English. Such fields of inquiry include literary form, history, psychology, gender, sexuality, class, race, disability, and information studies. Based broadly in the study of narrative, the course will introduce students to the basic tools for discourse analysis at the graduate level. The course introduces new ways of looking at textual objects through major theoretical approaches. It will also introduce new ways of looking at prevalent anxieties surrounding death—literal and figurative—anxieties that are almost without exception filtered through the most banal yet vibrantly threatening cultural imaginings of “health,” or what constitutes “soundness of body; that condition in which its functions are duly and efficiently discharged” (OED). We will examine together why “health” is, as French physician and philosopher Georges Canguilhem wrote, “not a scientific concept [but rather] a popular [vulgaire] concept. Which is not to say that it is trivial, but coming within everyone’s reach.” Canguilhem asked us to consider seriously the divide between the public’s understanding of “health” (the absence of disease, or “life lived in the silence of the organs”) and the medical-scientific establishment’s understanding of “health.” Ranging from a study of literature and culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (especially Austen’s Pride and Prejudice), to the novels of J. M. Coetzee (The Lives of Animals and Waiting for the Barbarians), and Kazuo Ishiguro (Never Let Me Go), our readings will trace the connections between imagining and narrating the “health” of people and things, and what this says about our attitudes towards dying.

Primary Texts

*recommended reading

**Book-Length Critical-Theoretical Studies**

**Handbooks**

**COURSE POLICIES**

**READING**
As this is a graduate-level course, there will be reading aplenty. This includes primary texts (fiction) and secondary materials (articles, theoretical texts). I expect every member of our class to keep up with the reading and be prepared for discussion.

**GRADES**
Participation in discussion (20%)
Short papers and Symposium presentation (20%)
Essay One (20%)
Essay Two (40%)

**LATE POLICY:** Essays—and all other assignments—are due at the beginning of class.

1) Late essays will be marked a full grade lower for every day late. Essays turned in a week past the deadline will be given a “zero.”
2) Short at-home writing assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class. Late ones will not be accepted.

**EMAILING POLICY:** I want to get to know you and your work this semester. Thus I ask that you stop by my office during office hours (or other scheduled times) so that we can talk. DO NOT EMAIL ME TO ASK FOR AN “UPDATE” ON MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, OR TO EXPLAIN AN ABSENCE.

**ESSAY FORMAT:** Your paper should be paper-clipped. It must include page numbers. Format: 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins.

**PLAGIARISM:**
Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade on the assignment, if not for the course. I will follow the departmental policy 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 representation of them as one’s own 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 Student Standards Office.”

*Always submit your papers using correct MLA (Modern Language Association) format.*
WEEK ONE
Wednesday 8/24/16 Introductions; The Rise of the Novel and the Need to Know

- The Rise of the Novel: some notes—handout
- Ian Watt, “Realism and the Novel Form” (from The Rise of the Novel)—handout
- Jeremy Bentham, from Panopticon, or, The Inspection-House (1787)—handout

WEEK TWO, 8/31
- Some considerations of “health” and “death”: a place to begin our most preliminary inquiries into the study of English and the desire for storytelling

- THEORY: J. Hillis Miller, “Narrative” (from Critical Terms for Literary Study) and “Critic as Host”—D2L
- NOVEL: Kazuo Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go (Part I, chapters 1-6, pages 3-76)

WEEK THREE, 9/7 Labor Theory

- THEORY: Alex Woloch, The One vs. the Many: Introduction (pages 12-42) E. M. Forster, “Flat and Round Characters”—D2L
- NOVEL: Kazuo Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go (Part I, chapters 7-9, pages 77-111)

WEEK FOUR, 9/14 Individual conferences with Dr. Park in 3030 Coleman

26th Annual Phi Beta Kappa Fall Lecture
“The Invisible Matter: How We Impoverish Liberal Arts Education by Marginalizing Africana Muslims”

Who: Dr. Mansa Bilal Mark King (Ph.D. Johns Hopkins), Associate Professor of Sociology, Morehouse College, Atlanta

When: THURSDAY NIGHT, 9/15, 5pm, Doudna Lecture Hall. Casual reception to follow at Dr. Park’s house: everyone’s welcome!

Continue reading: Kazuo Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go (Part II, chapters 10-17, pages 115-203)

WEEK FIVE, 9/21 Recessive Action

WEEK SIX, 9/28

Digital Humanities

• Ted Underwood, Introduction, *Why Literary Periods Mattered: Historical Contrast and the Prestige of English Studies*—D2L


• Alan Liu, selection TBA from *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information*

WEEK SEVEN, 10/5

Required: Susan Bazargan Graduate Lecture in English:
“How Well Do We Already Understand Literary History?”

Who: Dr. Ted Underwood (Ph.D. Cornell) Professor of English and Information Sciences
http://www.eiu.edu/humanitiescenter/spotlight.php

When: 9/28, 5pm, Doudna Lecture Hall

Casual reception to follow at Dr. Park’s house: everyone’s welcome!

WEEK EIGHT, 10/12

PAPER ONE DUE

WEEK NINE, 10/19

Post-Colonial Theory (and Zombies)

  Peruse articles here: https://zombieacademy.wordpress.com/zombie-research/

• NOVEL: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Volume I, Chapters I – XI, 3-40)
  Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Ch. 1-11, 7-47)

• FILM: George Romero, *Night of the Living Dead* (on D2L)

WEEK TEN, 10/26

(Non-) Utilitarian Theory and Psychoanalytic Theory
• THEORY: Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (Rivkin 431-37)

• NOVEL: Pride and Prejudice (Volume I, Chapters XII – XXIII, 40-89)
Pride and Prejudice and Zombies (Ch. 12-23, 47-103)
Claudia Johnson, “Jane Austen’s Body” (from Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures)—D2L

• FILM: Les Revenants (The Returned) (on D2L)

---WEEK ELEVEN, 11/2---

Cultural Studies Theory (and Bare Life)

• THEORY: Michel de Certeau, “The Practice of Everyday Life” (Rivkin, 1247-57)
  and “The Unnameable” (D2L)
  Giorgio Agamben, reading TBA
  Samuel Weber, “Bare Life and Life in General”—D2L

---WEEK TWELVE, 11/9---

Animal Studies

• THEORY: Marianne Dekoven, “Guest Column: Why Animals Now?”—D2L
  David Clark, “Animals...In Theory: Nine Inquiries in Human and Nonhuman Life”—D2L

• NOVEL: J. M. Coetzee, The Lives of Animals (Introduction through page 69)

---WEEK THIRTEEN, 11/16---

Workshop on final paper drafts

---THANKSGIVING WEEK: 11/21-11/25 ENJOY!-----

---WEEK FOURTEEN, 11/30---

Conferences with Dr. Park in 3030 Coleman

---WEEK FIFTEEN, 12/7---

PRESENTATIONS AT THE ENGLISH 5000 SYMPOSIUM

---FINALS WEEK: Paper Two Due---
A selection of “zombie” thesis statements in recent writing:

1) Over time, *Night of the Living Dead* established a paradigm for panic and informed a sizable corpus of fright flicks in which communicability plays a pivotal role. As it was ripped off, remade, referenced, and sequelized, the film’s logline incubated to emerge as archetypal an American narrative as the frontier myth. Structurally, *Night of the Living Dead* differs little from the standard Western.¹

2) What Romero’s zombie movies show us, then, is not that zombies are aliens that need to be defeated so that human life can continue but that zombies represent the alien within us […] It is as a kind of indestructible life-force that the zombies insist which, in the words of British philosopher Stephen Mulhall, become ‘a nightmare embodiment of the natural realm understood as utterly subordinate to, utterly exhausted by, the twinned Darwinian drives to survive and reproduce.’²

3) The fast and the accelerated infected are pure products and emblems of a particularly virulent and frantic consumerism signified crucially by their near constant association with fast and industrial food. The question of their speed and singular focus here is entirely to the political point. If, to the chagrin of food-apocalypse writers, “slow” food has increasingly become “fast,” then the slow zombie has also been accelerated and intensified as the embodiment of a consumer signified by blindly focused, violent, and apocalyptic eating habits. On the one hand, the “infected” or “fast” zombies might be seen as locavores surviving on the landscape around them, but they have, unfortunately and paradoxically, turned eating local into the quintessential act of fast-food consumption. Eating without regard to consequence or cultural tradition is all that zombies do.³

4) This essay examines the shift in fictional representations of plague and viral infection in relation to technological, medial, and economic developments. Ben Jonson’s play *The Alchemist* and Daniel Defoe’s novel *A Journal of the Plague Year* revolve around historical visitations of plague in London. This study takes London as its constant variable; the city governs our choice of texts. They negotiate anxieties of the early modern era as mercantilism gives way to the process of accumulation tied to the developing free market as theorized by classical political economy. Two recent motion pictures, set during fictional London outbreaks, display a similar preoccupation with transforming economic spaces. In these texts, however, the relatively young figure of the viral zombie stands in place of and performs a function similar to the more venerable plague. *Shaun of the Dead* and *28 Days Later* both serve as vehicles for expression of the ever-accelerating viral nature of global capitalism. By adopting a transhistorical approach, we demonstrate the relationship between media and plague that emerges, as the fact of infection generates not only a surrounding rhetoric of plague but also a veritable plague of rhetorics. In keeping with recent plague scholarship, this approach emphasizes the close kinship between plague and textuality by treating plague as a text to be read on the individual and political body and the structure of plague writing itself as a mirror of its subject, proliferating with a serial contagiousness.⁴

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² Ola Sigurðsson, “Slavoj Zizek, the Death Drive, and Zombies: A Theological Account,” *Modern Theology* 29.3 (July 2013), 361-380. 373, 374.