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ENG 3809-001: Contemporary British Literature: Terror, Violence, and Dystopia

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English 3809
Coleman 3150
MWF 10-10.50 a.m.
Class Web: www.martinezliteraria.com/eng3809

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English 3809: Contemporary British Literature
Topic: Terror, Violence, and Dystopia

Course Policies:
In this course, we will explore the exciting genesis of new fictions that emerged in Britain after World War II. Specifically, we will look at how British writers start transforming the role of the novel to encompass the economic, political, and social crises of the late 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and beyond (from the rise of political violence in Northern Ireland, to the Cold War fears of nuclear warfare, to global terrorism). We will encounter significant theoretical currents of the contemporary such as postmodernism, feminism, postcolonialism, and existentialism.

Our primary texts will be a variety of intriguing novels, films, and generous considerations of popular music from the punk, post-punk, new wave, and independent music movements in Britain, ranging from the Sex Pistols to Radiohead. Course requirements: two papers, weekly responses to online forum, active discussion, midterm and final examinations.

Required Texts:
Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance” (WebCT)
Martin Amis, Dead Babies
Pat Barker, Union Street/Blow Your House Down
David Mitchell, Black Swan Green
Margaret Thatcher, “To Conservative Rally, Cheltenham (July 1982)” (WebCT)
Shane Meadows, This Is England (film)
Iain Banks, The Wasp Factory
Martin McDonagh, The Lieutenant of Inishmore
Robert McLiam Wilson, Eureka Street
Alan Clarke, Elephant (film)
Zadie Smith, White Teeth
Kazuo Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go (time permitting)
Alfonso Cuaron, Children of Men (film)

Required Music:
Generous selections from the punk, post-punk, new wave music scenes, and beyond (available via class web site: http://www.martinezliteraria.com/eng3809).

Required Attendance, Materials & Editions:
• Check e-mail daily
• Visit class web site frequently
• Use text editions found at Textbook Rental
• Attend Class and Discuss
• Weekly brief responses to music via WebCT forum
• Additional course readings via WebCT

Assignments:
• Short Paper (5-7 pages): 15%
• Long Paper (7-10 pages): 25%
• Attendance & Participation: 20%
• Midterm Exam: 20%
• Final Exam: 20%
Content Warning:
Contemporary, and especially postmodern, texts often use violence and disturbing misappropriations of sex (rape and other forms of sexual abuse) as a way to get readers’ attention and tell stories that represent realities and challenges they see in their worlds. Some of our texts may prove either emotionally painful for or morally offensive to you. If you’re unwilling to read such material, please consider switching to another course. If you consider this literature worth reading but find yourself upset by it, always feel free to talk to me during my office hours, and to bring up your concerns during class if you’re comfortable.

Specific Assignments:
All papers should be double spaced, in 12-point, Times New Roman font, with 1” (top/bottom) and 1.25” (left/right) margins. Make sure to include your name, course name, professor’s name, and date on the front page; a title for your paper; and your name and page numbers in the headers of the paper. Staple your papers.

The Short Paper (5-7 pages): You must choose to write about one of the novels we have covered in the first half of the course. You should identify a specific topic of interest to you in the novel and develop an argument that interprets that aspect of the novel. For example, you may wish to discuss the treatment of a certain character or theme, the use of a recurring image, motif, or word/phrase in a given work, but make sure your topic is focused. Remember, this is a short paper that must present a convincing interpretation of the work you have chosen. Outside research is not required for this paper; it should simply be your analysis of the text(s) at hand.

The Long Paper (7-10 pages): This paper still requires you to close read and analyze a novel or film from class, but your choice of text must be different from the choice of your first paper. Outside research is required for this paper (at least two sources). You must cite your sources in MLA format.

Failure to cite any outside sources or critics will constitute plagiarism.

Note: You may choose to analyze music covered in the course, but it should be in conjunction (ideally) with a text or film from class. See me if you have questions.