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ENG 3504-001: Film and Literature

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English 3504 Section 001, Film and Literature
Knee-deep in Blood: Meeting Our Basic Needs in Film and Literature

Dr. Robin L. Murray
Office: CH 3351
Office Hours: M 4 – 5 p.m., W 4:30-5, and T/R 1:00-3:00 (and by appointment)

Fall 2010, MW 5-6:50
Phone: 581-6985/345-7983 before 10

Course Description:

This semester’s film and literature course will examine literature and film about the consequences of our consumption of food, energy, water, clothing, and other basic needs in relation to the strategies the writers and filmmakers employ to make their points. Some writers and filmmakers, for example, mask their messages through spectacular narratives and visual events, as in There Will be Blood, Fast Food Nation, Total Recall, and the literary works that inspired them. Please note: We will discuss all works on Monday and screen all films on Wednesdays during “lab time.” The class will be assessed through film responses, a final paper, a group presentation, and a midterm and final exam. (old curriculum Group 6; new curriculum Group 5)

Texts:

Achebe. Things Fall Apart
Gaskell. Mary Barton
Grant. Tank Girl Apocalypse
Hesse. Out of the Dust
Hogan. Mean Spirit.
Kidder. Mountains Beyond Mountains
Sinclair. The Jungle

Course Requirements:

1. **Weekly Responses and Participation**: Responses are about two pages typed and reflect careful reading and synthesis of course materials and/or films. Your responses will serve as a source for discussion in class as a whole or in small groups so are part of your participation grade. Responses should analyze, critique, argue for or against, or evaluate—they should not summarize except to make the writer’s point(s). You must be in class to receive credit for your response or for any in-class work.

2. **Midterm**: This exam will provide an opportunity to internalize material all students read for class and to carefully read the first films in the class.

3. **Group Novel Teaching and Presentation**: Members of four different groups will each read a different text related to our basic needs and be responsible for teaching it to the rest of the class (with my help). Film clips from films that build from the novel(s) should be included in your presentation—as well as information about author/director.

4. **Final Exam**: This exam will not be cumulative. It will provide an opportunity to internalize material read for class as a group and as a class from Midterm forward and carefully to read the last films in the class.
5. **Final Paper:** The final paper should either expand one of your responses—which you focus and then develop using information from the film and/or literature—or revolve around a film you have chosen on your own. For the second option, choose an adaptation of a graphic novel, with my approval, and write a detailed and focused analysis of its form and style. This paper should be approximately 6 pages long.

6. **Film Log:** This Log will offer a place for you to write brief responses to the films we watch for class. These should be informal and approximately 100 words. Respond to them in relation to Film Narrative and Style or our class theme (our basic needs).

**Grades:** Grades will be determined as follows for a total of 100%:

- **Weekly Responses and Participation** 20%
- **Midterm** 20%
- **Group Teaching/Presentation** 20%
- **Final Exam** 20%
- **Final Paper** 10%
- **Film Log** 10%

**Grading of Responses, Presentation, and Paper:**

Response grades will be based on analytical complexity. Each will be worth twenty points. If a response only summarizes a film or novel, the response gets only half credit. Adequate analysis (or argument or critique) will result in 14 points (C level). Good analysis, etc., in 16 points (B level). Great analysis, etc., from 18-20 points, depending on clarity, precision, and sense of voice.

Paper grades will be based on the following areas: Audience awareness, organization, development, sentence structure, word choice, grammar/usage/mechanics. The first three areas will be weighted more heavily than the second three (60% vs. 40%). I will also distribute the English Department’s grade analysis in class.

Presentations will be evaluated according to a rubric I will distribute in class. Groups should also turn in any class handouts or visuals with novel responses.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Plagiarism:** The English Department states, "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 original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

**Electronic Writing Portfolio:** This class is a writing intensive class, so you may submit your paper as a writing portfolio sample, following the instructions on the CASL Website. Submissions must be made during the course of the class to receive my approval. Please note that the Writing Center is available for help with all writing assignments, as well. Take advantage of this free service.
Fall 2010 Tentative Course Calendar (Subject to Change)
English 3504: Film and Literature

August

All We Need is the Air That We Breathe: The Aesthetics of Oxygen

23 Introduction to the Course: Film Narrative and Style. How to read a film. Film Adaptations. Read “We Can Remember it for you Wholesale” for 8/25 and sections of Film Art chapters on Narrative and Style for 8/30 and write a response applying what you learn to a film of your choice. Film clips from The Wizard of Oz.

25 Total Recall

30 Response Due. Film Art Discussion—What is film art and style? How was it applied in Total Recall and The Wizard of Oz? Clips from Connected.

September

1 Blue Vinyl: The World's First Toxicity Comedy. Read The Jungle for 9/13 and write a response.

We Are What We Eat?: Eco-Food Films, Inc.

6 No Class: Labor Day.

8 Our Daily Bread. Read The Jungle and write a response

13 Response Due. Discuss The Jungle and introduce Things Fall Apart. Read Things Fall Apart for 9/20 and write a response.

15 Tortilla Soup. Read Things Fall Apart for 9/20 and write a response.

20 Response Due. Discuss Things Fall Apart

22 Moolade. Read Tank Girl for 9/27 and write a response.

The Weight of Water: Transforming a Need Into a Commodity

27 Response Due. Discuss Tank Girl and reading comics/graphic novels. Review adaptation. Read Out of the Dust for 10/4 and write a response.

29 Tank Girl. Read Out of the Dust for 10/4 and write a response.

October

4 Response Due. Discuss Out of the Dust as poetry and young adult literature. Compare its context with that of Tank Girl. Clips from Flow. Review for Midterm on 10/11.

6 The Grapes of Wrath. Review for Midterm on 10/11.
Ready to Wear?: From Fashion to Environmental Injustice

11  **Midterm.** Prepare for Group Presentations on 10/18. **Film Log (first half) due.**

13  *China Blue.* Prepare for Group Presentations on 10/18

18  **Group I and II Presentations.** Evaluate and write a response for 10/25.

20  *Real Women Have Curves.* Prepare for Group Presentations on 10/25.

Give Me Shelter: The Ecology of Homes and Homelessness

25  **Response Due. Group III and Group IV Presentations.** Evaluate. Read *Mountains Beyond Mountains* for 11/1 and write a response.

27  *Vagabond.* Read *Mountains Beyond Mountains* for 11/1 and write a response.

November

1  **Response Due.** Discuss *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, shelter, and health care.

3  *Dark Days.* Read Part I of *Mean Spirit* for 11/8 and write a response.

The Heat is On: Coal, Oil, and Nuclear Power in Film and Literature

8  **Response Due.** Discuss Part I of *Mean Spirit*. Read conclusion of *Mean Spirit* for 11/15 and write a response.

10  *Tulsa.* Read *Mean Spirit* conclusion for 11/15 and write a response.

15  **Response Due.** Discuss *Mean Spirit.*

17  *Rise Up! West Virginia.* Read first half of *Mary Barton* for 11/29 and write a response.

22-26  (Thanksgiving Break)

Other Basic Needs?

29  **Response Due.** Discuss *Mary Barton* and its historical and cultural context. Read conclusion of *Mary Barton* for 12/6 and write a response.

December

1  *She's Gotta Have It.* Read conclusion of *Mary Barton* for 12/6 and write a response.

6  **Response Due.** Discuss *Mary Barton.* Discuss Final Exam and Final Paper (due on 12/8).

8  *Sacrifice: The Story of Child Prostitutes from Burma. Final Paper Due!*

13-16  **Final Exam.** Turn in completed Film Log at the beginning of the Midterm.