Spring 1-15-2005

ENG 4300-4390-003-097: Literature and National Identity

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Course Description and Objectives: A nation is to some extent "an imagined political community" – a shared cultural artifact, so to speak, produced and reinforced by what people say about themselves, as well as by historical, political, and geographical conditions. What this course does is trace the development of English national identity from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, as "imagined" in works by Tennyson, Dickens, Stoker, Woolf, Kureishi, and Barnes. How do these writers depict themselves as English, how do they depict their relationship to their land, to their state? How do these depictions change in response to industrial developments in the nineteenth century, to the advent of democracy and of the British empire, to the pressures of immigration, emigration, and modernist entertainments, such as the growth of package tours and theme parks? How does the historical record reinforce these depictions and/or contradict them? These are some of the questions we will ask of the assigned reading, as we consider England as "imagined" in them.

The assigned reading is restricted to English literature, but how the English "imagine" their nation is especially relevant to our identity as Americans, first, because our country is a direct product of the English empire, and, second, because America is now heir to the imperial power that grew out of English national identity, as it grew in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and waned in the twentieth. So as we read and discuss these English writers, we will inevitably think about what it is to be an American, and about how America is depicted by our writers and about what role America should play in the world today.

Since this is a senior seminar, a semester long research project that takes up some aspect of the "imagined" nation is required, the fruits of which you will be required to present to a "live" audience at the English Studies Conference scheduled for April 9. I will distribute details of this project, with deadlines for submissions early in the semester.

Course Requirements:

preparation of assigned readings/regular participation in class discussions – 10%
mid-term exam – 20%
conference presentation – 20%
research paper – 30%
final exam – 20%

You must complete all of the requirements to pass the course.
Texts:
   Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*
   Dickens, *Great Expectations*
   Stoker, *Dracula*
   Woolf, *Between the Acts*
   Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*
   Barnes, *England, England*

Tentative Schedule:

Jan. 11: introduction to the course


Jan. 18: “Gareth and Lynette”

Jan. 20: “Lancelot and Elaine”


Jan. 27: “Guinevere”

Feb. 1: *Idylls* review

Feb. 3: *Great Expectations* 1-15 (parts 1-10)

Feb. 8: *GE* 16-31 (parts 11-19)

Feb. 10: *GE* 32-48 (parts 20-29)

Feb. 15: *GE* 49-59 (parts 30-36)

Feb. 17: *GE* review

Feb. 22: *Dracula* 1-8

Feb. 24: *Dracula* 9-15

Mar. 1: *Dracula* 16-21

Mar. 3: *Dracula* 22-27

Mar. 8: *Dracula* review

Mar. 10: **mid-term exam**
Mar. 15, 17: spring break

Mar. 22: *The Buddha of Suburbia* 1-5

Mar. 24: *Buddha* 6-10

Mar. 29: *Buddha* 11-15; **conference paper due**

Mar. 31: *Buddha* 16-18

Apr. 5: *Between the Acts* 1-56

April 7: *Between* 56-112

[April 9: **English Studies Conference**]

April 12: *Between* 112-154

April 14: *Between* 154-219

April 19: *England, England* 1-79

April 21: *E,E* 79-150

April 26: *E,E* 150-218

April 28: *E,E* 218-275

The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, May 4, 2:45 – 4:45 pm.

“If I understand you rightly, you have formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to – Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Moorland, what ideas have you been admitting?”

Henry Tilney upbraids Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen (1803, 1818)