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ENG 5006-001: Contemporary British Fiction

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ENGLISH 5006: CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FICTION

Spring 1999
Wednesday, 1900-2130
Coleman Hall 305

Dr. Zahlan
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581-6977; cfarz@eiu.edu

AIMS OF THE COURSE
This seminar will enable participants to increase their knowledge and understanding of significant themes and trends in British fiction of the last quarter of the twentieth century. We will read, analyze, and discuss a cross-section of fictional texts published in England since 1975. As we read, we will relate novels and stories to contemporary British culture and society, and we will also make intertextual links to the literature of the past. We will consider fictional texts in social, political, and historical contexts. Additionally, we will examine them in terms of the character and development of narrative and of the techniques and philosophical implications associated with post-modernism.

Course Procedures: The class will be conducted as a seminar. Participants are expected to work independently and creatively and to contribute to discussions as well as to be prepared for assigned reports and presentations.

OFFICE HOURS
Tuesdays, 1720-1750; Wednesdays, 1645-1715; Thursdays, 1400-1530 & 1720-1750; By Appointment

TEXTS
Amis, London Fields; Barnes, Flaubert's Parrot; Carter, The Bloody Chamber; Durrell, The Avignon Quintet; Lessing, The Memoirs of a Survivor; McEwan, The Child in Time; Naipaul, Guerrillas; Rushdie, Midnight's Children; Swift, Waterlands; Winterson, Sexing the Cherry.

Recommended Text: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers...

SYLLABUS
JANUARY 13: Introduction to course & assignments
Oral Report: ____________________________

FEBRUARY 3: Carter, The Bloody Chamber (1979)
Oral Report: ____________________________

FEBRUARY 10: V.S. Naipaul, Guerrillas (1975)
Oral Report: ____________________________
PAPER II DUE BY 4:00 P.M. (1600) ON APRIL 29.

FINAL EXAM (CUMULATIVE): _________________________
(Bring test booklets to your final exam.)

GRADE CALCULATION: Paper I--10%; Prospectus--5%; Paper II--25%; Final Exam--25% 
Class Preparation & Participation--35% (including Oral Reports I and II)

ASSIGNMENTS

CLASS JOURNAL: Keep a separate notebook or journal in which you write your initial and considered responses to reading assignments and class discussion and in which you keep notes of your "outside" reading in history, theory, and criticism. From time to time, you will be asked to write responses in class, and you should add them into your journal when they are returned. Journals are very useful in reviewing for exams and in planning your formal papers and oral presentations. I will not collect or grade journals.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

REPORT I: During the semester, each seminar member will present an oral report (approximately 20 minutes) on one of the assigned texts. In preparing your report, select some specific aspect of theme or narrative technique to examine within the chosen work. Keep in mind also our collective goal of relating the recent works we read to the traditions of English fiction as well as to social and cultural conditions in contemporary Britain. As you prepare your oral report, you may find it enlightening to consult background works and/or studies of narrative theory. Be sure to use all secondary sources judiciously and critically. Present the views and insights of critics accurately, and identify your sources. Be sure also to bring your own critical intelligence to bear on the work; give us the benefit of your own insights.

Please provide members of the seminar with an outline and a bibliography.

REPORT II (PAPER II PRESENTATIONS): During the last two and one-half class sessions, each student will present the material of his/her Paper II project. Presenters should convey findings and insights as clearly and as interestingly as possible and should be prepared to answer questions and respond to the comments of the class. (The schedule for Research Presentations will be distributed in class on 7 April.)

Please provide members of the seminar with an abstract of your research paper and a bibliography (two pages total) when you present your report.

PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

PAPER I (4-6 typed double-spaced pages) is an essay on some specific aspect of theme or narrative technique in one of the literary texts assigned for the course; students are permitted, perhaps even encouraged, but not required to discuss the work dealt with in their first oral report.

In your paper, you may use other works by the author you are discussing, historical
Oral Report: _____________________________

Oral Report: _____________________________
Begin Durrell, *The Avignon Quintet* (1975-86)
(Read and prepare to discuss one of the five volumes on reserve at Booth Library.)

MARCH 3: Lawrence Durrell, *The Avignon Quintet* (1975-86)
(Read and prepare to discuss one of the five volumes on reserve at Booth Library.)
Oral Report (*Monsieur* [1975]): _____________________________
Oral Report (*Livia* [1979]): _____________________________
Oral Report (*Constance* [1981]): _____________________________
Oral Report (*Sebastian* [1984]): _____________________________
Oral Report (*Quinx* [1985]): _____________________________
PAPER I DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE OR by THURSDAY, 4 MARCH at 5:00.
Schedule Conferences for next week: Topic Selection for Research Papers

Oral Report: _____________________________

SPRING BREAK

Oral Report: _____________________________
PROSPECTUS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR SEMINAR RESEARCH
PAPER DUE ON THIS DATE

Oral Report: _____________________________

APRIL 7: Conclude *London Fields*.
Oral Report: _____________________________

APRIL 14: Conclude *Sexing the Cherry*
Oral Report: _____________________________
BEGIN RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS AS SCHEDULED

APRIL 21: PRESENTATIONS OF PAPER II (AS SCHEDULED)
APRIL 28: PRESENTATIONS OF PAPER II (due in class or on April 29 by 4:00)
background works, and works of literary theory or criticism. Be sure to quote accurately, indicate all quotes and paraphrases, and document accurately and fully (use the new MLA system). Paper I is due on or before 4 March.

Please discuss your paper topics with me.

PAPER II, due Thursday, 29 April, is a researched critical study of 10 to 15 typed double-spaced papers tracing a specific theme or technique in two works of British fiction,* one of which must have been (and both of which may have been) published in or since 1990. The second work may be a work assigned for this course, but you are also free to choose other works of British fiction that you have read or wish to read. Part of the assignment is to select and obtain suitable texts. You may wish to begin with the "Selected Works of British Fiction" list and/or by consulting reviews in issues of Granta, Times Literary Supplement, London Review of Books, The New Yorker etc. You will undoubtedly check out library and bookstore holdings electronically, and you will probably also undertake expeditions to bookstores: the Lincoln Bookstore in Charleston, Pages for All Ages etc. in Champaign.

The specific focus of the paper and the outside sources (primary and secondary) read in preparing it will be determined by each student in consultation with me. Topics should be identified by 10 March; a formal Prospectus is due by 24 March.

One purpose of the project is to introduce a "new" book and perhaps a new author to the seminar. Try to find a "novel of the nineties" that will be interesting and valuable to all of us, and try to present it so that we will all be anxious to read it.

FOR BOTH PAPERS: Be sure that your papers are built upon a solid "thesis"--an argumentative assertion supported with evidence. Please consult with me as you choose topics and formulate your thesis. Be sure to follow the directions on the Course Policies sheet.

* For our purposes, authors can be considered "British" who hold United Kingdom passports, were born in Britain or/and have lived substantial parts of their lives in the U.K., and write in English. ("Immigrant" writers such as Naipaul and Rushdie would be considered, for our purposes, British, whereas an African writer who attended university in England, for instance, would not. South Africans, Australians, and Canadians are not "British.")

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE, punctuality, preparation, and participation are expected and required. Students are responsible for all material covered in class and all announcements or assignments made in class as well as for all assignments on the syllabus. In addition to fulfilling specified assignments, graduate students are expected to work independently and to do outside reading related to the material of the course. It is essential that all students attend every session of the seminar and participate in the discussion; it is impossible to "make up" a missed seminar session. Assignments are to have been completed by class time on the date for which they appear on the syllabus. The books in which the day's assignments are contained should be brought to class.

Remember that "class participation" counts towards the course grade; a participation/preparation score will be assigned each student for each of the scheduled class meetings other than the first, and absence will result in a "0" for the day's participation as well as on any graded work due or done in
class. There will be no opportunities to make up a missed exam or oral report other than in cases of documented medical emergency; (signing in at Health Service does not constitute documentation of a medical emergency). Unannounced quizzes on assigned material or inc-class writing assignments may be given at any time. There will be no opportunities to "make up" missed quizzes.

The Final Exam should be written on test booklets, available at the Union Book Store. Please write tests in ink and on the appropriate booklets.

ALL PAPERS AND OTHER WRITTEN WORK must be handed in on the date due.
1. Work turned in late without advance clearance will not be accepted.
2. Clearance does not constitute an "excuse." Work turned in late with clearance will be penalized, usually at the rate of 5 points per day of lateness.
3. Any lateness may delay the grading and return of the paper, perhaps until the end of the semester.

BE SURE TO KEEP A COPY OF EVERY PAPER YOU HAND IN. IN THE CASE OF A MISSING PAPER, THE STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPLYING A COPY.

A NOTE ON THE PRESENTATION OF PAPERS: Papers must be typed (double-spaced) or computer-printed heavy or medium-weight white 9 x 11 paper. Leave adequate margins. Each paper must have a separate title sheet which includes the title of the paper, course title, instructor's name, student's name, and date of submission. Repeat the title at the top of the first page of text. Papers must be stapled or clipped.

In the case of computer printed papers, be sure to hand in LETTER-QUALITY COPIES PRINTED BY LASER, INK-JET, OR ON A RIBBON THAT IS IN GOOD CONDITION--NO PALE or DOT-MATRIX COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED. ALSO, MAKE SURE THAT PAGES ARE SEPARATED, NUMBERED, AND CLIPPED TOGETHER IN CORRECT ORDER.

ONLY PAPERS THAT ARE NEAT AND IN CORRECT FORM CAN BE ACCEPTED.

DOCUMENTATION: Use the "new" MLA system to cite both primary and secondary sources used in your papers. The new system is fully explained and illustrated in the latest edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Each student should have access to a copy.

Inform yourself about documentation conventions for electronic media information and materials. All such materials must be documented and citation forms are illustrated in recent handbooks; go to the Writing Center for assistance. Electronic-media materials must be evaluated for quality at least as scrupulously as print materials. Please remember that you must absorb and process all materials: downloading is not research.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All written work (papers, exams, tests, quizzes) must be original and independent. Please make sure that you understand the meaning of plagiarism and the policy of the English Department:

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" (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 assignment of the grade of F for the course.

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."