**English 240: Thinking Big Thoughts with Literature**

Professor Kornbluh

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TR 12:00-1:45pm

Spring 2019

Office Hours by appointment and Fridays 1:00-3:00

**When we study literature we do more than just read it - we pay attention to how creative works *think*, how they produce ideas in ways that differ from everyday reasoning and from scientific exploration. To help English majors define that different, valuable mode of thinking, this course combines a few great works of literature with several fundamental texts in cultural theory. We’ll ask big questions like “why do human beings universally make art and literature?” “what are the implications of this universality for the organization of collective social life?” “how can literary thinking help address collective social catastrophes like inequality, sexuality, and climate change?” Final projects will center around answers to these questions, and may take shape as op-eds, you-tube videos, or other expressions.**

**Course Policies**

This course, like all English courses, requires a serious commitment to reading. Reading is hard work! Set aside time to read the texts as carefully and slowly as possible. Complete assigned reading for the day listed. As you read, make note of interesting, distinctive, or complex passages or ideas for comment during discussion. Try to state for yourself the thesis of each text, and if you can’t do that, try to figure out why. Come to class with your copies of the texts, and ready to discuss your notes.

Participation is crucial for a strong class. Your reading notes will help you participate; in-class activities like informal writing and structured presentations will also help. Participation is the largest single component of your final grade (20%).

Similarly, each student will sign-up to lead discussion for one class period and this facilitation is worth 10%. An intensified version of the normal prep you do for class, facilitation may involve: identifying at least three interesting, weird, beautiful, or hard passages in the reading; connecting that day’s reading to at least one other reading in the course; offering a prompt for in-class writing; offering discussion questions for small groups.

Attendance at all class sessions is required, except in cases of sickness, religious holidays, or personal crises. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed, either by consulting a friend or by visiting the professor during office hours. 4 or more absences may be grounds for failing the course.

Students are strongly encouraged to visit the Professor regularly – stop by office hours or email to make an appointment at another time.

Plagiarism consists of taking words or ideas that are not your own from other papers, articles, books, internet materials, unwritten sources etc., without acknowledgement, even if you put them in your own words. This is a serious offense against all university and professional codes of conduct; plagiarism will be dealt with according to procedures outlined in the UIC student handbook. Consult the handbook for further details on other matters of proper academic conduct. Your essays must be submitted both in hard-copy and electronically to Blackboard, through which they will be scanned for plagiarism using SafeAssign.

If there is something you need to help you succeed in this course, please ask.

Students with disabilities who require accommodations can register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Please contact ODS at 312-413-2183 (voice) or 312-413-0123 (TTY).

**Requirements**

* active participation, including: careful completion of assigned reading, thoughtful contribution to discussion (20%)
* in-class writing (10%) informal writing, some listed below/some spontaneous
* discussion facilitation (10%)
* reflection paper one (15%)
* reflection paper two (15%)
* close reading essay (15%)
* final project (15%) must incorporate criticism or theory from at least three scholarly sources, including at least one not on our syllabus. Visit the library and make use of the very helpful English research librarian, Glenda Insua (ginsua1@uic.edu).

Please note that pop quizzes may be proctored at any time.

**Required Texts**

**(available for purchase at the UIC bookstore and elsewhere):**

Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*

Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*

**Please note that the majority of the readings are PDFS available via dropbox.**

**Reading Schedule**

**CREATIVE ONTOLOGIES**

**Jan 15** introductions; Audre Lorde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury”; Amy Lowell “September 1918”

in-class writing: Chauvet cave paintings, Gigantia stoneworks

**Jan 17** Alva Noe, *Strange Tools* excerpt;Oscar Wilde, “The Soul of Man Under Socialism”;

Karl Marx “Estranged Labor”

**Jan 22** Ben Lerner *The Hatred of Poetry* excerpt; Terry Eagleton “What is Literature?”; J Hillis

Miller *On Literature* (Chapters 1 and 2)

**Jan 24** Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” excerpt; Sarah

Brouillette, “Creative Labor”

**Jan 29** Roland Barthes, “Myth Today”; Raymond Williams “Mediation” (pdf in 2 parts); in-class

writing: modern myth

**Jan 31** Caroline Levine, *Forms* introduction; **Reflection Paper One Due**

**GENDER, PSYCHE, EMPIRE**

**Feb 5** Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* Chapters 1-10

**Feb 7** Chapters 11-16 in class writing: close reading

**Feb 12** Chapters 17-25

**Feb 14** Chapters 25-30; Mallory Ortberg “Texts from Jane Eyre”

**Feb 19** Concluding *Jane Eyre*;Virginia Woolf, “A Room of One’s Own” excerpt

**Feb 21** Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* excerpt; Michel Foucault *Madness and*

*Civilization* excerpt

**Feb 26** Sigmund Freud *Civilization and Its Discontents* excerpt; Mark Fisher *Capitalist Realism*

excerpt

**Feb 28 no class; Close Reading Essay due**

**Mar 5** Nancy Fraser and Tithi Bhattacharya “Notes to a Feminist Manifesto”

**WORLD-MAKING DESIRE**

**Mar 7** Alenka Zupančič, *What is Sex?* excerpt

**Mar 12 no class – Marcia Chatelain lecture 3-11 at 4pm**

**Mar 14** Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle”; James Baldwin, “The Outing”;

**Mar 19** Eve Sedgwick, “Queer and Now”; Judith Butler *Gender Trouble* excerpt; Adrienne Rich “Diving into the Wreck”

**Mar 21** Lee Edelman, *No Future* excerpt; Alondra Nelson “Future Texts”; **Reflection Paper**

**Two due**

**Apr 2** Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

**Apr 4** Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* concluded

**Apr 9** Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence* excerpt, Nathaniel Rich, *Losing Earth*

**Apr 11** Christina Sharpe, “The Weather”; Ray Scranton “Learning to Die in the Anthropocene”;

Craig Santos Perez, “Love Poems in the Time of Climate Change”

**MEDIATING HOPE, PROJECTING COLLECTIVITY**

**Apr 16** Cleanth Brooks, “The Heresy of Paraphrase”; Wimsatt and Beardsley “The Intentional

Fallacy”

**Apr 18** Ezra Pound “In a Station of the Metro”; Gwendolyn Brooks, “We Real Cool”;

William Carlos Williams, “Between Walls”; in-class writing: paraphrase

**Apr 23** Rita Felski, “Enchantment”; Jacques Ranciere, “The Emancipated Spectator”

**Apr 25** Nathan Hensley, “Catastrophe and Knowledge”; Aaron Hanlon “Offenses of the

Humanities”

**Apr 30** Fredric Jameson, “Varieties of the Utopian”; Sean Grattan, *Hope Isn’t Stupid* excerpt;

*Pitch Perfect*

**May 2** Todd McGowan, “After Injustice and Repression”; Jose Munoz “Take Ecstasy With Me”;

*Pitch Perfect* concluded

**Final Projects Due**