**Living American Authors**

“The Great Writers are not all Dead”

English 2329.017 / University of Texas at Arlington / Spring 2014

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5:30-7:50 pm MW Dr. Wayne Gay

GeoScience Hall 104 Office: Preston Hall 210

Instructor Contact:

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(yahoo address is preferred)

This course will examine the literature—including fiction, poetry, nonfiction, cinema, drama, and popular cultural artifacts such as commercials, songs, and television shows—of our own time. In contrast to literature surveys you may have taken in the past, this course will focus entirely on writers who are still alive.

Leave behind all presumptions about what qualifies as “literature” worthy of study in a university classroom. In 2013, we can have little knowledge of which contemporary works will eventually be regarded as “masterpieces,” or even if the concept of “masterpiece” will persist. To that end, the instructor has chosen works with the idea of introducing students to contemporary literature which may be unfamiliar, and which is likely to produce interest, discussion, and possibly even controversy in the classroom. In some instances, a student may be familiar with a work to be discussed, but will hopefully look at that work in new ways—and thus sharpen his or her ability to examine all literature he or she experiences. The student is not expected to like any particular work, but is expected to be able to form an opinion and to observe aspects beyond the obvious in any given work.

To that end, we will examine literature ranging from highly esoteric works of prose and poetry to items aimed at a huge mass audience, including television episodes and popular song lyrics. During the semester, we will attempt to define the issues that writers in English-speaking North America deal with in our time, and how writers approach those issues.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Sondheim, Stephen, and James Lapine. *Into the Woods* (script). New York: Theater Communications Group, 1987. ISBN 0-930452-93-3

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus* (2 vols.) New York: Pantheon, 1991.

ISBN 0-394-54155-3 (Vol. I)

0-394-55655-0 (Vol. II)

Sapphire. *Push*. New York: Knopf, 1996. ISBN 978-0-679-76675-9

Jimenez, Francisco. *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child.* New York:

Houghton Mifflin, 1997. ISBN 978-0-8263-1797-1

Ellison, Harlan. *The City on the Edge of Forever : The Original Teleplay that became the Classic* Star Trek *Episode***.** Clarkson, Ga.: White Wolf, 1996.

ISBN: 1565049640

Electronic versions of the above texts are acceptable.

In addition, you will be required to download a substantial amount of material from Blackboard. At some point early in the semester, you will be expected to demonstrate that you own the required texts or have ready electronic access to all of the required texts.

Students are urged to obtain a loose-leaf binder for storage of down-loaded texts and notes.

COURSEWORK:

During the course of the semester, students are expected to:

1. Submit eight short 300-word responses to reading assignments.
2. Participate frequently in classroom discussion
3. Complete two in-class open-book written exams, each consisting of a total of 750 words.

ATTENDANCE:

Because this is a discussion course, regular attendance is expected. Attendance and participation will be factored into your final grade (see below).

Illness is not an excused absence; the leeway of four absences provides a generous allowance for times when you are contagious or can’t walk across the room because of a bad case of flu. Don’t expend your four absences foolishly early in the semester; save them for the possibility that you might need them late in the semester.

Students are advised to refrain from browsing or engaging in electronic communications by text or otherwise during class time; the instructor reserves the right to adjust grades or attendance record as a consequence of internet or telephone activity during class. Students are advised not to initiate or accept internet or telephone communications during class time; acquaintances, including family members or friends, should be aware that you will not be available for telephone or internet communication during class time. Students are advised not to casually leave and re-enter the classroom; this is distracting to the instructor and other students, and robs your colleagues of the opportunity they have paid for. The instructor reserves the right to deny readmission to the classroom and to lower the final grade on the basis of this sort of disrespect for the instructor and other students.

GRADING:

To earn an A in this course, students must submit all eight responses ON TIME, submit a satisfactory midterm exam and satisfactory final exam, and have no more than four absences. All responses and exams are graded pass-fail.

The final grade will be lowered on the basis of missed responses as follows: Students who turn in only 6 or 7 responses will receive a final grade of B or lower; students who submit only 5 responses will receive a grade of C or lower; students who submit only 4 responses will receive a grade of D or lower, and students who submit 3 or fewer responses will receive a grade of F.

Your final grade will fall by one full letter for every four absences. For instance, a student who submits six of the eight required responses and who has five absences will receive a grade of C.

A WORD ABOUT THE RESPONSES:

Due dates for each response are included in the course schedule below. Each response will be at least 300 words long, and will be submitted on Blackboard before 11:59 p.m. on the Saturday of the week in which it is due. The responses may relate to any portion of the reading assignment for the upcoming week. Good possibilities for response include:

1. Why I hate a particular assignment
2. Why I love a particular assignment
3. A brief evaluation of the assignment based on a standard technique of literary criticism, such as formalism, feminist theory, gender theory, queer theory, new historicism, “new” criticism, historical context, or any other of the techniques we will discuss early on in the course
4. A brief review in the style of a newspaper or magazine critique evaluating the value and quality of a specific segment of the assignment

For the final response (No. 8), each student will submit the name and other relevant information as well as a 300-word response relating to a specific work *by a living author* of the student’s own choosing. Possibilities include but are not limited to an advertisement on the internet, a movie, a play, song, a short story, a novel, or a billboard. For this assignment, international students or students whose parents or grandparents were born outside of the U.S. are encouraged to present an item from their country of origin or recent ancestry. Students born in the western hemisphere, including the U.S., Canada, and Latin America, may consider the entire western hemisphere, including all of North and South America, as possible sources. Students who have a particular interest in a country outside of the western hemisphere may use that country as a source for material for this assignment.

Also, for response no. 8, you may create a new original work of literature, OR a work of visual art or music. Should you wish to submit creative work for response no. 8, you must consult me by April 1 and have the project you have in mind approved.

A WORD ABOUT PLAGIARISM AND RELATED OFFENSES

Plagiarism is the willful presentation of the work of others as your own. Allowing a friend to write your responses for you is plagiarism. Taking material from the internet or another source verbatim is plagiarism.

Blackboard detects plagiarism!

To avoid plagiarism, place all verbatim material in quotation marks and credit the source.

The university penalty for plagiarism will be enforced.

AND . . . ABOUT WIKIPEDIA: Because all of the writers we deal with are living, I will accept Wikipedia as a source for basic information, though be aware that Wikipedia is not, and should not be regarded as a reliable source for factual information in most classes.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

WEEK I (Jan. 13 & 15)

Introduction to course and syllabus

WEEK II (Jan 22)

Before class: download and read two files from Blackboard:

1. Introductory Readings (“The Story of an Hour,” “Critical Approaches to Literature,” and “Long Time Gone”)

2. “Story by Updike and Sample Responses”

Monday: MLK Holiday (no class)

Wednesday: Discussion of reading assignments

WEEK III (Jan 27 & 29)

Before class: download and read short stories group I

Submit response no. 1 on Blackboard before 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, January 25.

WEEK IV (Feb 3 & 5)

Before class: download and read short stories group II

Submit response no. 2 by 11:59 pm on Feb 1

WEEK V (Feb 10 & 12)

No response due

In class: Watch *Gummo*

WEEK VI (Feb 17 & 19)

Before class: read *Push*

Submit response no. 3, responding to *Push*, by 11:59 pm on Feb 15

In class: Discuss *Push*

WEEK VII (Feb 24 & 26)

No response due

In class: watch *Into the Woods*

WEEK VIII (Mar 3 & 5)

Before class: read *The Circuit*

Submit response no. 4, responding to *The Circuit*, by 11:59 pm on Mar 1

In class: Discuss *The Circuit*

\* \* \* \* SPRING BREAK \* \* \* \*

WEEK IX (Mar 17 & 19)

Before class: read *Caleb’s Crossing*

Submit response no. 5, responding to *Caleb’s Crossing*, by 11:59 pm Mar 15

In class: discuss *Caleb’s Crossing*

WEEK X (Mar 24 & 26)

Monday: campus visit by Geraldine Brooks, author of *Caleb’s Crossing*,

Class procedure TBA

Wednesday: Midterm exam; bring blue book, green book, or laptop to class

WEEK XI (Mar 31 & Apr 2)

Before class: read *Maus* (both volumes)

Submit response no. 6, responding to *Maus*, by 11:59 pm Mar 29

In class: Discuss *Maus*

WEEK XII (April 7 & 9)

No response due

In class: Discuss, read script of “The City on the Edge of Forever ,” and watch

television episode

WEEK XIII (April 14 & 16)

Before class: download Poetry Assignments from Blackboard and read

Submit response no. 7, responding to poetry readings

In class: discuss poetry selections

WEEK XIV (April 21 & 23)

No response due

Monday: continue discussing poetry readings

Wednesday: Written portion of final exam; bring a laptop, a blue book, or a green book to class

WEEK XV (April 28 & 30)

Before class: Submit response no. 8 (cultural artifacts)

In class: Discuss and view cultural artifacts

EXAM WEEK

Final exam period: Monday, May 5, 5-8 pm at the regular classroom

Continued discussion of cultural artifacts

**Official UTA Policies Drop Policy**: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. According to the UT System Regents’ Rule 50101, §2.2, "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

**Student Support Services Available**: The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources for more information.

**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMailis available at http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/. There is no additional charge to students.