**ENGL 2329: American Literature**

**PostModern American fiction**

**Instructor:** Michael Brittain

**Day/Time** T-TR 9:30 - 10:50am, PKH 206

**Email: brittain@uta.edu**

**Office:** 517 Carlisle Hall (CH)

**Office Hours:** 11am-noon M-TR, or by appointment

**Required Texts:**

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Don DeLillo, *Libra*

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

Additional readings provided as PDF files on Blackboard

Access to Netflix or streaming movie capability

**Course Description:**

In this course we will read a wide range of American fiction written during the last fifty years, supplemented by theoretical readings that explore related issues. A major issue we will try to wrap our minds around is the term "postmodern," that conceptual sponge which can refer to such diverse phenomena as: "high" vs. "low" forms of expression in art, literature, architecture, music, and (in the "popular" or "low" category) film, TV, comics, advertising; an historical period of cultural (literary, artistic, etc.) production. Postmodern works may also draw upon a particular formal stylistic repertoire such as self-reflexivity, "new"-ness, and/or being consciously experimental or difficult. Whether we argue that the postmodern era was ushered in with the assassination of JFK in 1963, the opening of Disney World in 1971, or some other entirely arbitrary event, it is clear that Americans of the last several decades have witnessed a fundamental shift in our relationship to technology, mass media, and consumer culture. In this course we will consider texts, films, artwork, music, and other cultural artifacts that revel in, critique, or even resist these elements of postmodernism. Though we will try to get a handle on this admittedly slippery term, we will not limit ourselves to the "postmodern." We will also consider how fiction interacts -- or fails to interact -- with history, race, ethnicity, gender, class, politics, and the conditions of a work's production.

**Course Objectives:**

This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirements in Language, Philosophy, and Culture. The required objectives of these courses are the development of students’ critical thinking, communication skills, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. Many elements of this course foster development of these objectives, which are explicitly addressed in the “Signature Assignment” (see below). The Departmental guidelines for sophomore literature can be found by typing “sophomore literature” in the “Search UT Arlington” box on the University website: <http://www.uta.edu/uta/>.

**Course Goals:**

This course begins with the assumption that literature both reflects and shapes the culture from which it derives. Thus a study of literature—in this case, assorted works from Postmodern American writers—is also a study of a culture, that set of attitudes, values, and institutions that defines a people. We learn ultimately not just about these works of literature and the literary traditions they represent but also and primarily about our country and ourselves. We will not just passively read the stories and plays this semester. Rather, through close examination of character development (dialogue, character point of view, narrative techniques), plot (rising and falling action, the epiphany) and theme, you will gain a literary vocabulary with which you will be able to write about, and discuss, literature. Hopefully, in the end, we will all have a better understanding of the impact amazing literature can have in aiding us with our struggles to form our own identities.

I’ve tried to select a range of works: our list encompasses gender, ethnic, and geographical diversity. Inevitably some selections will be more to your liking than others, but I hope you will at least find all of them interesting.

**Assignments:**

Readings: Complete the entire reading selection by the discussion date. Since several of the novels we’ll be studying are fairly long, I advise you to read ahead. I also suggest that you take text notes to help you keep track of plot, characters, image patterns, and the like. This not only helps in exam preparation; it makes you an active rather than a passive reader.

Analytical Essays: You will write two analytical essays over issues related to the course readings. Essay prompts will be given in class for each analysis paper. Critical analysis is more than an opinion (I liked/didn’t like a reading or agreed/disagreed with a point). To be “critical” requires identifying the criteria that informs your judgment (explaining *why* you had that response). These essays give you a space to explore your reactions to the reading, discuss an element/theme you find intriguing, or ask questions about the text and/or its historical context. Use close textual analysis to illuminate your discussion. This assignment will be graded on the originality of your thought and the depth of analysis used to support your position.

Quizzes: You will take seven quizzes over the course of the semester. The quizzes will cover your readings and class lectures. The two lowest grades will be dropped. You must buy a Blue book for these quizzes.

Novel Responses: So that you do not let the reading material simply pass in one eye and out the other, you will write ten (10) short responses covering the three novels over the course of the semester. Each response should be one full page in length (typed, double-spaced, following all [criteria for papers](http://www.uta.edu/english/tidwell/Amlit--Summer2005/american%20lit--Criteriaforpapers.htm)), and should be your response to some element of the reading for the day. These responses give you a space to explore your reaction(s) to the reading, discuss an element/theme you find intriguing, or ask questions about the text and/or its historical context. These will help you prepare for class discussions and generate ideas for your essays. Be ready to discuss your responses and ideas during class. I want you to share yourknowledge and questions with the class.

It is your responsibility to keep track of how many responses you have turned in. You will need to write a response for each of the "novel reading days." and will ***not*** be allowed to let this slide and then turn in a “wad” of responses at the end of the semester. Furthermore, you must be in class to turn in a response, as I ***will not*** accept late or emailed responses. Their purpose is not simply to get you thinking about the readings but also to provide a starting point for class discussion. Thus, if you do not have your response written when you come to class, it is much less useful.

These responses will be graded simply. Your grade will not be based on grammar, mechanics, spelling, etc. (unless grammatical or other problems interfere with my understanding of your ideas), nor will it be based on whether or not I agree with your ideas about or interpretation of the text/film/etc. **Your grade will be solely based on whether or not you respond thoughtfully and engage with the text, raising intelligent questions (not limited to plot), making interesting connections, and generally responding in productive ways.**

Exams: There will be two exams during the semester. The first (the midterm) will cover only the first half of the course and the other is a final exam, which may include questions about the second half of the course and will certainly include some more comprehensive questions addressing issues of the class as a whole and asking you to make connections across the different sections of the class. For these exams you will be responsible for the texts, class discussions, any lectures I give, and information from student presentations.

**Grading:**

The course grade will be determined as follows:

Novel Responses 10%

Quizzes 10%

Essay #1 (Signature Essay) 20%

Essay #2 (Research Project) 20%

Midterm 20%

Final exam 20%

**Please Note**: I will also take into account ***the quality of your preparation*** for class and ***your contribution to class discussions***. **All papers and exams** must be completed to receive credit for the course.

In accordance with the UTA undergraduate catalogue, final grades are as follows:

90-100%: A

80-89%: B

70-79%: C

60-69%: D

Below 60%: F

***Both essay projects must be completed to pass the course*.** If you fail to complete an essay project, you will fail the course, regardless of your average. **Keep all papers** until you receive your final grade from the university. You cannot challenge a grade without evidence. Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels.

**Paper Reuse Policy**

You are not allowed, under any circumstances, to reuse papers from prior classes in this course or any other course that you have taken at any institution. Reusing papers does not demonstrate any advance in knowledge or skill, and so would not be helpful for you either in terms of your learning this semester, or for me in terms of assessing this learning. If you feel your situation constitutes a clear or significant exception to this rule, you must discuss this with me prior to the due date of the first draft.

**Turning in Assignments to Blackboard**

All major assignments in this course will be submitted to Blackboard. I will not accept any assignments via e-mail. All assignments submitted to Blackboard must be saved as a .doc or .docx file to ensure that I am able to open them on my computer. It is your responsibility to ensure that all of your work is saved in this way and submitted in the correct format. If you submit work in the wrong format, then you will receive a zero for the assignment.

**Attendance**

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students’ academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I have decided that attendance at class meetings is not required but ***strongly encouraged***.

**Tardiness**

YOU (and I, your instructor) signed up for a 9:30am class. You are college students, and I should not have to remind you to show up to class on time. Quizzes are given at beginning of class, so be on time. When students arrive late, it disrupts what we are doing and takes away from our class time. Therefore, excessive tardiness will not be tolerated. Every two tardies (that is, coming in after we’ve begun work) will count as one absence.

**Late Assignments**

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date specified. Summary responses **will not** be accepted late. Assignments turned in after the class has begun will receive a ten-percent deduction unless the instructor has agreed to late submission *in advance of the due date*. For each calendar day following, the work will receive an additional ten percent deduction. Work is not accepted after three late days. If you must be absent, your work is still due on the assigned date.

**Expectations for Out-of-Class Study**

A general rule of thumb is this: for every credit hour earned, a student should spend 3 hours per week working outside of class. Hence, a 3-credit course might have a minimum expectation of 9 hours of reading, study, etc.

**Communication**

I have provided my UTA email address so that you can contact me whenever you have questions. If I need to contact you, I will use Blackboard or MyMav to email you. This means that you have a responsibility to know what your UTA email address is and to check that address regularly.

**Conferences and Questions**

I have four regularly scheduled office hours each week. These times are reserved for students to drop by or to make an appointment to discuss course assignments, grades, or other class-related concerns. I will be happy to make other appointment times for you if your class schedule conflicts with regular conference times or if I am not available on certain days. If you receive a grade on an assignment about which you have questions, please wait twenty-four hours before discussing it with me. This gives you time to process the assignment comments and to think about how your course work meets the requirements set forth for each assignment.

**Classroom behavior**

Class sessions are short and require your full attention. All cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices should be turned off and put away when entering the classroom; all earpieces should be removed. Store materials from other classes, reading not related to this class, bulky bags, and other distractions so that you can concentrate on the readings and discussions each day. Bring book(s) and e-reserve readings (heavily annotated and carefully read) to every class. Students are expected to participate respectfully in class, to listen to other class members, and to comment appropriately. I also expect consideration and courtesy from students. Professors are to be addressed appropriately and communicated with professionally.

According to *Student Conduct and Discipline*, "students are prohibited from engaging in or attempting to engage in conduct, either alone or in concert with others, that is intended to obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with, or that in fact obstructs, disrupts, or interferes with any instructional, educational, research, administrative, or public performance or other activity authorized to be conducted in or on a University facility. Obstruction or disruption includes, but is not limited to, any act that interrupts, modifies, or damages utility service or equipment, communication service or equipment, or computer equipment, software, or networks” (UTA Handbook or Operating Procedures, Ch. 2, Sec. 2-202). Students who do not respect the guidelines listed above or who disrupt other students’ learning may be asked to leave class and/or referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

**Classroom Visitors:**  Only students officially enrolled in this section are allowed to attend class meetings. Students may not bring guests (children, spouses, friends, family) to class unless an academic request has been submitted and approved by the instructor well in advance of the proposed class visit. Children are not allowed in class as visitors at any time.

**Academic Integrity.** All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

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. "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" (Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Series 50101, Section 2.2)

You can get in trouble for plagiarism by failing to correctly indicate places where you are making use of the work of another or colluding with another to prepare assignments. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the conventions of citation by which you indicate which ideas are not your own and how your reader can find those sources. Read your textbook and/or handbook for more information on quoting and citing properly to avoid plagiarism. If you still do not understand, ask your instructor. All students caught plagiarizing or cheating will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

**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](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

T**he Writing Center**

The Writing Center, Room 411 in the Central Library, offers tutoring for any writing you are assigned while a student at UT-Arlington. You may schedule appointments online by following directions available at www.uta.edu/owl, by calling 817 272-2601, or by visiting the Writing Center. If you come to the Writing Center without an appointment, you will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis as tutors become available. Writing Center tutors are carefully chosen and trained, and they can assist you with any aspect of your writing, from understanding an assignment to revising an early draft to polishing a final draft. However, the Writing Center is not an editing service; tutors will not correct your grammar or rewrite your assignment for you, but they will help you become a better editor of your own writing. I encourage each of you to use the Writing Center. Website: [www.uta.edu/owl](file:///C:\Users\owner\Desktop\www.uta.edu\owl).

**Title IX**

The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos. For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](https://owa.uta.edu/owa/brittain@exchange.uta.edu/redir.aspx?SURL=Z3LYaZDmhRkdzdd5OMR4bm_VKCsvd2-mGlbiWuFOOgLy-_NYka7SCGgAdAB0AHAAOgAvAC8AdwB3AHcALgB1AHQAYQAuAGUAZAB1AC8AdABpAHQAbABlAEkAWAA.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.uta.edu%2ftitleIX).

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112 -- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act - (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. As faculty members, we are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

**Emergency Exit Procedures**

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is at the east and west ends of the building. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

**Necessary Changes**

I have tried to make this syllabus as complete and thorough as I possibly can. Even so, during the course of the semester I may be required to alter, add, or abandon certain policies or assignments. I reserve the right to make such changes as they become necessary.

**Class Schedule (tentative)**

BB = Readings on Blackboard

Getting Started: Breaking the Frame

Aug 27 Syllabus; Introduction to course and each other; Discussion: What counts as literature?

What is postmodern literature?

Sept 1 Read: "Introduction" on BB. Pgs. ix-xix; Discussion: Modernism vs. Postmodernism; How to read and analyze literature—handout; In-class reading/writing.

Sept 3 Read: Vonnegut, excerpt from *Breakfast of Champions*, 84-93 (BB)*.* Heller, excerpt from *Catch 22* (Ch.9 “Major Major Major Major”) 345-62 (BB). **Quiz 1**

Sept 8 Barthelme, “See the Moon,” 25-33 *PAF*; Gass, “In the Heart of the Heart of the Country,”

65-84, (BB) ; Paley, “The Pale Pink Roast,” 94-99 (BB).

Sept 10 Abish, “Ardor/Awe/Audacity,” 99-110 (BB) ; Reed, excerpt from *Yellow Back Radio*

*Broke-Down*, 55-65 (BB) **. Intro Essay 1: Signature Assignment; Quiz 2**

Sept 15 Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, Chs. 1-3. **Response Due**

Sept 17 Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, Chs. 4-5. **Response Due**

Sept 22 Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, Ch. 6. **Response Due and Quiz 3**

Revisiting History/Facts Meet Fiction

Sept 24 Spiegelman**,** excerpt from *Maus*, 294-300 (BB); Philip Roth, excerpt from *The Ghost Writer* 306-21 (BB).

Sept 29 Morrison, excerpt from *Beloved*, 301-306(BB); Alexie, “Captivity,” 341-345(BB).

Oct 1 Doctorow, "The Leather Man,” 331-338 (BB). Wallace, “Lyndon,” 362-391(BB). **Quiz 4 and Essay 1 Signature Assignment Due**

Oct 6 DeLillo, *Libra* 1-116. **Response Due**

Oct 8 DeLillo, *Libra* 117-214. **Response Due**

Oct 13 DeLillo, *Libra* 215-354. **Response Due**

Oct 15 DeLillo, *Libra* 354-end. **Response Due; Review for Midterm**.

Oct 20 **Midterm Exam**

Pop Culture and High Culture...and Technoculture

Oct 22 Mason, “Shiloh,” 271-281(BB); White, excerpt from *Memories of My Father Watching*

*T.V.*, 255-263 (BB). **Intro Essay 2: Research Assignment**

Oct 27 Coupland, “Shopping Is Not Creating,” 568-573 (BB) . Leyner, “The Making of ‘Tooth Imprints on a Corn Dog’” (BB). **Quiz 5**

Oct 29 Russ, excerpt from *The Female Man* 537-47 (BB).

Nov 3 LeGuin ,“The One Who Walks Away from Omelas” on BB; Gibson, “The Gernsback Continuum,” 512-519 (BB). **Quiz 6**

Nov 5 No Class (Watch *Inception*)

Nov 10 *Inception* discussion; Utopia/dystopia definitions

Nov 12 Gibson, "The Gernsback Continuum" 512-519 (BB). **Quiz 7**

The Real after 9/11: Post-post-postmodernism?

Nov 17 Wallace, "The View from Mrs. Thompson's"(BB).

Nov 19 *11Septembre* (film in class)

Nov 24 Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 1-107. **Response Due**

Nov 26 ***Thanksgiving: No Class***

Dec 1 Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 108-216 **Response Due**

Dec 3 Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 217-end **Response Due**

Dec 8 Review for Final; **Essay #2 Research Project Due.**

**FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 17, 8am-10:30am**

**ENGL 2329 Syllabus Contract**

I have read and understood the syllabus, and I agree to abide by the course policies.

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Print Name Date

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Signature Date

**Permission to Use Student Writing**

Student’s Name

Class Number and Section

Instructor Name

I give my permission for my writing to be used as an example of student work and/or as a teaching tool for future classes. I understand that my name will be removed from my work before it is shared with others.

Student’s signature

UTA ID Date