English 206: 21st-Century Literature and Culture

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:10 – 3:30 pm, and by appointment.

Twenty-First-Century Literature and Culture, ENGL 206. Credit 3. An exploration of contemporary literature and culture: such topics as the new multicultural millennium; responses to 9/11 and new global realities; the transformation of popular genres.

Course Description and Goals: English 206 is an exploration of contemporary writing in its cultural contexts. Students will be introduced to the major themes and techniques of a number of important writers from this period. The course will focus on the aesthetic and cultural values that mark the literary treatment of contemporary issues and debates, often examining the transformation of old genres to address new concerns. For instance, the course might investigate the ways in which writers are now revitalizing a number of popular genres, returning science fiction and crime literature, for instance, to the mainstream of contemporary literature and finding new modes of expressing and coping with the violence of the new millennium, including the graphic novel and other literary modes that enhance our understanding of visual culture. These texts compel a deeper examination of the meaning of personal ethics and social responsibility. The course also aims to improve the ability of each student to read, understand, and appreciate literary texts.

Prerequisite: None.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Identify and describe the major themes and techniques of important contemporary writers.

2. Identify and analyze the aesthetic values that mark current literary movements.

3. Apply methods and techniques presented in the course to the analysis of texts in discussions and writing.

Core Curriculum Objectives:

The course addresses the Foundational Component Area in the following four ways.

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas that serve as the foundation for various contemporary literary works.
Communication Skills (CS): The course will enhance communication skills through small and large group discussion and writing about ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading including the graphic novel and other literary modes that enhance our understanding of visual culture.

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will teach personal responsibility by enhancing students' understanding of how to ethically use sources to craft a persuasive argument/user to an essay question and by exploring the ways in which personal responsibility has been redefined in our new millennium.

Social Responsibility (SR): The course will enhance social responsibility by providing students with a deeper understanding of how recent history and broader social forces have shaped current writing.

Core Evaluation:

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include evaluation of written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Class room discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of contemporary literary works.

CS: The evaluation of communication skills will be based on class participation in discussions and on exams and may include evaluation of written assignments. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the richness of contemporary writing through exams in which they will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and through class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text, including the graphic novel and other literary modes under examination.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon the exams and papers which will require students to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of the way differing experiences, cultures and philosophical outlooks shape the development of a literary tradition, including their own.

PR: The evaluation of personal responsibility will be based upon an assignment in which students will be expected to ethically cite another person's work in crafting an answer or essay response to a specific question. The instructor will offer concrete examples of how to paraphrase ideas and integrate in-text citations in order to construct a persuasive argument. In addition, the assignment will focus on the complex treatment of personal responsibility in contemporary writing, such as one of the post 9/11 apocalypses.

Assignments and Grading: Regular attendance and timely completion of all reading assignments are expected. Please refer to http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07 for more information on excused and unexcused absences and make up work.
Your final grade will be based on your performance on three exams (20% each with each exam being worth 100 points) and two papers (20% each with each paper being worth 100 points). The three exams will be made up of questions requiring short answers, but enabling students to indicate a thoughtful personal response to the issues covered in class, including the meaning of personal and social responsibility in our time. The exams will emphasize both the assigned reading and the material covered in class.

The papers will provide you with opportunities to explore contemporary writing in a variety of ways, including traditional analyses of literary texts, research papers, creative work, reports of your own discoveries in the genre, and explorations of the transformation of written texts into film. In these papers, students will also demonstrate their ability to ethically cite a source from another person’s work in order to construct a persuasive argument.

Grading Scale
A=90-100
B=80-89
C=70-79
D=60-69
F=0-59

**Academic Dishonesty**
All policies, including those on academic dishonesty, outlined in TAMU’s Student Rules (http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/) apply: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”

**The Americans with Disabilities Act** (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room B118 Cain Hall, call 845-1637 or visit http://disability.tamu.edu/.

**Required Texts:**
Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*
Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*
Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*
Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*
Max Brooks, *World War Z*
Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*
Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*
Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*
Walter Mosley, *Six Easy Pieces*
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*

**Reading Assignments:** You should have completed reading the assigned texts by the first class of each week.

**Week 1**
- Introduction
  - Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*

**Week 2**
- Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

**Week 3**
- Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
  - The instructor will also discuss concrete examples of how to paraphrase ideas and integrate in-text citations in order to construct a persuasive argument. The student will demonstrate their mastery of this on the papers.

**Week 4**
- Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*

**Week 5**
- Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*
  - First Exam

**Week 6**
- Chabon (continued)
  - First paper Due

**Week 7**
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*

**Spring break**

**Week 8**
- Max Brooks, *World War Z*

**Week 9**
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

**Week 10**
- Smith (continued)
  - Second exam (Modernism)

**Week 11**
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

**Week 12**
- Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*
  - Second paper Due

**Week 13**
- Walter Mosley, *Six Easy Pieces*
Final Exam: The exam will emphasize both the assigned reading and the material covered in class.