

Modern Fiction

English 4304

Monday, 6-8:45

p.m.

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Various classrooms
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Goals

Most people who read a lot think that novels reveal important insights into human nature. That is a good enough reason for studying them. In other words, the ultimate goal of this course is to make you thoughtful about the human condition. Reading these novels will give you a place to begin. This course will also help hone your skills of critical thinking.

After taking this course, you should be able to use these novelists' insights into the human condition to develop your own insights and to help others develop theirs. That does not mean you just adopt these ideas as your own. You can argue, disagree, cite contradicting evidence. It does mean you take these ideas and winnow them through your own experience. Do the characters seem real? Do the incidents, motives, plots seem plausible? You may adopt these ideas, modify them, or reject them, but this is a good place to start developing your own.

To develop your own ideas, you need to think critically, and this course should help you develop critical thinking skills. For example, after taking it you should be able to see patterns in characters and incidents in several novels, synthesize them into a coherent idea and then compare and contrast that idea with what you know. For one thing, that means you will need to see each novel in relation to the others. You should also hone your skills of assessing evidence and developing theses and presenting arguments.

Over the past 40 years or so, people have used theory, applied to both literature and culture, to develop insights. You need to be familiar with some of the ideas, so we will discuss several aspects of theory and apply them to the novels we read.

To do all that, of course, you will need some basic knowledge about the novelists and the novels, such as plots, characters, and incidents. For example, you should be able to match characters and novels and even identify specific incidents.

Texts

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*

Ford, *The Good Soldier*

Forster, *A Passage to India*

Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Kafka, *The Trial*

Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*

Morrison, *Paradise*

Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*

Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Class procedure

On the first night, we will meet in Uvalde, and after that the course will be split web. You will turn in assignments by web, and I will meet with students in their home campuses on a rotating basis. You can see when I'll be on your campus in the schedule below. You do not have to meet when I am on another campus, unless you are absent when I am on your campus. See attendance below. We will discuss all the novels assigned since the last time we met.

Grading

You will be graded on your knowledge of the novels and on your understanding of the novelists' insights, and your ability to develop and support your own. You will accumulate points, up to a possible 1,000, and if you have 900, you will make an A and so on.

Weekly questions. 130 points. I shall post questions on Blackboard, and you will respond on Blackboard. The questions will ask about the hermeneutics or poetics of a novel, and you will need to respond in some detail, citing evidence to support your response. An assignment sheet is available.

Response papers. 300 points. You will write two papers, of two to three pages, responding to questions that I give you or to questions that you ask. Basically, they will ask what a piece of literature says about human nature or about culture. You will submit a rough draft, and I'll tell you what you need to do to get an A, and you will revise the paper

A list of response questions is attached. You may respond to questions on any of the novels we have covered up to the time you write a paper.

Term paper. 150 points. You will select a topic regarding the modern novel, develop a position, and write a six- to eight-page paper to support that position. I will look over your work at various points to assure that you are doing acceptable work. If you wish, you may write all the response papers about the same topic and then put them together with appropriate polishing for the term paper. An assignment sheet is available.

Exams. 250 points. A mid-term exam on March 22, worth 100 points, and a final exam on May 12, worth 150 points. You will need to identify ideas, novels, characters, etc. and write a couple of short essays on topics you select from a list. The object will be to show that you can analyze and synthesize evidence and produce a conclusion and a coherent argument to back it up.

Class participation. 170 You will post two questions on Blackboard and answer two of your peers' questions. Each post will be worth 45 points.

Attendance

The attendance policy for this class is different from the one explained in the catalog. You must attend at least four class meetings. If you have to miss one scheduled for your home campus, you must attend a meeting at another campus. If not, you will be dropped unless you have a documented, legitimate reason for missing both classes. Legitimate means an emergency that prevented you from being in class, such as an illness. Documented means something signed by an authority, such as a doctor, indicating you were indisposed both times.

Also, you must participate in discussions of all the literature, so you must attend throughout the semester. Attend the meetings at your site according to the schedule for that site; only deviate from that schedule if you have a legitimate excused absence in which case you must attend a class meeting at another site as soon as you can. It will never be permissible to attend four meetings in a row and skip the rest of the semester--you would be counted as absent during the months when you should have met at your site.

Late papers

Late assignments without a legitimate, documented reason for being late will not be accepted. Legitimate means you were incapacitated and could not do the work. Documented means a document indicating you were incapacitated.

Plagiarism

Plagiarized work will not be accepted. Plagiarism means turning in someone else's work for credit. We will discuss documentation and citation so you will know how to submit work without plagiarizing.

Students with disabilities

Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. Students who need accessibility services should contact Kathy Biddick at 830-279-3003. The address is 2623 Garner Field Road, Uvalde, Texas 78801.

Distance education

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.