PROFESSOR JENNIFER BURNS BRIGHT
ENG 395: Post-1945 20th Century Literature: Hell in a Handbasket
8:00-9:20 TuTh, 307 DEA

CONTACTING ME:

Prof. Bright: jlevin@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: TuTh 9:30-11:00, or by appt., in VIL 313C.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Ginsberg, Howl
Ionesco, Rhinoceros
Nabokov, Lolita
Lappé, Diet for a Small Planet
Murakami, In the Miso Soup
Collins, Hunger Games
Plus additional material on Blackboard

GRADING POLICY AND BREAKDOWN:

A rubric for paper grading is available on Blackboard.

Short Paper: 25%  Midterm: 25%
Final Paper: 35%  Class Community: 15%

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

When we say a situation is going to hell in a handbasket, we mean that we are on the slippery slope to disaster. We will understand by the end of the term how this is a major theme of Western literature in the past hundred years. This course explores texts that reflect the terrible crises and anxieties raised in second half of the twentieth century, from totalitarianism to nuclear holocaust to AIDS. We will grapple with nightmares awakening within the psyche, the dangers of bourgeois compliance, the expression of sexual difference, and the failure of science. Will we make it safely to the twenty-first century? As we study the cultural shifts expressed in mourning the losses of the present and envisioning a frightening future, we will make connections between the thematic trends we see and how the literature is shaped, or in other words, how the form relates to the content.

English Department Courses Learning Outcomes:

1. Read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. Draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. Perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
5. Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. Employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay’s thesis.
Office Hours: I am available for several hours a week for drop-in office hours and welcome your visits. You do not need an appointment, unless you are unable to make those times. I also answer questions via email – please allow 24 hours turnaround time, though. I can answer specific writing questions over email, but can’t review full drafts over email. If you’d like to discuss your draft, please come see me in person.

Assignments: You will write two papers for this course that exhibit an understanding of the issues presented in texts we’ve read this term, careful and thorough reading, good analytical skills, and knowledge of proper citation and other stylistics. There will be a midterm and a final paper based on your comprehensive knowledge of the material.

Late assignments will be dropped one letter grade per class day late, unless we make arrangements ahead of time, and a late final project automatically receives one letter grade reduction per day late. If you suspect you might have a problem meeting the deadline, please email me. Emergencies, of course, are an exception. A grading rubric will be made available for the papers.

Attendance/Accommodations: If you miss more than three classes, and/or you don’t complete in-class assignments/discussion leadership satisfactorily, you will receive a 0 for your class community grade.

Please be considerate of others – chatting and laptops and cell phones are distracting, so don’t use them in class. If there is a handout or reading, please print it out ahead of time and bring the paper copy to class instead of using an electronic copy so you can take better notes.

If you are sick or need to miss one class for university sanctioned team events or another reason, be proactive: email me to let me know and email another student to take notes for you.

It is your responsibility to (1) turn in all missed work on the day you return; and (2) arrange to get notes/assignments from another student ahead of time, (3) contact me with questions AFTER you review the notes. We can discuss extensions for missed work as necessary. If you have other extenuating circumstances (family emergency, serious illness), you must communicate that to me in a timely manner so we can discuss how to handle it.

I’d also like to hear from you during the first week of class if you need any alternative accommodations for physical or learning disabilities, so we can make sure your needs are met in a timely fashion.

Notes: It is expected that you will come to class having read and annotated all assigned materials. Notes should be taken as you read and on discussion in class, as well. Class Community grades will be lowered and we’ll resort to reading quizzes if I find class discussion is lacking because of haphazard preparation.

Final Exam: No final exam. Your final paper is due in class on Thursday of Week 10.

Academic Misconduct: Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct (details available at conduct.uoregon.edu). For our class, the most important aspect of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources (e.g., quotations, paraphrases,
ideas taken from another source). Plagiarism is a serious offense, punishable by failure in this course.

**Class Community:** The class will be mostly discussion, and thus, the class community is a crucial part of the experience. My pledge: I will give plenty of opportunities to participate by assigning leaders for questions related to the articles, mini-presentations, and small group projects, and you’ll be encouraged to brainstorm your ideas in assignments. I will work hard to create an inclusive environment, and everyone is expected to share ideas. Shy people should try to share the burden of discussion and participate at least once a class, and talkative people should try to let others respond first. We don’t want to create a situation where only a few students talk.

To stimulate interest and build reading comprehension and summarizing skills, I will schedule weekly discussion leaders for texts we are reading this term. Your mission as DL:

- know a bit about the author and context of your text by doing a bit of research online;
- encourage your peers to participate equally, efficiently, and respectfully by
- writing 2-3 good discussion questions that relate the text to a political or social issue of that time. Try to be as open-ended as possible, so people will want to talk!

You will also present a short synopsis of your final paper during Week 10 in lecture for the whole class, which will be included in your final participation grade.

**CLASS COMMUNITY GRADING GUIDE**

5 – Great, frequent participation (but not dominating or otherwise disrupting the conversation) with insightful comments that show an understanding of the reading; increased understanding for others with dialogue and responses to others; attended several office hours; helpful peer reviews; volunteered for presentations and did great job; effective in small groups.

4 – Good participation that may not be as frequent or insightful in class discussions as a “5” but still offered quality comments at each class, attended several office hours, fulfilled course requirements of participation in class and peer reviews with many thoughtful comments, volunteered for presentation, showed preparation and insight in small groups. Frequent talkers may earn this grade if they dominate discussion (if you’re worried about this, let others speak first).

3 – Adequate participation, satisfactorily completed all class and peer review assignments, attended at least one office hour for help on paper, may have missed a class, occasionally participated in class discussions or read aloud, may have not always been prepared and fully participatory in small groups. Sometimes participation had to be prompted.

2 or 1 – Inadequate participation that comprised several of the following: rarely participated in class discussions, only asked questions that demonstrated neglect of reading or other assignments, missed several classes or was regularly late without explanation, failed to attend office hours, did not add much to small groups due to lack of preparation, did not complete all class or peer review assignments or put in only minimal effort.

0 – Missed over three classes with unexcused absences (will automatically get this grade) OR several of the following: very rarely participated in class discussions, offered no or
minimal comments, did not attend office hours or attended only to ask about missed classes or grade justifications without reading comments, failed to do peer reviews or other assignments, or did minimal effort on peer reviews.

**SCHEDULE:**

*Syllabus subject to revision throughout the term. Reading is required and due on the date listed. Books are listed by author; files in the Course Documents section of our Blackboard site are listed as BB. All papers and projects due at the beginning of class.*

**Week 1: Crises of Consciousness**

4/1 Introduction to Class, Instructor, Syllabus, 1945, and End Times.

4/3 Ginsberg

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 2: Crises of Consciousness**

4/8 Ginsberg

4/10 Ionesco

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 3: Crises of Conscience**

4/15 Nabokov. **Short Paper Due.**

4/17 Nabokov through p. 142.

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 4: Crises of Conscience**

4/22 Nabokov

4/24 Nabokov through end.

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 5: Cinematic Crises**

4/29 Kubrick and Bunuel

5/1 Midcentury Café

Discussion Leaders:
**Week 6: Environmental Armageddon**

5/6  Lappé

5/8  **Midterm (Material from Week 1- Lappé)**

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 7: National Crises**

5/13  Civil Rights protest poetry (Selected poetry on BB)

5/15  AIDS activism (Kramer on BB)

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 8: Dystopian Futures**

5/20  Murakami

5/22  Murakami

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 9: Dystopian Futures**

5/27  Collins

5/29  Collins

Discussion Leaders:

**Week 10: Class Research**

6/3:  Presentations

6/5:  Presentations

**Final Paper Due on Monday, June 9 at 12:00 noon, in my office at 313C Villard Hall, inside the Comparative Literature Department.**