

English 407: Literature and the State, Winter Term 2014

Dr. Mark Whalan, whalan@uoregon.edu

Goals of the course: This course will examine a variety of texts that engage the modern state—its functions and possibilities; its ability to repress and coerce; its ability to forge new and enduring kinds of social connection; and what place, if any, it allows for literary culture. It will examine some of the ways in which literature and the state engage with one another—the tradition of utopian and dystopian literature; how the state surveilled and monitored radical writing in the twentieth century; how writers wrote about war, healthcare, and even the federal mail; and how literature offers modes of resistance to state policies of racial inequality. We will also consider theoretical models which have mapped the relationship between culture and the state.

Course reading:

You must complete all the essential reading listed for each seminar, and come prepared to discuss it. This is a discussion-based classroom, and I expect everyone to have something to contribute in **every** session.

Several additional readings will be provided, to help students preparing presentations and research papers, and to suggest methodological frameworks for considering the relationship between the state and literature.

Assignments and grading:

Class participation 10%; presentation 10%, 2 short papers 40% (3-4pp each), final paper 40% (8-10pp).

Papers:

Questions will be circulated for papers two weeks in advance of the paper deadline.

Presentations:

You will work on presentations in groups to be established in the first week of term. These should last for no more than ten minutes.

Class participation:

I will reward students who approach discussion in an enthusiastic, informed, and collegial way. Both I and your fellow students will appreciate informed opinions, critical insight, a willingness to take a few risks, and respect for others. I will occasionally set small in-class activities and presentations which will also count towards this grade.

Attendance:

At the beginning of each class you should sign the attendance register. You are allowed two unexcused absences. Missing classes beyond this without adequate excuse and documentation (such as a doctor's note) will result in your overall grade being lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence. Four such absences results in a failing grade.

Classroom Electronic Communications Policy:

In this class, cell phone use and the use of tablet devices is prohibited. All such devices should be stored in your bags or left at home. Laptop computers are permitted but only for activities related to the content of the class.

Plagiarism:

All written work should be either your own or contain clear references to your sources; one of the hallmarks of good scholarship is being able to use the insights of others while keeping your ideas distinct from theirs. I expect you to abide by university regulations on the proper acknowledgement of source material, and to follow accepted conventions for how to reference scholarship. I advise you to check on the university's student conduct code

(<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx>) for information about this; I recommend MLA style for the presentation of your research papers. Information about how to prepare bibliographies and citations in MLA style can be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>), and at the Knightcite MLA citation application (<http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/>).

Late papers:

Papers should be submitted in class on the day of the deadline listed. I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for each day a paper is late. I will not accept any paper that is more than a week late. Any request for extensions will be carefully considered, but should be made as far in advance of the due date as possible.

Disability:

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to discuss this with me as soon as possible. Also please request that the Accessible Education Center send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. [Accessible Education center resources are available at <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>].

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:30-1pm, Fridays 11:30-1pm, PLC 207.

ESSENTIAL READING: please purchase these texts or arrange access for them for the duration of the course. These texts are available at the Duckstore.

Herland and Related Writings, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, ed. Beth Sutton-Ramspeck. Broadview Editions, 2008.

Never Let Me Go, Kazuo Ishiguro. Vintage, 2005: 1400078776.

Company K. William March. University of Alabama Press, 1989: 0817304800.

The Forbidden Zone, Mary Borden. Hesperus Press, 2008: 1843914433.

Selected Poems, Claude McKay: Dover Thrift Editions. 0486408760.

Waiting for the Barbarians, J.M. Coetzee. Penguin, 2009: 0143116924.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU BRING THESE BOOKS—AND PRINTOUTS OF INDIVIDUAL STORIES OR POEMS FROM BLACKBOARD—TO CLASS. You should also get into the habit of marking up these stories as you go along: it will help you focus your reactions and ideas for class discussion, and will improve the detail and insight of your written papers.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Week One, 1/6: Introductions.

W. H. Auden, "The Unknown Citizen," George Orwell, "Writers and Leviathan" (at http://orwell.ru/library/articles/leviathan/english/e_wal); Amanda Claybaugh, "Government is Good," *Minnesota Review* 2008, available at <http://www.theminnesotareview.org/journal/ns70/claybaugh.shtml>

Wider reading:

Michael Szalay and Sean McCann, "Do You Believe in Magic? Literary Thinking After the New Left," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* Vol. 18.2 (2005): 435-468. On Blackboard.

Unit one: Utopias, Dystopias

Week Two, 1/13: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

Wider Reading:

"Utopia and its Discontents." Edward Rothstein. In *Visions of Utopia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003: 1-28. On Blackboard.

"The Treatment of the 'Woman Question' in Radical Utopian Political Thought," Filo Diamanti, in Barbara Goodwin, ed: *The Philosophy of Utopia* (London: Frank Cass, 2001): 116-139. On Blackboard.

"Feminism, Utopian and Scientific: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Prison of the Familiar." Brian Lloyd. *American Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 93-113.

Week Three, 1/20: MLK Day (No Class)

Wk 4, 1/27: Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

Wider reading: “Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society,” Ruth Levitas, in *The Philosophy of Utopia*, ed. Barbara Goodwin (Frank Cass, 2001). On Blackboard.

“Cruelty is Bad: Banality and Proximity in *Never Let Me Go*.” Bruce Robbins. *Novel* Vol. 40.3 (2007): 289-302. On Blackboard.

Unit two: War and the State

Wk 5, 2/3: William March, *Company K*, up to page 184.

FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE

Wider reading: Randolph Bourne, “The State,” available at <http://fair-use.org/randolph-bourne/the-state/>

Margot Norris, “Introduction,” *Writing War in the Twentieth Century* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2000): 1-32. On Blackboard.

Wk 6, 2/10: *Company K* cont'd to conclusion.

Wallace Stevens, *Lettres D' Un Soldat* cycle; Siegfried Sassoon, “The General,” “On Passing the New Menin Gate,” “The Rear Guard,” “Blighters”; Wilfred Owen, “S.I.W.”; “Anthem for Doomed Youth”; “Dulce et Decorum Est”; “Strange Meeting”; “Disabled”; James Weldon Johnson, “St. Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day.” All on Blackboard.

Wider reading: Mark Whalan, “‘How did they Pick John Doe?’: Race and Memorialisation in Interwar US Culture.” *Modernism and Mourning*, Ed., Patricia Rae. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2007: 85-101.

Selections from Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998). On Blackboard.

Wk 7, 2/17: Mary Borden, *The Forbidden Zone*

Wider reading: Freedman, Ariela. “Mary Borden's *Forbidden Zone*: Women's Writing from No-Man's-Land.” *Modernism/Modernity* 9.1 (2002): 109-124. On Blackboard.

Unit three: the racial state

Wk 8, 2/24: Claude McKay and racial surveillance

SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE

Uncollected poems and *Harlem Shadows*, in *Claude McKay: Selected Poems*.

Claude McKay, "Soviet Russia and the Negro," available at http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/mckay/russia.htm

William J. Maxwell, "F.B. Eyes: The Bureau Reads Claude McKay." In *Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism, and Twentieth-Century Literature of the United States*. Ed. Bill V. Mullen and James Smethurst. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Wider reading: William J. Maxwell, "Introduction," *The Collected Poems of Claude McKay*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004. On Blackboard.

Wk 9, 3/3: J.M Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Wider reading: "Interview with Jeremy Cronin," conducted by Andrew van der Vlies, in *Contemporary Literature and the State*, ed. Matthew Hart and Jim Hansen.

"Truth, Reconciliation, and the Restoration of the State: Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*." Troy Urquhart. *Twentieth Century Literature* 52 (1) (2006): 1-21. On Blackboard.

"The Mark of Empire: Writing, History, and Torture in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*." Michael Valdez Moses. *The Kenyon Review* 15.1 (1993): 115-127. On Blackboard.

Wk 10, 3/10: Conclusions: where we are now

Martha Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship and the Narrative Imagination," *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* 107. 1 (2008): Chapter 10, 143-157.

Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "The Depths of the Heights: Reading Conrad with America's Military." In Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Humanities and the Dream of America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011: 191-203.

Thomas G. McGuire, "War Literature, the Constitution, and Fostering Reluctant Killers." *War, Literature and the Arts* 20 (2008): 24-29.

MONDAY 3/17: FINAL PAPER DUE, NOON