

University of Oregon Syllabus

Course Title: Literature of Ken Kesey
ENG 399; CRN 46381
Credits: 4
Instructor: David Scott Arnold, Ph.D.
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Office: PLC 212
Office Hours: MW 4:00 – 5:00 pm
Summer Term 2014 MUWH 2:00 – 3:50 pm in 112 LIL
21 July – 14 August

"*You are embarked. You have no choice.*"

--Pascal

"*Tell all the truth/But tell it slant.*"

--Emily Dickinson

"*It is with fiction as it is with religion: it should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie.*"

--Herman Melville

I. Course Description

This course explores the literature of Ken Kesey, viewed in the context of American literary precursors, two significant novels, and subsequent writings by and about the author. To “frame” our study in this most compressed—four week!—course, our understanding will be aided by Richard Poirier’s classic, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature*, as we read carefully Kesey’s two essential novels, the popular and very successful *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and the complex narrative telling, *Sometimes A Great Notion*, for many the most accomplished work of Northwestern reality yet written (and, on the timely note: **this** year is the 50th anniversary of its publication!). The final week will be devoted to studies of the times Kesey helped define: Tom Wolfe’s justly famous *Electric Kool-Aid Acid* text (*not* required reading this year), and the recent *Spit in the Ocean #7: All About Kesey*. (We will also acknowledge two studies suggestive of the vision of reality supporting the course at the metaphysical level: Gary Saul Morson’s *Narrative and Freedom* and Giles Gunn’s *The Interpretation of Otherness: Literature, Religion and the American Imagination*.)

II. Texts

The following texts are required for the course (the key one to note is the particular edition of *SGN*, so we can all be on the same page); the first three ordered through the U of O Bookstore:

1. Richard Poirier, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature*

- **Paperback:** 257 pages
- **Publisher:** University of Wisconsin Press; Reprint edition (January 1986)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0299099342
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0299099343

2. Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Penguin Classics) (Text intro by Robert Faggen)

- **Paperback:** 312 pages
- **Publisher:** Penguin Classics; Reprint edition (December 31, 2002)
- **Language:** English

- **ISBN-10:** 0141181222

3. Ken Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion* (Paperback)

- **Paperback:** 640 pages
- **Publisher:** Penguin (Non-Classics); Reprint edition (July 28, 1977)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0140045295

4. Ed McClanahan, ed., *Spit in the Ocean #7: All About Ken Kesey* [this text has been “between printings,” so I have placed several copies placed on reserve I Knight Library]

- **Paperback:** 272 pages
- **Publisher:** Penguin (Non-Classics) (October 28, 2003)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0142003638

5. *Kesey* (Northwest Review Book Series) (Paperback) [four copies placed on Knight Library reserve]

- **Paperback:** 197 pages
- **Publisher:** University of Oregon Press (December 2001)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0871140462

NOT REQUIRED:

Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (Paperback)

- **Paperback:** 432 pages
- **Publisher:** Bantam; Reprint edition (October 5, 1999)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0553380648

III. Assessment and Evaluation

10 % Four weekly worksheet assignments (nothing exotic, rather to keep us on track)

25 % Midterm (matching, short answer, short essay)

30 % Final Critical Synthesis Paper (5-7 pages on topic germane to this course)

35 % Final Exam (matching, term/concept definitions, essay)

[the critical synthesis paper must be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font size, and must engage at least three academic sources, including Poirier and Gunn.]

For all Written Assignments:

All writing assignments will comport to the standards of grammar detailed in the *MLA Style Sheet* or current (eighth--2011) edition of Jane E. Aaron’s *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*, which provides MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual of Style (the American Academy of Religion citation style will be accepted in this course as well). **Be consistent:** choose one style appropriate for your scholarship, and stick with it.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in this course or at this university. All work submitted must be your own and written exclusively for this course. The use of sources—ideas, quotations, paraphrases; from papers, articles, books, or websites—must be properly acknowledged and documented. If you have any doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University's policy on it, come talk to me or see UO's Student Conduct Code (<http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/judicial/conduct/code.htm>). Plagiarism or cheating will result in an automatic failing grade for the course.

IV. Teaching Philosophy and Methodology

There is a quality of education known only by way of classroom interaction, and your instructor shall ensure that such quality is fully insinuated at every level of pedagogy. Dialogue among students about scholarship integral to their deepened understanding of fields of knowledge makes every difference for all participants, and is particularly relevant when such study finds safe harbor in such thinkers as Giles Gunn and Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin is the cultural critic who sponsors your instructor's understanding of the pedagogy in a college classroom setting, the dialogism ingredient in the interaction found by all who actively participate: open-ended collegial inquiry into the nature of the human is on-going, unfinished, and enriched by our study of those who have shaped the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences informing us today.

V. Class Routine

Each session will begin with Ralph Waldo Emerson's invitation offered to his Thursday evening gatherings in his living room in Concord, "What new thing has come your way since last we met?" We then will explore, discuss, evaluate the issues raised before us by the reading and study we have engaged in light of the syllabus. Such a pattern reveals the necessity for all participants to study well the assigned reading before class begins. The Course Outline is revealed below.

VI. Course Outline

Week 1

21 July Mon	Introduction of the course Aims, Goals, Expectations of the class
22 July Tuesday	Richard Poirier, <i>A World Elsewhere</i> Robert Fagen, "Introduction" (a very fine piece of writing) Ken Kesey, <i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>
23 July Wed	Kesey, <i>Cuckoo's Nest</i> Poirier, <i>A World Elsewhere</i> Worksheet #1 due
24 July Thurs	Kesey, <i>Cuckoo's Nest</i>

Week 2

28 July Mon	Kesey, <i>Cuckoo's Nest</i> Representative Critical Responses to <i>Cuckoo's Nest</i> Strelow, <i>Kesey</i>
29 July Tuesday	Midterm (no other assignment this day; all are free to Frisbee)
30 July Wed	Ken Kesey, <i>Sometimes A Great Notion</i> Strelow, <i>Kesey</i>
31 July	Poirier, <i>A World Elsewhere</i>

Thurs Kesey, *Sometimes A Great Notion*
Worksheet #2 due

Week 3

4 August Giles Gunn, "American Literature and the Imagination of Otherness" (Blackboard)
Mon Kesey, *Sometimes A Great Notion*

5 August Poirier, *A World Elsewhere*
Tues Kesey, *Sometimes A Great Notion*

6 August David S. Arnold, "'A Damn Sight Holier': Reading the Wonder of Kesey's *Notion*"
Wed Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion*
Worksheet #3 due

7 August Kesey, *Sometimes A Great Notion*
Thurs Final Paper Thesis Statement discussion

Week 4

11 August Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*
Mon Kesey, *Sometimes A Great Notion*

12 August Ed McClanahan, ed., *Spit in the Ocean #7: All About Ken Kesey*
Tues Kesey, *Sometimes A Great Notion*
Worksheet #4 due

13 August *Spit in the Ocean #7: All About Ken Kesey*
Wed Conclusions, review for Final

14 August **Final Exam 1515-1715**
Thursday

18 August Term Papers Due (with SASE) by 5:00 pm in Dr Arnold's 212 PLC office
Monday

Students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements with me as soon as possible. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.