

## **English 410/510: Literature and the State, Fall 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 learning outcomes**

By the end of the course, you will have had practice in the following skills:

- 1) Reading literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
- 2) Drawing on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
- 3) Performing critical, formal analyses of literary texts;
- 4) Writing focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
- 5) Employing primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis;
- 6) Engaging in in-class dialogue about literary texts and delivering well-researched, cogently argued oral presentations.

### **Course reading:**

You must complete all the essential reading listed for each class, 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%; 2 short papers 40% (3-4pp each), war memorial group presentation 15%; final paper 35% (8-10pp). You must have either an in-class consultation or an office hour consultation to discuss the final paper.

### **Papers:**

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

### **Presentation:**

During our work on war and memorial, you will work in assigned groups to prepare a short presentation giving an interpretation of a memorial of your choice. These presentations will take place on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November. We will read scholarship on memorialization and the state in the week leading up to this presentation, which should help you with the methodology of your talk. Presentations should be no longer 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, or ask for informal presentations/preparation assignments for class, 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. Five such absences results in a failing grade. If you have to miss class because of illness, a family emergency, job interviews, or any similar reason, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

**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.

**Accessibility:**

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of this course which result in disability-related barriers to your participation. For more information or assistance, you are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1155; website: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>

**Sexual Violence and Survivor Support Statement:**

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu).

**Office Hours:**

Wednesdays 10am-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: 1551119870.

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

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

*The Surrounded*, D'Arcy McNickle. University of New Mexico Press, 1978: 0826304699

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

*The Forbidden Zone*, Mary Borden. Hesperus Press, 2008: 1843914433. [A free, online version of this text is available at <http://www.ourstory.info/library/2-ww1/Borden2/fz.html>].

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**

**9/30:** Introductions

**10/2:** George Orwell, "Writers and Leviathan" (at [http://orwell.ru/library/articles/leviathan/english/e\\_wal](http://orwell.ru/library/articles/leviathan/english/e_wal)), and on Blackboard; Amanda Claybaugh, "Government is Good," *Minnesota Review* 2008, available at <http://www.theminnesotareview.org/journal/ns70/claybaugh.shtml>, and on Blackboard; sheaf of poetry from the 1930s (available on Blackboard).

### **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, 10/7:** Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*, chapters 1-8.

**10/9:** *Herland* cont'd, chapters 9-12.

### **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, 10/14:** Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, chapters 1-14.

**10/16:** *Never Let Me Go* cont’d, chapters 15-23.

**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: the racial state**

**Wk 4, 10/21:** Claude McKay and racial surveillance.

### **FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE**

Claude McKay, *Selected Poems*: “A Midnight Woman to the Bobby,” Preface to Constab Ballads; “The Apple-Woman’s Complaint,” “The Heart of a Constab,” Uncollected Poems (pp.23-29).

**10/23:** *Harlem Shadows*, pp.30-50. All 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](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. On Blackboard.

**Wider reading:** William J. Maxwell, “Introduction,” *The Collected Poems of Claude McKay*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004. Both on Blackboard.

**Wk 5, 10/28:** Race and Empire. J.M Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, up to “I cannot re-enter the dream or taste the bread that has made my saliva run,” p.120, chapter IV.

**10/30:** *Waiting for the Barbarians*, to conclusion.

**Wider reading:**

“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 6, 11/4:** Native sovereignty, the bildungsroman, and the U.S.A. D’Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded*, chapters 1-21.

**11/6:** *The Surrounded* continued, chapters 22-34.

**Wk 7, 11/11: Unit three: War and the State.**

**SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE**

Mary Borden, *The Forbidden Zone*, to the end of part one [The North].

**11/13:** *The Forbidden Zone* cont’d, to the end of part two [The Somme].

*The Forbidden Zone* is available online at <http://www.ourstory.info/library/2-ww1/Borden2/fz.html>

**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.

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

**Wk 8: War and memorial poetry.**

**11/18:** Wallace Stevens, *Lettres D’ Un Soldat* cycle; Siegfried Sassoon, “The General,” “On Passing the New Menin Gate”, “The Rear Guard,” “Blighters”; James Weldon

Johnson, "St. Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day;" John Dos Passos, "The Body of an American."

Steven Trout, "Soldiers Well Known and Unknown: Monuments to the American Doughboy, 1920-1941." From *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010: 107-156.

**11/20:** Wilfred Owen, "S.I.W."; "Anthem for Doomed Youth"; "Dulce et Decorum Est"; "Strange Meeting"; "The Dead-Beat"; "Greater Love"; "Apologia Pro Poemate Meo"; "Insensibility"; "Disabled"; "Mental Cases"; "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young."

Jay Winter. "War Memorials and the Mourning Process." *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

All readings on Blackboard.

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

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. On Blackboard.

Robin Wagner-Pacifi and Barry Schwartz. "The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (1991): 376-420.

## **Wk 9: 11/25: WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT DAY**

**11/27: THANKSGIVING; NO CLASS.**

## **Wk 10, 12/2: 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.

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

All on Blackboard.

**12/4:** Conclusions, and paper consultation

**WEDNESDAY 12/10: FINAL PAPER DUE, NOON**