English 104. Introduction to Fiction
MWF 11:00-11:50 p.m. in 360 Condon
Professor: Deborah Shapelle
Email: dshapelle@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: MWF 2-3 p.m. in 365 PLC & by appointment

Course Description

From Robinson Crusoe, one of the earlist of novels, to recent television programs like Lost, castaway fiction has provided the vehicle for exploring different narrative forms, perspectives, voices, modes, and approaches to symbolic representation. At the same time, these fictions about individuals cast adrift from their familiar worlds have encouraged us to ponder the borders of the human, the relation between freedom and community, the value of technology and nature, and the significance of storytelling itself. Focusing on works by authors like Daniel Defoe, H. G. Wells, Yann Martel, and Jean Rhys, as well as selections from several related films, this course will introduce you to some of the fundamental methods of literary analysis. Based on the premise that only through practice can we learn close critical reading and thoughtful writing, class sessions will be conducted primarily as a series of workshops and complementary discussions.

Books available at the UO Bookstore, 895 E. 13th Avenue at Kincaid, 346-4331

Daniel Defoe  The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe
Yann Martel  Life of Pi
H. G. Wells  The Island of Dr. Moreau

Selections available on Blackboard, under “Course Documents”

Jean Rhys  Voyage in the Dark, chapters 1-6
Anonymous  The Female American, chapters 3-5

Course Requirements and Information

Reading: Plan to read each text carefully, while making note of issues or questions you would like to raise during class discussion. All reading assignments should be completed before class by the dates listed below.

Quizzes: There will be a series of short, unannounced quizzes throughout the term, which will count for 15% of your grade. Each quiz will pose a few brief questions about the assigned readings primarily for that day.

Writing: While in-class writing assignments (quizzes included) will give you the opportunity to hone your analytic skills and to receive regular feedback on your ideas from me as well as your peers, you will be asked to submit 3 polished pieces of writing during the term. The first assignment (worth 10% of your grade) will ask you to select any one paragraph from Robinson Crusoe and to write a 1-page analysis of it. The second assignment, in which you may build on the analysis you provide in the first, will be to write a 2-3-page argumentative essay on Defoe’s novel. For your third essay, also 2-3-pages in length, you may write on any of the material we discuss during the fifth and sixth weeks of the term. Each of the 2-3-page essays will count for 20% of the final grade. Requirements, and topics for the two longer essays, will be posted to our Blackboard site under the link “Assignments.” Late essays will not be accepted without penalty. I will nevertheless consider special situations that are brought to my attention, preferably 24 hours or more before an assignment is due. You will also have the option to revise one of these essays, with your new grade for that essay being the average of the two received. Optional rewrites are due by the last day of class. On the last day, March 16th, there will be an in-class essay on
Life of Pi; this last essay will count for 10% of your final grade. There will be no opportunities for making up this final essay, so please plan to attend class.

Panel Discussions: During the eighth and ninth weeks of the term, we will hold panel discussions centered on Life of Pi. You will be asked to work with one of your peers and to present a collaborative 5-minute presentation on any aspect of the novel, focused on the readings for that day. We will hold 5 panel discussions over 5 days, and each panel will be comprised of 4 collaborative presentations. Members of the rest of the class will serve as audience and respondents. I will select topics for the final in-class essay largely from the content of these presentations, so it will be to your advantage to attend and take part actively in these discussions. The presentation will form 10% of your grade.

Participation: Class participation comprises the remaining 15% of the final grade. Please remember that each of your contributions to class may enhance your own experience as well as that of your fellow classmates.

Extra Credit: You may receive extra credit (1-2 points added to your final average) by writing your own castaway story (ca. 2-pages in length) anytime before the last week of class.

Attendance: Your ability to participate, of course, depends on your arrival to class in a timely fashion. Recurring lateness may lower your class participation grade; contact me early in the term if you foresee a regular problem in getting to class on time. After 3 unexcused absences, your final grade for the course will drop by 1/3 of a point (e.g., A- to B+) for each subsequent absence.

Academic Integrity: All work should be your own; any borrowed ideas, paraphrases, or quotations from outside sources must be properly documented in your writing. One act of plagiarism will result in automatic failure for the entire course. For further advice, please select the link “Course Information” from our Blackboard menu, click on the link “General Information,” and then “Avoiding Plagiarism.” If you are uncertain about how or whether to document a particular passage, don’t hesitate to ask me. Please be advised that the English Department is required to report all cases to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.

Tutoring: Each of you will bring your own strengths and experiences to this course; however, if you find yourself struggling to complete the writing assignments with the desired results, you may wish to seek additional advice and assistance. Free writing tutoring is available through Academic Learning Services, located in 68 PLC. For further information, call 346-3226 or consult the website at http://als.uoregon.edu. I would also be happy to discuss your work and any related issues with you during office hours or by appointment.

Course Calendar

Week 1  9 January. Introduction

11 January. Robinson Crusoe, pp. 5-35 (to “But I that was born to be my own Destroyer . . .”)

13 January. Robinson Crusoe, pp. 35-66 (“And now, in the managing my Household affairs”)

Week 2  16 January. No Class: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday

18 January. Robinson Crusoe, pp. 66-100 (“I was sadly put to it for a Scythe or a Sicle”)

20 January. Robinson Crusoe, pp. 100-133 (“Such is the uneven State of human Life”)

Week 3  23 January. Robinson Crusoe, pp. 133-161 (“It was a dismal Sight to look at”)
25 January. *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 161-194 (“When the settled Season began to come in”)  
1-pg. analysis of one paragraph due by end of day

27 January. *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 194-226 (“Though this was all a Fiction of his own”)

Week 4  

1 February. Selections from *Robinson Crusoe* (Luis Buñuel, 1954)

3 February. Selections from *Cast Away* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000)

Week 5  
6 February. *The Female American*, Chapters 3-5

8 February. *Voyage in the Dark*, Chapters 1-3  
First 2-3-pp. essay due by end of day

10 February. *Voyage in the Dark*, Chapters 4-6

Week 6  
13 February. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Chapters 1-7

15 February. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Chapters 8-14

17 February. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Chapter 15-End

Week 7  

22 February. *Life of Pi*, Author’s Notes & Chapters 1-15  
Second 2-3-pp. essay due by end of day

24 February. *Life of Pi*, Chapters 16-36

Week 8  
27 February. *Life of Pi*, Chapters 37-48 (panel discussions)

29 February. *Life of Pi*, Chapters 49-59 (panel discussions)

2 March. *Life of Pi*, Chapters 60-77 (panel discussions)

Week 9  
5 March. *Life of Pi*, Chapters 78-90 (panel discussions)

7 March. *Life of Pi*, Chapters 91-94 (panel discussions)

9 March. *Life of Pi*, Chapter 95-End

Week 10  
12 March. *Lifeboat* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1944)

14 March. Review

16 March. Final in-class essay