ENG 399: Living Writers  
Miriam Gershow

TR 12-1:20  
260 Condon

Office Hours: M 11-12:30, W 12:30-2 and by appt.
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Living Writers will investigate the sometimes symbiotic, sometimes complicated relationship of reader, writer and the written work. Students in this seminar will closely examine the contemporary fiction of four authors and then prepare for and participate in author visits. Beyond developing critical reading skills, students will learn to represent and even reconsider their interpretations of texts in conversation with authors. Students will formulate both questions and answers about who holds the meaning of texts, how authorial intention informs a finished work, and if, when and how reader interpretation gains primacy over authorial invention.

Required Reading:
Andre Dubus III Dirty Love
Danielle Evans Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self
Peter Hoffmeister Graphic the Valley
Laila Lalami The Moor's Account

Available at the Duckstore and on reserve at Knight Library

Course Structure:
We will spend two weeks on each work of fiction, the first week closely reading the text through a combination of lecture and discussion, and the second week preparing for and hosting the author visit. Small groups of students will be responsible for organizing and preparing for the author visit. These responsibilities will include researching relevant biographical data, existing author interviews, or book reviews to share with the class in advance of the visit, and then introducing the author on the day of the visit.

Assignments:
*Small group planning and facilitation of author visit 10%

*For each visiting author:
  1 close-reading paper (1-2 pages): 20%
  1 Canvas discussion board, Questions for the Author: 5%

*Author Engagement assignment: 20%

*Written exam 20%

*Final essay (4-5 pages): Using the readings and conversations of the term as evidence, map a clear, defensible argument about the relationship between reader, writer and text. 25%

Attendance:
Because author visits are the cornerstone of the course, those four days are mandatory – April 12, April 26, May 10, May 31. Exceptions will be made only for documented
emergencies. Aside from the author visit dates, you may accrue two unexcused absences without a grade penalty. Any absences beyond those two will each accrue a half grade penalty to your final course grade.

Engagement:
We are a small class with unprecedented access to authors. This is a very good thing. While there are many ways to be engaged in course content aside from speaking up loudly, I do expect everyone to directly engage with authors during their visits. You will be expected to ask informed, substantive questions on those days. On all other days, active engagement can take any of a variety of forms, including active listening, small group work, in class writing, etc. If you are worried about active participation during author visits, come see me. Let’s figure out strategies together so those opportunities aren’t squandered. From my end, I promise you will go into those conversations prepared and supported.

Formatting
All written work should be typed and double-spaced, using standard 12-point serif font and 1” margins. Safest bet -- use the default settings on MS Word.

Academic Honesty
All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, which means you may not submit papers or portions of papers you have written for any other course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented using the conventions of MLA citation.

Access
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uaoec@uoregon.edu.

Religious Holidays
Students who observe their religious holidays at times when academic requirements conflict with those observances must inform instructors in advance of the holiday. Students are responsible for making up missed work according to a schedule determined with the teacher.

Emergencies
UO Emergency Management & Continuity Program (UOEMC) has an entire website dedicated to helping students, staff, and faculty become better prepared in the event of an emergency: http://emc.uoregon.edu/. This website offers a wide range of helpful tips, including how to create your own emergency supply kit to updates on any recent alerts. Three recommendations in particular pertain to this class: confirm that you are signed up for emergency alerts (for both emails and text messages), practice at least two routes out of this classroom so that you already know them in the event of an evacuation (there are
evacuation maps available in most hallways that you can consult to help you identify the best routes) and know the evacuation assembly area. For emergency assistance on campus call 911. For non-emergency assistance on campus call 541-346-2919. Never assume others have called when you witness an emergency situation that endangers yourself or others.

Gender-Based Violence
Students who experience gender-based violence: Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, coercion, and/or sexual harassment is encouraged to seek help. Please visit https://safe.uoregon.edu for information. You are also strongly encouraged to contact Renae DeSautel, Sexual Violence Response & Support Services Coordinator, desautel@uoregon.edu. She will keep your information confidential. In addition, the UO Ombuds office (541 346-6400 or ombuds@uoregon.edu) can provide confidential support and assistance. You can also contact any pastor, priest, imam, or another member of the clergy. All of these people, including all UO faculty members, have an obligation not to reveal your name or other specific information without your permission, although faculty members do have to provide “general information” that will help us create a safer campus. As your instructor, I can also reassign work partners and make other necessary accommodations.
Schedule of Assignments

**Note 1:** You are encouraged to attend **all** author events, listed in text boxes.

You are required to attend **two** events for the Author Engagement assignment. Speak to me in week 1 if you have scheduling conflicts preventing your attendance at two events.

**Note 2:** With the exception of *Before You Suffocate…*, you should read the book in its entirety by the first time it appears in the syllabus.

**Week 1**
- **Tues April 3:** Introduction to the Course
- **Thurs April 5:** *Before you Suffocate Your Own Fool Self* 1-63
  
  **Close Reading paper 1**

**Week 2**
- **Tues April 10:** *Before you Suffocate Your Own Fool Self* 65 – end
  Danielle Evans visit preparation
  
  **Discussion board questions due by 10am–BEFORE CLASS**

  **Thur April 12:** Danielle Evans class visit

  7pm: Danielle Evans reading and book signing, Knight Library Browsing Room

**Week 3**
- **Tues April 17:** *The Moor’s Account*
  
  **Close Reading paper 2**

  **Thurs April 19:** *The Moor’s Account*
  Excerpt from source text: *The Journey of Alvar Nuñez*…(1542) pp 1-10. PDF on Canvas.

**Week 4**
- **Tues. April 24:** *The Moor’s Account*
  Laila Lalami visit preparation
  
  **Discussion board questions due by 10am–BEFORE CLASS**

  **Wed, April 25**

  2:30 – 4:30 pm Panel discussion with Laila Lalami (Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art)

  6 pm – 8 pm Laila Lalami keynote (Eugene Public Library)
Thurs, April 26: Laila Lalami class visit

**Week 5**
Tues May 1: *Dirty Love*
Close Reading paper 3

Thurs May 3: *Dirty Love*

**Week 6**
Tues May 8: *Dirty Love*
Andre Dubus III visit preparation
Discussion board questions due by 10am–BEFORE CLASS

Thurs May 10: Andre Dubus III class visit

8pm: Andre Dubus III reading and book signing, Knight Library Browsing Room

**Week 7**
Tues May 15: Written Exam

Thur May 17: Source texts – *Graphic the Valley*
Author Engagement Assignment Due

**Week 8**
Tues May 22: *Graphic the Valley*
Close Reading paper 4

Thurs May 24: *Graphic the Valley*

**Week 9**
Tues May 29: *Graphic the Valley*
Peter Hoffmeister visit preparation
Discussion board questions due by 10am–BEFORE CLASS

Thurs May 31: Peter Hoffmeister class visit

**Week 10**
Tues June 5: First draft final essay

Thurs June 7: Final draft final essay
Other spring term readings:
Lots of authors come to campus! Go give them a listen, even though they are not a part of the Author Engagement Assignment.

Mary Jo Salter (poet) April 19 8pm, Knight Library Browsing Room
Susan Choi (novelist) May 14 4pm, Knight Library Browsing Room
Margo Jefferson (memoir) May 30, 7:30pm, 182 Lillis