ENGL 2334.001: THEMES AND GENRES IN ENGLISH LITERATURES – FALL 2013

Instructor: Prof. Josh Epstein (joshua.epstein@tamucc.edu)
Class Sessions: Tues. and Thurs., 5:30-6:45 p.m., Center for Instruction 127
Office: Faculty Center 287
Phone: 361.825.2395
Office Hours: Mon., 3-4 p.m.; Tues. and Wed., 12-2 p.m., or by appointment.

TOPIC: ART, THE SELF, AND THE OTHER

Literary writers spend much of their time reflecting on the role of art in human life: how artists use their work to cope with, escape from, or transform their relations to other humans. What is the point of art, literary or otherwise? What kinds of people are artists? What are the relationships between art and its cultural contexts? We'll address these questions by closely studying, discussing, and writing about poetry, plays, and novels from Britain and its former colonies.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:
William Shakespeare, The Tempest
Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray
W. Somerset Maugham, The Moon and Sixpence
Esi Edugyan, Half-Blood Blues
John Trimble, Writing with Style
Selected poems, distributed in class or on Blackboard.

You will need to set up a Basic account on Xtranormal.com, and to purchase some "points"; I estimate that this will cost no more than $5 per person.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
• Recognize the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts.
• Respond critically to literary works.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course will help students to:
• Gain familiarity with the categories, concepts, and vocabulary used to analyze literature.
• Draw connections between literature and other art forms.
• Improve skills in, and understanding of, the conventions of scholarly analytical writing.
• Develop confidence, facility, and endurance in reading literature closely and analytically.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: I do not allow the use of laptops, cell phones, iPads, Kindles, etc. during class. They distract and disengage students from the discussion. I know this policy isn't popular with everyone, but I will enforce it. Students who violate it will be dismissed and marked absent, losing all credit for the day's work. If this policy poses you a specific problem, please speak with me individually.

EMAIL: Check your Islander email every day. I will use email frequently to communicate with the class. If you prefer, you can have your Islander email forwarded automatically (https://distance-education.tamucc.edu/assets/forwarding_email.pdf).

Just as you check your email daily, so do I: email is a good way to get in touch with me quickly. That said, I receive a ton of daily email, and the following will help our exchanges go smoothly:
• Lengthy, detailed, or extensive conversations are best discussed in person. Email works best for quick questions; it is not an appropriate medium for discussing grades, asking me to review drafts, or asking "What did/will I miss?" Discussions of grades or drafts should be handled in office hours; if you are going to miss class, contact a classmate to get notes, schedule changes, etc.
• If you are emailing to ask about a policy or assignment, your first step should be to review this syllabus and/or the relevant assignment sheet.

• Emails should be treated as professional communications (see www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor). Include a subject line, a salutation ("Hi Prof. Epstein"), and a closing ("Thanks, [Ricky]"); say "please"/"thank you"; write in grammatical sentences and a respectful tone.

• Please leave me at least 48 hours to respond before sending a follow-up. I usually respond sooner, but sometimes things pile up.

REQUIRED COURSEWORK:

SYLLABUS AND PLAGIARISM QUIZZES (5 POINTS TOTAL):

All students must complete two quizzes, each posted to Blackboard. One quiz addresses course policies on this syllabus; the other addresses plagiarism. These two quizzes are considered together as one assignment; credit will be given on an all-or-nothing basis—five points or zero points. To receive credit, you must complete both on time (no later than Sept. 17 by the beginning of class), and you must earn 100% on both quizzes. You may retake them as many times as you want, so long as you've completed both quizzes with 100% by the deadline.

TWO ESSAYS, WITH REVISIONS (25 POINTS EACH).

Two written essays based on course readings. The first paper will be at least 1000 words; the second at least 1500 words. For each essay, you will turn in a first version as well as a revision. I call them "first versions," not "drafts," for a reason—they must represent your best work, and must fulfill all assignment guidelines. You will then have the chance to revise your essays based on the feedback you receive.

The first version of each essay will be worth 5 points; the revision worth 20 points. Draft grades are curved as follows: a draft of A or B quality will earn 5/5; a draft of C or D quality will earn 4/5; a draft of F quality will earn 0-3 points, at my discretion. Revision grades are not curved.

With each revision, you will submit a short Writer's Memo (300 words), explaining the process you went through as you revised. Guidelines are attached at the back of this syllabus (p.8).

ESSAY SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: Papers will be penalized if they fail to meet these guidelines.

(1) After turning in the hard copy of each essay, you must upload the essay to SafeAssign (on Blackboard) within 48 hours. You will not receive credit for an essay unless it is uploaded to SafeAssign. SafeAssign serves as a plagiarism checker; this isn't the only reason I use it, but be advised.

(2) Papers must be double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman, with 1” margins on all sides, and stapled.

(3) Late work is penalized two points per day, including weekends. Please note: computer and printer problems do not excuse late work. Plan ahead and back up your files.

(4) Papers are due at the beginning of class as specified. Late arrival to class will make the paper late.

(5) Length requirements are firm. Essays that fall decidedly short of the required length will receive an F; this applies to drafts as well as revisions. If you're running short, consider introducing new examples, analyzing them at greater length, or engaging with counterarguments. Do not pad your essay by tinkering with margins, font size, or spacing.

(6) Both papers will be submitted, and then revised for a new grade. The first versions of these essays are not outlines or "rough drafts": they should be thoughtful, well-written essays, and must meet the minimum length requirements.

(7) Resubmit the graded first version with the revision in a folder with pockets; include a Writer's Memo.

(8) Feel free to come talk with me about your essays, and to visit the CASA Writing Center.
PARTICIPATION/QUIZZES/IN-CLASS WRITINGS (15 POINTS):
You are expected to participate actively in every class. Be ready to ask questions, answer questions, try out arguments or wacky ideas, join in groups, etc. We will also have frequent quizzes designed to make sure you’ve read and to kick-start the day’s discussion. They will mix objective and subjective responses, and will be graded on a 4-point scale: 4 = A, 3 = B, 2 = C, 1 = D, 0 = F (as in “Fabulous opportunity to do better next time”). I do not give make-up quizzes, for any reason. However, I will drop your three lowest scores, including any missed due to absence or tardiness.

These writings are used to take attendance (see below); if you don’t turn one in, you will be marked absent.

Quizzes will demand close and careful reading. Simply reading SparkNotes will not get you where you need to go. Read the texts slowly. Again, write in your books as you read.

At the end of term I will average the point totals for your in-class writings; I will assess your in-class participation; and I will average these two grades to determine a total score.

Bring your book to class. If you don’t have your book with you, you will be marked absent. If you don’t know what to say about a question, look back through the book and figure it out!

BLACKBOARD POSTINGS (4 POSTINGS X 4 POINTS APICE = 16 POINTS TOTAL):
Each student will be asked to complete four postings, of at least 350 words each, addressing a question, passage, or prompt related to a course reading. There are six opportunities to post, so you may omit any two without penalty. Postings are not accepted late, for any reason; please plan ahead! You are responsible for keeping track of how many postings you have completed.

*** If Blackboard malfunctions, you may email the posting to me in advance of the deadline, and then post it once Blackboard is working again. Technology problems DO NOT excuse late work. I suggest writing each posting in a word processing file prior to posting it, so that you won’t lose your work if (when) Blackboard freezes.

XTRANORMAL PROJECT (15 POINTS):
In groups of 2-3, students will script and produce an Xtranormal video, creatively adapting course texts or concepts. You may, for example, rewrite a scene from a book; imagine a conversation among 2-3 authors; script a dialogue between two critics arguing over a text; imagine an author in his historical context; or something else. The video must be 4 minutes long; you will also write a 3-page abstract, sourced with citations from the original text(s), explaining how you derived your script. Students will present their videos to the class during the final exam session.

Each group will need to establish a Basic Xtranormal account (http://www.xtranormal.com), and to purchase enough points to produce a video (estimate: ~$10 total for the entire group, give or take).

POLICIES:

I can't reverse time! Once a deadline has passed, it's passed; once an assignment is done, it's done. Be in touch early, rather than late, if a problem arises.

Office Hours: You are invited to visit office hours to discuss any aspect of the course. If those hours don't suit your needs, please feel free to email me to set up an appointment. (See email policy, p.1.)

Equal Opportunity: All students will be treated fairly and equally regardless of race, sex, religion, nationality, age, disability, sexual/affectional orientation, or socioeconomic status. Hate speech or harassment, on these or any other grounds, is not acceptable in this class.
**Attendance:** You have three free absences with no penalty, no questions asked, no excuses needed. *Each absence after the third will result in the deduction of one point apiece from your final grade.* For example, if you have 81 points and five absences, your final score will be 79.

These three "free" absences are designed for minor illnesses and personal situations. *I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences,* as in the workforce, either you're here or you're not. Exceptions are made only for major medical or family emergencies, documented with the Division of Student Engagement and Success (a doctor's note isn't enough).

If you do miss class, please **contact a classmate** to find out what you missed. If you still have questions after getting notes from a classmate, by all means feel free to come speak with me.

**Please do not be late to class.** And please don't leave early. Take off your coat and stick around a while. Late arrival or early departure will count as an absence.

**Academic Misconduct:** Everything that you submit in this course must comply with the Student Code of Conduct ([tinyurl.com/tamucc-code](http://tinyurl.com/tamucc-code)). Any incident of academic misconduct—including cheating, plagiarism, forgery, multiple submission, or complicity—will result in a zero on the assignment, and will be reported to Judicial Affairs. A second incident, no matter how "minor," will result in an F for the course, and will be reported to Judicial Affairs with a recommendation for formal disciplinary action. To avoid plagiarism, you must cite the source of any ideas, quoted or paraphrased, that are not your own. When using someone else's language (even a short "catchy" phrase), put the quoted language in quotation marks and cite the page number. This policy applies to all assignments, regardless of format. If ever in doubt about what you are doing, consult with me before submitting the assignment. *Uncertainty about the rules is not an excuse for violating them.*

**University Resources and Procedures:**

**Academic Advising:** It is imperative that all students visit regularly with an academic adviser. Each college within the university has an academic advising center, staffed by full-time, professional advisers to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. To find out how to contact the right adviser, go to [http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php](http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php). Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information, go to [http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac](http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac).

**Tutors:** The [Center for Academic Student Achievement](http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac) (Glasscock 107; 361.825.5933) provides trained tutors and consultants, including the [Writing Center](http://casa.tamucc.edu/wc.php) and reading tutors. These are core academic skills that will help you greatly in this class, in other classes, and beyond the university. You've already paid for these services—take advantage of them!

**Veterans/Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance. I cannot **retroactively accommodate students:** all necessary accommodations must be documented *in advance,* not after the fact.
Dropping a Class: I of course hope that you won't find it necessary to drop this class, but academic and life circumstances sometimes make that the best option. I urge you to speak with me, and with an adviser (see above), prior to dropping. You do not owe me an explanation, but I am happy to talk openly with you about your options. Whatever you decide, please note that ceasing to attend class does not automatically result in your being dropped. You need to go through the correct procedure, explained on the University's advising web site (http://advising.tamucc.edu/questions.html#registration).

GRADING:

Grading Assistant: Grading responsibilities will be shared between the professor and the grading assistant, Ms. Traci Vega. Grade disputes should be taken up with the professor, not the grader, during office hours. If you dispute a grade, I reserve the right to raise or lower it.

The Digits: A total of 90-100 points equals an A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; and 0-59 = F. The above assignments add up to 101, effectively giving every student one free point. For this reason, among others, I stick to these numbers firmly and without exception.

Blackboard Gradebook: I will record grades using Blackboard, but I do not use Blackboard to calculate grades. Any averages/percentages_totals on the Blackboard Gradebook are unofficial.

Standards. Grades are awarded on achievement, not effort. This is a university: I have high standards for writing, even in a core curriculum course. Grading standards are as follows:

- **A** = Work that **exceeds expectations** for originality, analytical depth, logical rigor, and organizational and expressive clarity. "A"-level work may have minor flaws, but it stands out as excellent.
- **B** = Good work that **meets expectations with merit** in the above categories.
- **C** = Adequate work that **meets expectations** but is inconsistent or "shaky" in the above categories.
- **D** = Passing work that **meets the minimum expectations**, with severe problems in the above categories.
- **F** = Fails to satisfy the minimum expectations of the course or assignment, or is plagiarized.

For your reference, the average grade in ENGL 2334 tends to be in the B-/C+ range. Please be aware that grades of C or D are not indictments; they represent passable college writing in need of more revision and development. If you wish to discuss graded work, take at least 48 hours to review my comments; at that point, feel free to come to office hours. I do not discuss grades over email or during class.

Grade Appeals: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Division of Student Engagement and Success.

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**ENGL 2334 Syllabus (Fall 2013) – p.5**

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Schedule:

Readings are to be completed before class on the days indicated.
Remember that you are required to bring the readings with you to class each day.

Sept. 5 (R): Introductions. Reading poetry.
In class together, read Adrienne Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers."

Sept. 10 (T) Read Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn." (Print off from Blackboard and bring to class.)
Talk about poetic voice, rhyme, and figurative language. Map out the rhyme scheme prior to class. In class: talk about meter, rhythm, and sound patterns.

Sept 12 (R) Shelley, "Ozymandias"; Ashbery, "The Painter." (Print off from Blackboard and bring to class.) **Blackboard Posting 1 Due.**

Sept. 17 (T) **Syllabus/Plagiarism Quizzes Due Before Class.** Poems on Blackboard; print out and bring to class: Auden, "Musee des Beaux Arts"; Williams, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"; Bottrall, "Icarus." Look at Breughel, Icarus. Talk about Paper 1 assignment.

Sept. 19 (R) Browning, "My Last Duchess" (Blackboard), and the chapters from Writing with Style called "Thinking Well" and "Getting Started." Brainstorm Paper 1 ideas.

Sept. 24 (T) **Paper 1 (first version), due in class.** Bring in two copies; one to turn in and one to workshop. **Remember to upload to SafeAssign.**

Sept. 26 (R) *The Tempest*, Acts I and II.


Oct. 3 (R) *The Tempest*, cont. In class: excerpts from Tempest films. **Blackboard Posting 2 due.**


Oct. 10 (R) **Paper 1 Revision due, with graded draft.** Remember to upload to SafeAssign. In-class: lecture on Oscar Wilde and "Aestheticism."

Oct. 15 (T) *Picture of Dorian Gray*, through p. 78 (end of ch. 6).

Oct. 17 (R) *Picture of Dorian Gray*; through p. 122 (end of ch. 10). **Blackboard Posting 3 due.**


Oct. 29 (T) *The Moon and Sixpence*, first two-thirds.

Oct. 31 (R) *The Moon and Sixpence*, finish.

Nov. 5 (T) *The Moon and Sixpence*. Lecture on Paul Gauguin and "primitivism."

Nov. 7 (R) **Blackboard Posting 4 due.**

Nov. 12 (T) *Half-Blood Blues*, first two-thirds.

Nov. 14 (R) *Half-Blood Blues*, finish Brainstorm Paper 2 ideas. **Blackboard Posting 5 due.**

Nov. 15 (F) Last day to drop (not that I want you to!)

Nov. 19 (T) **Paper 2 draft due in class.** Bring two copies; one to turn in and one to workshop. **Remember to upload to SafeAssign.**
Nov. 21 (R)  *Half-Blood Blues*, cont.

Nov. 26 (T)  Discuss Xtranormal assignment and form groups.

Nov. 28 (R)  No class – Happy Thanksgiving! Gobble gobble!

Dec. 3 (T)   *Half-Blood Blues*, cont., if necessary. Margaret Atwood, "Death by Landscape."

Dec. 5 (R)   Linton Kwesi Johnson, "Inglan is a Bitch"; "Sonny's Lettah" (online) Blackboard Posting 6 due.

Dec. 10 (T)  Paper 2 revision Due. Remember to upload to SafeAssign. In class: Work on Xtranormal Assignments. (Laptops permitted.)

Xtranormal Projects to be Presented during our scheduled Final Exam time:

Please use this space to take down the contact info of 2-3 classmates whom you can contact if you miss class.

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Guidelines for Writer's Memos

The revision of each essay must be accompanied by a writer's memo—a letter, from you to me, which addresses the following in at least 300 words:

- What have you worked hardest to accomplish in this paper? What was your goal?

- What do you think is working best in your paper (what are you proudest of)? What do you think is the best and biggest change between this revision and the previous version?

- Outline, in some detail, what your overall process was in revising the essay. What steps did you go through to reconsider the argument, restructure the essay, edit the prose, etc.? What was the most important thing you accomplished in these steps? Were there any particular struggles you had along the way? Be specific.

- Of course there's always limited time to make these essays turn out perfectly. If you had one more chance to revise, or if you'd had more time, what do you think you would do differently? What would you add, subtract, reconsider, etc.?

- Ask at least one, preferably two or three, questions that you have about writing. These may range from "big" questions about the writing process ("What are good strategies for picking a topic?") to "small" or nitpicky questions ("How do I punctuate a quotation?"), to questions about this specific paper. I will answer these questions as well as I can.

- **Writer's memos should not talk about grades.** Focus on the piece of writing itself, and the process you went through to develop it. The point of the memo isn't to "sell me" on how great your paper is, but rather to reflect honestly about your development as a writer.

Here are the nitty-gritty details about writer's memos:

- At least 300 words.

- Stapled at the back of the paper (it should also be included as part of the file you upload to SafeAssign).

- Writer's memos are not given a separate grade; however, I may consider their quality when assigning a grade to the essay. Don't slack on them.

- Revisions submitted without memos are counted late until you have submitted the memo as well. For example, if you submit the paper on time, but the memo three days late, the paper is three days late.

- This is a letter, not a paper. You may write it informally, so long as that doesn't lead you to take it less seriously. You should still write in good, clear English, check for grammar and spelling, express yourself clearly, etc.