ENGLISH 2335.001:
Themes and Genres of the Americas
Summer 2014
MTWTh 1:00-1:50 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Wendy Walker
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Office Hours: MW 10:00-12:00; T 11-12; other times available by appointment
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*The best way to reach me is via email. While I try to respond to all email within 24 hours, I am not available outside of regular business hours and likely won’t respond after 5 p.m. or on weekends.

Course Description:

Gregory Currie, a professor of philosophy at the University of Nottingham, recently argued in the New York Times that we ought not to claim that literature improves us as people, because there is no “compelling evidence that suggests that people are morally or socially better for reading Tolstoy” or other great books. However, such evidence does exist. Raymond Mar, a psychologist at York University in Canada and Keith Oatley, a professor emeritus of cognitive psychology at the University of Toronto, reported that individuals who often read fiction appear to be better able to understand other people, empathize with them and view the world from their perspective. We will explore our own response to this debate through reading and writing about fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction. The textbook introduces and explains literature with reading selections centered on five enduring themes—Growing Up and Growing Older, Women and Men, Money and Work, Peace and War, and Varieties of Protest.
In addition, the course work is designed to allow you to explore what you know about literature’s connections to writing and culture as well as what you know about yourself as a member of society. Therefore, I am especially interested in helping you explore the intersection of the personal and public, the private and the social in your thinking, your reading, your writing, and your life. This class will ask you to explore what you know about culture (academic and otherwise) and yourself. We will look at writing, our own and that of others, as articulations of knowledge. We will, therefore, need to continually ask ourselves a number of important questions, such as:

- Who is the author of this piece?
- Why was this piece written? What “knowledge” does it attempt to impart?
- What do we know about the historical, social, and cultural background of this piece?
- How do I connect to this piece? (How do I relate to it through my own life and experience?)

Of course, our work should not be limited to these questions, and many more will arise throughout our discussions. However, it is important to remember that the work we do should involve deep analysis.

**Required Texts***:

*Several additional texts will be made available via Content in Blackboard (Bb). Students are required to print these texts and bring them to class on the day assigned. If texts are not in hand, student will receive no participation points for that day.

**Course Objectives:**
1. To examine the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts by reading texts by authors from a range of cultures and nationalities.
2. To explore the distinctive characteristics of relevant literary periods, genres, and writers.
3. To understand and use basic literary terms and concepts.
4. To develop analytic skills by close reading, class discussion, and writing.
5. To use writing as a tool for learning.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):**
Students who successfully complete ENGL 233C will be able to:
1. Recognize the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts;
2. Respond critically to literary works.

**Course Requirements and Policies:**
Grading: In order to pass this class you must do all of the work, including all reading that is assigned, in-class discussions, informal writing, and collaborative analysis and interpretation. Therefore, if you are absent during any class period, contact the instructor
and/or a classmate immediately. Please also note the absence and tardy policy explained in this syllabus.

Informal Writing: This includes in-class essays, guided writing, freewriting, response journal writing, explications, comparisons/contrasts, reviews or any combination of these. As these are informal assignments, they need not be typed, but should be a minimum of one full page in length.

Formal Writing (Quizzes, Essay, and Exams): Quizzes will be given randomly throughout the semester, and will include questions based on previous discussions as well as questions based on the assignment due on the day the quiz is given. You must be in class to take the quiz; no make-up quizzes will be given.

You will also be asked to write a 4-6 page literary analysis that discusses the novels we will read this semester. This is a formal essay assignment that will require close reading and synthesis. You will be given a grading rubric well in advance of the due date; due date yet to be determined.

There will also be midterm and final exams. These are formal essay assignments based on our in-class discussions that you will complete outside of class (so, a take-home exam, really) and turn in on the date given below. (Please note: Each exam will include a review session in the class period prior to each exam and will include a grading rubric; at the end of this session, you will receive the prompt/prompts to which you must respond.)

**NO LATE ESSAYS OR EXAMS WILL BE ACCEPTED. You must turn in your exam in the class period in which it is due or receive a failing grade on the assignment.**

Grading Scale:
- Participation, quizzes, informal writings, group work, etc. 30%
- Literary Analysis 10%
- Midterm Exam 25%
- Final Exam 35%

A = 90-100%  B = 80-89%  C = 70-79%  D = 60-69%  F = 60% or below

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism involves the presentation of some other person's work as if it were the work of the presenter, and it is a serious offense. Therefore, both your midterm and final exams must be submitted to Turnitin.com prior to the class period in which it is due, and any student who has chosen to plagiarize will receive a failing grade for the course and risks being placed on academic probation, suspension, or expulsion. If you are unsure about whether or not you might be plagiarizing, please talk to me.

Attendance: Because the formal work you do in the course depends on your in-class writing, informal writing, collaboration with your classmates, and discussions, if you miss more than four hours of class time your grade will be lowered by 1/3 for each hour of
absence beyond the four hours. That is, a B will drop to a B- and so on. If you are absent, you are responsible for what you missed. Excessive tardiness will also lower your grade. If you participate in a sport or some other university sanctioned event or activity that requires you to miss class do not take this course during your travel season. Additionally, please note that NO ABSENCES ARE EXCUSED.

University Community Discourses, Diversity and Personal Responsibilities: In class discussions, readings, and writing throughout this quarter, we will examine ideas from diverse perspectives. At this university, students and faculty are afforded an academic environment that allows for intellectual expression; challenging issues and ideas may arise, but none of these should be expressed in an inappropriate manner either verbally or in writing. One of the goals of a university is to challenge us to think again about what we know (and all that we don’t know). This demands that we all share responsibility for creating and maintaining a democratic and civil learning environment in our classrooms and in the larger university community: we will be conscious of and accept responsibility for what we say and do, how we act, how our words and actions have consequences, and how our words and actions affect others. Racism, sexism, and other non-democratic or oppressive behaviors are unacceptable.

Special Notices:
*Notice to 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. You can also visit their website at http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/ and contact them via e-mail at disability.services@tamucc.edu. 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.

For SOPH LIT classes
**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
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

*** Grade Appeal Process: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that his or her final grade reflects academic evaluation which is arbitrary, prejudiced, or inappropriate in view of the standards and procedures outlined in the class syllabus, may appeal the grade given for the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. 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 the University Rule 13.02.99.C2.01, in the University Handbook for Rules & Procedures: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/Rules_Procedures/

Tentative Schedule: