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General Education and I-Series Course Submission and Review

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ENGL241 Introduction to the Novel

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General Information

Title Introduction to the Novel

Course Number ENGL241

College ARHU - Arts and Humanities

Department English

Submitted By Thomas Colborn Moser Jr

CORE Information

CORE Fundamental Studies No

CORE Distributive/Advanced Studies (HL) - Literature

CORE Diversity No

General Education Information

Fundamental Studies None

Distributive Studies Humanities

Diversity None

Course Questions

General Questions

Please give a brief description of the course:

In 1924, the literary critic I. A. Richards made the claim that “the novel is a machine to think with.” In the 21st century, thinking has changed. Screens are everywhere, and it has been said that their constant flash has transformed and diminished the attention span of our society. This course aims to discuss and develop what the genre of the novel “does” that cannot be done by film, by television, by cell-phone screens, by any impressive stream of images, or even by textual excerpts pulled up for a quick read. The seven works (two novellas among them) will establish different “ways” of the novel, with particular focus on the process of thinking and the developed consciousness that, good as they are, images generally fail to reproduce. Although the novel will be presented as a machine to think with, it also will be discussed as a worthy and irreplaceable model of complex human thought. When we consider gender, for example, we will examine how masculinity and femininity evolve as different expressions when presented by visual images in film as opposed to articulate or often inarticulate words in the novel. We will also study how thought is presented in radically different ways in these novels that cross lines of class, gender, chronology, and nationality.

Please list any pre- or co-requisites for this course:

None

If there are pre- or co-requisites, please justify them with respect to their appropriateness for a General Education course:

None

Please list any restrictions (e.g. majors only) placed on this course:

None

What is the approximate course size (students/academic year)?

330

Please describe how student learning will be assessed (i.e. exams, homework, papers, group projects, etc.):

There will be a midterm (explication of lines from texts), a final (explications again, as well as a general essay). There will be a term paper that requires a point-by-point comparison of how different novels come at similar considerations (e.g., masculinity, memory, “the subconscious,” madness, logic, love, guilt, etc.). In discussion group there will be a reading quiz for each novel. There also will be two short papers discussing how key novelistic moments are or might be differently presented in a film version (except for our final novel, Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine*, all novels in this course have had multiple film adaptations). “What is gained and what is lost in each genre?” will be an ambition of these short papers.

Comments on the course that you feel may be useful for the review process. Also, if this is an existing course that you are planning on making changes to via VPAC (i.e. changing the title), please list those proposed changes here:

This is the first submission of the long-standing and popular course. We are changing the title of the course to "What the

Novel Does," and will be submitting a VPAC proposal to that effect.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are phrased as "*At the completion of this course, students will be able to...*". Answers are expected to demonstrate how the course will (1) give students the ability to meet the learning objective and (2) determine that students were successful in meeting the learning objective.

Learning outcomes in **this color** are **REQUIRED**

Humanities

Courses in the humanities disciplines study history and the genres of human creativity, and they include courses in the practice of architecture and the visual, literary and performing and creative arts. Under "Humanities," students will find courses in cultures and literatures in any language, creative writing, art, architecture, art history, classics, history, linguistics, philosophy, and the performing arts (dance, music, theatre) and their histories.

Must address **at least 4** of the following Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students will be able to...

...demonstrate familiarity and facility with fundamental terminology and concepts in a specific topical area in the humanities.

Although this course is neither a technical course on the novelistic form, nor a course on the history of the novel, a awareness of critical terminology will be necessary for our discussion (e.g., point of view, first-person narration, omniscient narration, direct discourse, indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, the subconscious – as well as period terms, e.g., Victorian, post-war, "the twenties," Romanticism, Realism, naturalism, post-colonialism). Key Assignment: The term paper will require students to contextualize their readings in both an historical and a critical context.

...demonstrate understanding of the methods used by scholars in a specific field in the humanities.

One of the ambitions of the course will be to prove to students that, when it comes to serious consideration, as for most things, a "plot summary" is worthless. Attention to detail, generally the essential first-step for the scholar, will be at the heart of our class work. (In the first text we discuss, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the line-by-line, and even word-after-word review will be excruciating, and, one hopes, as exciting as the investigation of a Sherlock Holmes or a Dr. Gregory House. Our investigation will be one where everything counts, where every word, every half-word, every comma, every line break, every preposition and bit of punctuation has the potential to hold significant meaning. Along the way we will suggest the importance of such detail attention in every line of work, that of the lawyer, the cop, the psychoanalyst, the salesman, the surgeon, the diagnostician, the wary parent and even the sycophant. Students will come away from this course with the ability to write a full page on the precise wording of a single sentence in a 300-page novel. Key Assignment: For both the midterm and final, students will be given brief quotations from the novels (some that have been reviewed in lecture,

some that are fresh with the exam). Their task will be to “close read” the sentences, and to highlight and explain aspects of diction and syntax that produce the “telling” point.

...demonstrate critical thinking in the evaluation of sources and arguments in scholarly works, or in the evaluation of approaches and techniques in the visual, literary, or performing arts.

...describe how language use is related to ways of thinking, cultural heritage, and cultural values.

The great luxury of the novel is that of extended development. and then, often, of finally honed precision. Our students live in a world of abbreviations, of ubiquitous contractions, of laid-back colloquialism that finds all good things awesome and almost every friend a dude. It is a world where “honesty” is expressed by plain talk that frequently asserts its no-nonsense integrity with the occasional “shit.” This course aims to suggest the danger when the complex Aristotelian language of “rhetoric” becomes to most nothing but an expression of “bull.” American Presidents speak like cowboys. Everyone on the political stage refers to both the American people and the terrorists as “folks.” This course stands up for developed verbal processes, and it will argue that without respect for verbal subtlety, the languages of diplomacy, of human intimacy, of politics, of race relations, and of justice itself will become impoverished. Key Assignment: The short papers that compare novelistic texts to cinematic “texts” will require students to discuss aspects of the written text that are lost, diminished, or significantly reframed when the medium changes.

...conduct research on a topic in the humanities using a variety of sources and technologies.

...demonstrate the ability to formulate a thesis related to a specific topic in the humanities and to support the thesis with evidence and argumentation.

. One of the dangers of writing about “the novel” is that the big sweep of the plot can foster student essays that make excessively general points. This course will insist that the student cite verse more than chapter, and far more than any “general story.” Of course students will make general statements in their papers, but only after having come to understand that a striking point might discuss why Henry James wrote, prepositionally, of “stopping in Rome or at Naples” (emphasis added). Key Assignments: All written work will demand proof of a thesis. This requirement applies not only to the term paper, but also to the explication of key sentences or passages on both the midterm and final (where students will need to identify the main point of the prompt, and then show, with focus on precise wording, how that point is subtly made).

...demonstrate understanding of the creative process and techniques used by practitioners in a specific field of the visual, literary, or performing arts.

Course Syllabus

View the course syllabus [here](#).

Note: Your browser may download the syllabus, in which case you will have to open it in a separate program, i.e. Adobe Acrobat or Microsoft Word, in order to view it.

Another Note: Some people are uploading Word .docx files (newer Word format). If your