

English 476: Senior Seminar
(WID Course)

Session: Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Marjorie Allison

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M,W 12:45-2, and by appt.

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Required Texts:

Atwood, Margaret. *Blind Assassin*

Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*

Coetzee, J.M. *The Life and Times of Michael K*

Enright, Anne. *The Gathering*

Flanagan, Richard. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (newly published)

Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*

Martel, Yann. *Life of Pi*

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*

Students will also need to access articles places in a course folder at WesternOnline.

***Students should also own a copy of the MLA Handbook.

Bring Relevant Textbook or Printout to Every Class

WID Course: "This course has been designated to meet the Writing Instruction in the Disciplines (WID) graduation requirement. WID courses provide instruction in the processes and formats for the writing content and style needed to be an effective professional in a student's chosen field."

Course Description:

This spring the Senior Seminar will consider literature in terms of various types of canon formation and questions of merit within literary studies, centered on novels of the British Commonwealth which have been named Booker Award Winners (currently the Man Booker Award). In reading several "Booker" novels, we will explore what makes an "award winning book," especially in light of a post-colonial, British Commonwealth award. We will consider who wins the award and what the consequences of winning a major award are. We will examine how these particular authors and texts support or subvert the master narratives "received" from the British Isles, how stereotypes are challenged, and how new cultural identities are formed. Additionally, we will address questions of gender (why don't female authors win the award at the same rate as male authors?) and questions of national identity (do these authors speak "for" their nations of origin?). Finally, we will consider how the books on this list begin to "speak" to each other when read together and if they are forming a useful canon of their own.

In this course, students will bring to bare their previous literary study. They will apply multiple theoretical approaches to the literary texts at hand and will extend and hone their skills of critical reading and writing. Within the framework of a seminar, they will practice situating their own reading and writing in the context of a larger scholarly discussion.

Requirements, Assignments, and Grading:

A senior seminar is a small group of advanced students engaged in original research and intensive reading and study. To that end, more is expected of you than your standard undergraduate literature course. Careful and critical reading in advance of class, frequent and substantial participation, and an extensive, original seminar paper are required in senior seminars.

Participation: As a seminar, this course relies on strong, nuanced, and consistent participation from each student in the class. I expect you to read each of the assigned readings in advance and attend class ready to discuss these readings in detail. Students are required to participate in discussion regularly by answering questions, posing questions, making analytical comments, and expressing his or her opinion. I will generally rely on voluntary participation but I also will call on students to contribute. Each student will be asked to help lead class discussion at least once this semester. Participation will be evaluated using the following general criteria:

- A:** Student contributes *daily* and *significantly* and always actively focuses on class discussion.
- B:** Student contributes *regularly* and always actively focuses on class discussion.
- C:** Student contributes *sporadically* and/or always actively focuses on class discussion.
- D:** Student contributes *rarely* and/or frequently does not stay actively focused on the discussion.
- F:** Student does not contribute and does not stay actively focused on the discussion.

I do not expect nor require students to have the “right” answer or to provide ground-breaking analysis but merely to engage in the process of discussing and analyzing the literature. Remember that quality is better than quantity but quantity is better than no quantity.

In order to participate at the level required, you will need to read the assignments carefully and critically. Here are some helpful guidelines for reading critically:

- Read the work of literature or article in advance (not right before class),
- Reread the work or sections of the work that are tricky or dense,
- Take reading notes – both summative and critical,
- Identify and question subtextual ideas and concepts,
- Draw connections between the primary and secondary readings,
- Draw connections between the novel, the Booker Award, canon formation, and
- Come to class with at least one conceptual comment about the reading.

In addition to daily participation, students will periodically be required to write discussion questions and to take unannounced reading quizzes that will factor into the participation grade.

Discussion Questions: Good questions should be open-ended, have multiple answers, and provoke discussion which helps us understand not only the work in question but how the work shapes our understanding of the contemporary novel, the Booker Award, canon formation, among other ideas. Avoid questions based on one’s personal “opinion,” explanatory questions, hypothetical questions, questions about

like or dislike, and questions that can be answered with yes, no, or some other simple sentence.

Quizzes: There will be a series of quizzes covering the reading assigned for that particular day. Questions on the quizzes will primarily be objective but some analytical questions will appear from time to time.

Exploratory Essays: For this assignment, students will write three short (2-3 page) exploratory essays. These essays will engage conceptually with the primary works: identifying, close reading, and critically analyzing one or two key elements, anxieties, questions, or concepts for further exploration and grounding and contextualizing your analysis in relevant secondary readings from the class. Each paper should contain a tentative argument about the work in question and also assert/demonstrate how this issue has a larger scholarly relevance and significance. I would encourage students to treat these essays as a possible seed for the longer seminar paper. Essays must be turned in during class and also uploaded in .doc or .rtf format to WesternOnline by the dates and times below.

Essay #1 Due:	February 9th
Sum/Analysis Due:	February 18th
Essay #3 Due:	March 4th
Essay #4 Due:	April 1st

Summary/Analysis: Students write a summary and analysis of one scholarly essay in preparation of the Scholarly Essay later in the semester.

Scholarly Essay Project: As the core assignment of the course, you will write a 12-15 page scholarly essay that advances a sustained critical argument regarding at least one of the novels and concepts such as the Booker Award, canon formation, the role of novels in identity formation, etc. You will engage with at least 5 critical/theoretical sources (beyond assigned readings) relevant to your topic. I encourage you to extend one of your shorter papers into this project. You are not allowed to combine two or more shorter papers into the scholarly essay. This paper will require you to engage in and contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation surrounding your topic.

This assignment will require:

- a **3-4 page scholarly essay proposal** that outlines your argument and integrates at least 3 of your sources,
- rough draft (12 page minimum),
- an annotated bibliography of your potential sources,
- 1-2 page (single-spaced) **reader's report** for a peer essay, and
- Revised 12-15 page scholarly essay.

Scholarly Project Due Dates:

Proposal: April 13th

Annotated Bibliography & Rough Draft Due:
April 22nd

Reader's Report Due:
April 27th

Final Draft Due:

May 3rd

Essay Policies: All essays should be typed, double-spaced and conform to MLA guidelines for format and in-text citation. Both secondary and primary texts must be cited both in the text and on a work cited page. Late essays will be assessed a 5% penalty for *every* calendar day they are late. No essays will be accepted after Thursday, May 8th. Late rough draft penalties will apply to the grade of the final draft. I reserve the right to not write comments on late essays.

DISTRIBUTION AND GRADING SCALE

Participation	20%
Exploratory Essays and Summary/ Analysis (7.5% each)	30%
Scholarly Essay Project:	
3-4 page proposal	10%
Annotated Bibliography of Sources	5%
1-2 (single-spaced) reader's report	5%
Final Draft	30%

A	93-100%	B+	87-89 %	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	F	0%-59%
A-	90-92%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%		
		B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%		

General Information

Participation, Attendance and Punctuality: Because this course is based upon class discussion, attendance and participation are crucial to the success of the course and the success of individual students in the course. In order to participate you must not only attend class but also arrive on time. If you are absent, it is up to you to find out from classmates what material you have missed and to find out what you need to do for the next class session. Any student who falls into a pattern of absenteeism will find his or her final grade adversely effected; persistent lateness will have a similar effect. Each student is allowed three absences for the semester--no questions asked. For each absence beyond three, I will deduct one half grade from your final grade for Class Participation. A pattern of chronic absences will result in the final, overall grade being lowered. Allowances to the overall number may be made in extreme circumstances (e.g. serious prolonged illness). These circumstances will need to be documented, and the student must contact me within 4 class meetings of the first absence.

Conduct: I expect my classes operate with great respect for a large diversity of ideas and viewpoints. This atmosphere is essential in any academic setting. I expect all students to respect and listen to other viewpoints –I do not expect all students to agree on issues. So, mature, respectful, and thoughtful dialogue is encouraged. Insensitive comments and conduct will not be tolerated, whether aimed at me or at a class member. Please see the Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/stucode.shtml>.

Scholastic Dishonesty: Scholastic dishonesty of any kind on any assignment undermines the quality of education at WIU and will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Scholastic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication, falsification, multiple submissions, and plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty of any kind will result in an F in the course and will be reported to CAGAS. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes scholastic dishonesty. I will

also be happy to answer any questions you may have. You should also consult the University policy at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

Americans with Disabilities Act: “In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. For the instructor to provide the proper accommodation(s), you must obtain documentation of the need for an accommodation through the Disability Resource Center and provide it to the instructor. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor’s attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs of students. Students who may require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e. fire, tornado, etc) should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow in such an emergency. Contact Disability Resource Center at 298-2512 for additional services.” These accommodations will be gladly given. Please contact me ASAP.

University Writing Center: The UWC is available to assist you with general and specific questions on any of the writing assignments for this course. Consultants can add another voice to your writing at any stage in the writing process from brainstorming to polishing the final product. Please call for an appointment (298-2815) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment to your session. A visit to the UWC should be a supplement to (rather than a replacement for) talking about your paper with me.

Email: Email correspondence is a quick and easy way to communicate during this semester. I will use it frequently to communicate with the class, and I encourage you to use it to contact me to set up an appointment, ask questions, make comments, etc. I do consider email to be formal communication so I expect emails to be properly addressed, to maintain a professional tone, and to be grammatically correct. If your question or request is too large to be handily resolved over email, I will ask you to set an appointment to discuss it in an individual conference.

Office Hours: Students are encouraged to visit during office hours. These are available to use without setting an appointment. Additionally, if I am in my office, feel free to drop in to see if I am available to meet. If you are not able to meet during office hours, please email me, and we can set an appointment.

Final Notes: Students are urged to keep an extra copy of their papers and of any other important work. If you hand something in late or in to my e-mail account, be sure that you confirm with me that I received the material.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Please turn off your cell phone ringer during class, and please refrain from texting during class.

Reading Schedule

(This schedule and list is subject to change according to the needs of the class. I will be adding in scholarly essays as we move along. All changes will be announced in class, and it is up to you to keep informed about any changes.)

1/21 Introductions

1/26 Begin *The Life and Times...*
1/28 “

2/2 Begin *The Bone People*
2/4 “

2/9 “; **Essay One Due**
2/11 “

2/16 Finish *The Bone People* and begin *The God of Small Things*
2/18 “; **Summary/Analysis Due**

2/23 “
2/25 “

3/2 Begin *Life of Pi*
3/4 “; **Essay Two Due**

3/9 “
3/11 Finish *Pi* Library Meeting ?

3/12-3/16 Spring Break

3/23 Begin *Blind Assassin*
3/25 “

3/30 “
4/1 “; **Essay Three Due**

4/6 “
4/8 Begin *The Gathering*

4/13 “; **Proposal Due**
4/15 “

4/20 Begin *The Sense of an Ending*
4/22 “ and **Rough Drafts Due**

4/27 Begin *The Narrow Road to the Far North*; **Peer Readings Due**
4/29 “

5/3 “; **Final Paper Due**
5/6 “

Final Date: Monday, May 11th at 3 pm; wrap-up of last novel and class