

Pittsburg State University
English 875
Whose Canon Is It, Anyway?
Summer 2013

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Course Description: This graduate-level, face-to-face seminar examines the current canon debate in a way that will give you a grasp of the history and theory of canon formation as well as hands-on practice in canon revision (tailored to your particular field specialties and interests). Readings and viewings will fall within one of three categories:

- Primary literature, film, and criticism in the self-consciously canonical lineage that was formative of the English literary canon as we now know it.
- Primary literature, film, and criticism that was excluded from, yet conscious of, the canon (and thus in its way equally constitutive of the canon).
- Current academic criticism and theory of the canon as well as selections from the journalism of the “culture wars.”

These readings, which focus on the following topics or “problems,” are designed to suggest that the evolution of the canon cannot be understood separately from that of the major institutions of the modern nation-state (political, economic, social, educational, and communicational). Likewise, the readings often model or perform these problems, whether explicitly or implicitly:

- The classics problem
- The national literacy problem
- The genre problem
- The generation/period problem
- The schooling problem
- The minority/marginal cultures problem
- The information age problem

Learning Objectives:

1. Narrate a history of the current canon debate.
2. Appreciate and understand the ways that race, ethnicity, religion, politics, class, and sex and gender have affected the creation of canonical and non-canonical texts.
3. Identify structural elements of novels, poetry, drama, and film and analyze how those elements help create specific meanings and effects.
4. Compare works in terms of theme, structure, and use of literary and cinematic devices.
5. Write effective analyses defending arguable theses based on close reading of texts and incorporating relevant terms, concepts, and research.
6. Identify issues and questions raised by literary texts that might be addressed by literary analysis.
7. Develop a deeper appreciation for the reading and study of literature.

Required Texts and Materials:

May Sinclair, *Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, Modern Library (2003).
ISBN: 0812969952

Lee Morrissey, *Debating the Canon: A Reader from Addison to Nafisi*, Palgrave Macmillan (2005).
ISBN: 1403968209

Anthony Burgess, *Clockwork Orange*, W.W. Norton & Company, Restored Text Edition (2012).
ISBN: 0393089134

Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Bookshop*, Houghton Mifflin, 1st edition (1997).
ISBN: 0395869463

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, W.W. Norton & Company (1998).
ISBN: 0393960129

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Scribner, Reissue Edition (2004).
ISBN: 0743273567

Outside materials available for download from Canvas or online.

Grading Scale:

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

Assignments and Evaluations:

Participation: 25%

Reading List Presentation: 20%

Final Project Proposal: 15%

Final Project: 40%

You must fully complete all assignments for the course in order to receive a passing grade.

Presentation: This class depends upon actively engaged speakers, listeners, and writers. Your responsibility is to be an active participant. As a result, this class demands that all reading assignments are completed, **in full**, on the day they are due and that you **bring the assigned text to class**. In addition, all assignments are to be typewritten and done according to directions. I encourage you to think for yourself, challenge each other, and assume pride and ownership in every text you produce.

Late Work and Attendance Policy: I reserve the right to decrease the grade of late work by ONE FULL LETTER GRADE for every day it is late including the first. For example, if an essay is two days late and the original grade is a B+, the final penalized grade would be a D+. If you have a problem with an assignment, please see me or call me BEFORE the due date. Any student who accrues excessive absences (three or more) will most likely fail the course. If you do miss class for any reason, you are still accountable for the work given and due that day unless prior arrangements have been made. Finally, I also expect you to be on-time to class. Any student who is tardy more than three times will be marked absent according to my discretion. If you have a problem getting to class on time (i.e., you have class on the other side of campus), please let me know as soon as possible.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism includes the presentation, without proper attribution, of another's words or ideas from printed or electronic sources. It is also plagiarism to submit, without the instructor's consent, an assignment in one class previously submitted in another. I reward plagiarism with a zero. Further action by the university may also be taken. Please familiarize yourselves with the university policy on plagiarism. If you feel that you need extra help with your assignments, tutors are available in the Writing Center in Axe Library (235-4694). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to cite sources properly, do not hesitate to ask me for help. Please also consult PSU's Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy available online at

<http://www.pittstate.edu/audiences/current-students/policies/rights-and-responsibilities/academic-misconduct.dot>

Also, make sure to consult the Syllabus Supplement, which can be thought of as a "one-stop" place for students to access up-to-date information about campus resources, notifications, and expectations. It is available at

<http://www.pittstate.edu/office/registrar/syllabus-supplement.dot>

A Word of Advice: All students are more than welcome to drop by during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions, continue discussion of issues from class, or to offer comments. This is especially true during the first week of class and especially true for students with disabilities who are registered with the Center for Student

Accommodations (235-4309) and who may need individual arrangements. **Make use of your teachers!!** We are here to help you learn, and we do not expect you to be perfect (who is?). We regard intelligent questions in and out of class and an eagerness to improve one's abilities as evidence of an A student more than written work alone. There is no such thing as a stupid question!

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments (ALL DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!):

All chapters are from *Debating the Canon*.

WEEK ONE

- June 3: Introduction to the Course and Assignments
View *Midnight Movies*
- June 4: View *Citizen Kane*
- June 5: *Citizen Kane* – Welles
Introduction – Morrissey
Ch. 8 – Adler
Ch. 32 – Graff
- June 6: *The Rover* – Behn
Available at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/behn/aphra/b42r/>
Ch. 1 – Addison
Ch. 2 – Hume
- June 7: “The Lifted Veil” – Eliot
Available at <http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/geliot.htm>
Ch. 3 – Johnson
Ch. 5 – Arnold
Ch. 24 – Smith

WEEK TWO

- June 10: View *Rocky Horror Picture Show*
- June 11: *Rocky Horror Picture Show* – Sharman
Ch. 7 – Leavis
Ch. 25 – Krupat
- June 12: *The Great Gatsby* – Fitzgerald
Ch. 12 – Adorno
Ch. 42 – Nafisi
- June 13: *The Great Gatsby* – Fitzgerald
Ch. 15 – Kolodny
Ch. 17 – Bennett
Ch. 21 – Bloom
- June 14: Excerpts from *Moby Dick* – Melville
Chapters 1, 3, 26, 27, 28, 36, 41, 42, 110, 117, 133, 134, 135, and the Epilogue available at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Mel2Mob.html>
“Melville’s Marginalia” – Howe (On Canvas)
Ch. 22 – Hirsch
Ch. 23 – Kermode

WEEK THREE

June 17: View Film (TBA)

June 18: Discuss Film
Ch. 33 – Guillory
Ch. 37 – Bloom

June 19: *Clockwork Orange* – Burgess
Ch. 26 – Altieri
Ch. 27 – Kernan

June 20: *Clockwork Orange* – Burgess
Ch. 28 – Kimball
Ch. 29 – Lauter

June 21: *The Bookshop* – Fitzgerald
Ch. 18 – Meese
Ch. 19 – Tompkins

WEEK FOUR

June 24: View Film (TBA)

June 25: Discuss Film
Ch. 35 – Said
Ch. 36 – Bérubé

June 26: *Wide Sargasso Sea* – Rhys
Ch. 6 – Eliot
Ch. 11 – Fanon
Ch. 14 – Showalter

June 27: *Wide Sargasso Sea* – Rhys
Ch. 39 – Garber
Ch. 40 – Rorty

June 28: *Life and Death of Harriet Freen* – Sinclair
Ch. 30 – Pollitt
Ch. 41 – Scholes

Assignment Overview

Reading List Presentation

You have been elected to represent graduate students in revising the MA Exam Reading List. In a fifteen- to twenty-minute presentation, answer the following questions about a work (or set of works in the case of poetry or short stories) from the MA Exam Reading List:

- By virtue of the work's inclusion on the reading list, the faculty members consider the work canonical. What makes the work canonical? You may use course readings to help support your ideas.
- The English Department is cutting the number of works on the reading list by 25%. Does this work deserve to stay on the list? Why or why not? You may use course readings to help support your ideas.

You should create a **handout to accompany your presentation**. The handout should highlight the important aspects of the presentation and the text for successfully discussing it on the MA exam. You will select a day and text during the first week of class.

Proposal and Final Project

Your final project will take one of three forms:

1. Writing a fifteen- to twenty-page research essay that addresses some issue related to the canon,
2. Creating the apparatus for an innovative literary and/or cinematic anthology that should study, reflect on, and/or innovate upon the idea of a canon, or
3. Creating the apparatus for an innovative course that should study, reflect on, and/or innovate upon the idea of a literary canon.

In the first option, you may want to address one of the "canon problems" mentioned in the Course Description and discussed in class. You may also want to take a different approach by, for example, performing a rhetorical analysis of the ways in which the canon is discussed in the Culture Wars of the last two decades of the twentieth century. Whatever approach you take, you will likely need to perform additional research to support your argument.

In the second option, you will create

- a table of contents complete with major divisions / organizational structure and links to online resources
- a sample of what a fully-developed unit would look like (e.g., headnote, bibliography, edited text, etc.)
- an annotated bibliography or commentary on a selection of older and recent print anthologies and literary histories in the field
- a theory archive or commentary (e.g., short excerpts from theorists, critics, or past authors that help determine the idea of the present anthology and short explanations of how these excerpts inform the anthology)
- a General Introduction to the anthology (three to five pages; look at the Norton and Heath anthologies for examples)

In the third option, you will create

- a fully-elaborated syllabus complete with schedule of assigned readings and links to online resources
- detailed notes for a sample class
- a selected, annotated bibliography of related courses on the Internet or elsewhere
- a theory archive or commentary (e.g., short excerpts from theorists, critics, or other sources that help determine the idea of the present course and short explanations of how these excerpts inform the course)
- a "philosophy of this course" essay (three to five pages)

Options Two and Three should contain the same amount of work as Option One, though you may have to include many more physical pages in Options Two and Three due to formatting. You may want to consider presenting your project in a different way. For example, I would be happy to help you to create a website that hosts your project.

A **three- to five-page proposal** that offers either an outline of the entire project or a completed section of the project is due on Monday, July 1. The final project is due on Friday, July 26. While we do not meet during the month of July, I am happy to meet with you about your project to discuss drafts or strategies for completion.