

ENGL 5993 -MX1 Special Topic in Literature: Contemporary British Literature
May 13 – July 5

Moral Complexities in Turn of the Millennium British Literature

Dr. Peter Fields, assoc. professor of English

peter.fields@msutexas.edu

Office: Bea Wood 230 in PY Ph: 940-397-4246

Office Hours: MTWR 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM; also, by appointment.

ZOOM: We will meet every Tuesday for a required group ZOOM meeting at 6:00 PM for one hour.

Due Dates at a Glance: Two Rough Drafts/Two Essays

Rough Draft for Essay 1 due in GETTING MY INPUT – Monday June 10.

Essay One: Drop Box opens June 17 – due before 11:59 PM Wednesday **June 19**. 50 percent of semester grade.

Rough Draft for Essay 2 due in GETTING MY INPUT – Wednesday June 26

Essay Two: Drop Box opens July 3 – due before 11:59 PM Friday **July 5**. 50 percent of semester grade.

LATE WORK: Late essays (submitted after 11:59 PM on the due date) are penalized 10 points out of 100 even if D2L says they are only late by a minute or less. No late Essays are accepted after 2:00 AM Saturday morning, July 6.

IMPORTANT: For Essay 2, which requires supporting sources, you are using the relevant chapters from Reisman and supporting sources I provide you in D2L. **Only use Reisman and the supporting sources I provide in D2L.**

Everyone needs this book:

Mara E. Reisman, *Moral Complexities in Turn of the Millennium British Literature*. Lexington Books, 2023. ISBN: 978-1-7936-4846-4. The book is five chapters—one for each of our five titles.

In addition to Reisman, everyone needs to choose **THREE** novels from the titles below. **NOTE:** Andrea Levy's *Small Island* is longer than the other titles and therefore worth TWO. If you choose Levy, you only need one other title, **TWO** altogether.

- Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*. Penguin Random House, 1990. ISBN: 978-0-679731726.
- Andrea Levy, *Small Island*. Picador, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-312429522.
- Jeanette Winterson, *The Daylight Gate*. Grove Atlantic, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-802122834.
- Graham Swift, *The Light of day*. Penguin Random House, 2003. ISBN: 978-1-400032211.
- Patrick McGrath, *Asylum*. Penguin Random House, 1997. ISBN: 978-0-679781387.

Tips to help you decide on your **three** novels (or **two** if you have chosen Levy's *Small Island*):

1. BOTH Levy and Swift feature FOOD—a **tasteful pairing**.
2. BOTH Levy and Ishiguro talk about the impact of World War II, its aftermath, and the lead-up to it (Levy about race; Ishiguro about Nazis)—an **historical pairing**.
3. The Merchant Ivory film for *The Remains of the Day* is a valid supporting source for Ishiguro because Mara Reisman discusses the difference between the novel and the film. The DVD's featurette "Blind Loyalty, Hollow Honor" is also a viable supporting source.
4. Winterson's *The Daylight Gate* is our shortest read. Ishiguro is our second fastest read.
5. The three **shortest** (fastest) reads would be **Ishiguro, Winterson, and McGrath—our fastest threesome**. Each book can be read in two or three sittings.
6. Winterson, Swift, and McGrath—all three novels—feature passion and violence. **McGrath, Winterson, and Swift comprise a love-and-violence trinity**.
7. The **longest** read is Levy's *Small Island*. But it's hard to put down this book. You will miss it.
8. The supporting sources for McGrath's gothic novel *Asylum* are NOT scholarly articles—they are links to YouTube. They are fun and short but also highly informative about unreliable narrator,

Gothic literature, and the sublime—relevant topics for McGrath. But I am open to your using the same videos for any of our other titles (in particular, about **unreliable narrator**).

Two Essays: we are dividing the graduate paper into three essays, each about 2800 words. You can use first person singular “I” in these essays—or not. **50 percent each.**

Prompt for both essays: **What caught your attention regarding the moral complexity in these novels?**

The **first essay** (approximately 2800 words) is only about what you notice the characters (or some of them) are doing about the moral complexity they face. This is an essay only about your three titles (or two if you chose Levy as one of them). If you are talking about *The Remains of the Day*, you may talk about both the novel and the Merchant Ivory film. **What caught your attention?**

The **second essay** (approximately 2800 words) requires a **Works Cited**. It features something that Mara Reisman has to say about your three titles (or two with Levy). In some respects, you may intuitively agree with her (e.g., about food and English identity in Levy). In other respects, you may be caught off-guard (e.g., about unreliable narrator in McGrath’s gothic novel). **What caught your attention?** The second essay is really **a critical review of Reisman and related supporting sources**. Don’t use supporting sources other than Reisman or those I have provided in D2L. You need my permission for any other supporting source (e.g., it could be you like a preface or afterword in your edition of one of your novels—but get my permission). If you are writing about *The Remains of the Day*, you can use “Blind Loyalty-Hollow Honor,” a featurette from the film DVD. I will provide a model of in-body citing and the Works Cited in a news item.

GRADUATE OBJECTIVES

- Graduate students reflect on the moral complexities of three of our primary titles (or two with Levy) with originality, insight, and self-awareness.
- Graduate students are required once-weekly to meet *together* on ZOOM.
- Graduate students reflect on Mara Reisman’s close reading and analysis of the moral complexities in our novels.
- Graduate students reflect on scholarly articles in professional journals (provided in D2L as PDFs or links) with originality, insight, and self-awareness.
- Graduate students reflect on YouTube sources if relevant to their titles (these sources are provided in D2L as links).
- Graduate students use MLA in-body citing and Works Cited.
- Graduate students have the opportunity to get input on their writing BEFORE it is due.

ACADEMIC HONESTY & FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

If students are interested in a supporting source I have not provided or authorized, they should get my permission first. We do use TURNITIN as a kind of alarm system. But it is not my habit to accuse anyone of plagiarism. I expect work to be the student’s own. Therefore, I always grade on the merits: that is, whether the essay meets the criteria of my rubric—not whether it just sounds academic or thoughtful. **The most important criterion in my rubric is the specific detail in the student’s own words.** Each body paragraph should describe something tangible and physical from the novel; for Essays 2 and 3, describe the detail or dynamic the supporting source has in mind. **Dynamic description of specific details is the number one sign (and reassurance) of originality.** I will provide models in our D2L news items for Works Cited and in-body citing of a novel, Mara Reisman, our scholarly articles, and YouTube sources.

GET MY INPUT: I am the only one who sees your work-in-progress.

In **CONTENT**, click on the module for GET MY INPUT. By the title of the relevant discussion forum (Essay 1, 2), click on the downward arrow and open **VIEW TOPIC**. Type directly, or copy-and-paste from your

own document, into the text box and then post to me. Don't use the attachment function. I will only evaluate what is in the text box.

IMPORTANT: Yes, getting my input is a thread for a discussion forum. But it is not the usual type. Other students in the class are not able to see what you send me for input. Only I do. And I am the only person who replies to your work.

REMEMBER: Getting my input is NOT for grade.

You must still submit the best version of your Essay to the drop box before 11:59 PM of the due date. My input is not for credit. The only way your work gets counted, evaluated, and graded is when you submit your document to the drop box.

Reading Schedule and Due Dates

WEEK 1 May 13-17: Tuesday, May 14, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Read your first book. Read the LONGER one first.

WEEK 2 May 20-24: Tuesday, May 21, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Read your second book. Read the next longest.

WEEK 3 May 27-31: Tuesday, May 28, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Read your third book.

WEEK 4 July 3-7: Tuesday, June 4, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Write approximately 2800 words about what characters do with moral complexities in your three titles (two titles if one of them is Levy's *Small Island*). Connect the complexities to specific details.

WEEK 5 June 10-14: Tuesday, June 11, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Rough draft of Essay 1 due in GETTING MY INPUT Monday June 10.

WEEK 6 June 17-21: Tuesday, June 18, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Essay 1 due in DROP BOX before 11:59 PM Wednesday June 19.

WEEK 7 June 24-28: Tuesday, June 25, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Rough draft of Essay 2 due in GETTING MY INPUT Wednesday June 26.

Examine the chapters in Mara Reisman that pertain to the titles you chose. Highlight remarks that stand out to you. Examine the supporting sources in D2L that pertain to the novels you chose. Write approximately 2800 words that feature thoughts that caught your attention in Reisman and supporting sources I provide in D2L. What specific details pertain to these thoughts?

WEEK 8 July 1-5: Tuesday, July 2, 6:00 PM group ZOOM.

Essay 2 due in DROP BOX before 11:59 PM Friday July 5.

Essays are penalized 10 points out of 100 even if D2L says lateness is only by a minute or less. **ALL LATE ESSAYS MUST BE SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN 2:00 AM Saturday July 6.**

Graduate Grading Rubric:

The five categories are scored with this scale: failing (56), passing (66), satisfactory (76), good (86), and excellent (96-100). The grade is an average of the five scores:

- **MINI-ESSAY Paragraph One:** The introduction should be comprehensive of most of your important ideas about moral complexities in the novels you chose. You might compose this paragraph LAST.
- **BODY PARAGRAPHS:** Each body paragraph starts with a topic idea about moral complexity. Then you cite the work you are examining. In Essay 1, you are citing the novels (three titles; or two titles if one of them is Levy's *Small Island*). Describe specific details in your own words. Essay 2 will feature thoughts that stand out to you from Reisman and supporting sources I provide in D2; be sure to indicate the actual thing, the specific detail or scenario the source has in mind. Essay 3 puts the emphasis on your personal reactions—your feelings about—a remark you recall from Reisman or one of your other supporting sources in Essay 2. For Essay 3, use a supporting source's remark as a point of departure for your feelings about each of your three titles (two if using Levy).
- **EPILOGUE (last paragraph):** For Essay 1, this paragraph starts with a specific detail from one of your titles—this detail is not one you have previously addressed. It's your point of departure for a final reflection on moral complexity in our course. For Essay 2, the epilogue should start with a remark from your supporting sources that you held back until the end. For Essay 3, the epilogue could start with a supporting source's thought or a specific detail from one of your novels, which you held back until now.
- **SPECIFICS:** As much as possible, the essay deals with specific situations, scenarios, actions, behaviors, and dynamics from the novels—even if indirectly in Essay 2 where you are featuring supporting sources (Reisman and those I've provided in D2L) or in Essay 3 where you are reacting to them.
- **ORIGINALITY, READABILITY:** The essay avoids speaking in broad generalities. Essay 2 needs an MLA WORKS CITED. All three essays use MLA in-body citing.