

ENGL5953- Contemporary Literature: Perspectives

Class: ENGL 5953

Section: 101

Place: online

Time: Weekly Meetings

Office Hours: M-T-W-R: 10:00-noon or by appointment

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Course Description:

In this class, we will read award-winning novels from internationally recognized authors. The main focus of the course will be to understand the value of perspective from an authorial standpoint as well as from a reader's point of view. Point of view is an essential component in a narrative as it determines the way we perceive the tale. To take this notion a step further, one must also consider who is telling the story. While point of view can be described simply as first-person, second-person, or third-person, the voice that tells the story is also critical to this notion of perspective. Finally, to add an additional layer onto this notion of perspective, one must consider *intertextuality*, which is when the shape of one text's meaning is determined by its relationship to other texts. For instance, Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is told in first-person from Huck's perspective; however, Everett's *James* takes that same narrative but shifts the perspective to that of Jim. While plot points provide clear landmarks in the narrative, how we as readers view those events differs because of the shift in perspective. It is the difference between the two perspectives that illuminates a greater narrative, one that encompasses both sides of the coin simultaneously. The novels we will read will explore complicated issues, both at the micro and macro level, all with the aim of gaining a greater understanding of narrative form and the world.

Required Texts:

Your House Will Pay by Steph Cha

Infinite Country by Patricia Engel

James by Percival Everett

Open Water by Caleb Azumah Nelson

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys

We will also read selected essays from other authors, critics and theorists; these materials are posted on D2L.

Assignments:

Responses 40%

For each book we read, a two to three page response is required. Check the course schedule for due dates for each response. Responses should address issues you find compelling from a literary, social, historical, and/or psychological perspective. Please quote specific passages in the text that illustrate your points. Each response will be graded as a check +, check, or check -, respectively equating to a 95, 85, or 75. Semester response grades are averaged. They and will constitute 35% of your grade. No late responses will be accepted without prior approval.

Final Project 40% + Annotated Bibliography 15%

A final paper of no less than ten pages that draws upon at least four secondary sources will be due the date of the final exam scheduled for this class. All topic proposals must be submitted and approved. Additionally, an Annotated Bibliography* of all secondary sources must accompany the final paper in lieu of a Works Cited Page. *Annotated Bibliography: an MLA entry followed by a summary of the text and its relevance to your project.

A Few Notes on Research:

Students should have no problem finding substantial criticism on Everett and Rhys; however, it's likely that far less is available on the other authors. Reviews and interviews provide vital information for a paper, but they are not substitutes for interpretive criticism. Look to analysis of contemporary literature/issues in general—that is, to books and articles on theory and critical framework.

Formatting:

All written work turned in to me for a grade must follow a specific format. I will only accept typed work that uses a 12 pt. Times New Roman font and margins must be standard width and height (1" all around). Every assignment must have a title, your name, class and section, date, and my name. All papers should have page numbers in the lower right hand corner beginning on the second page and follow MLA style conventions, with the exception noted above.

Late Work:

Assignments marked **Read** are due on the date they are listed. Failure to read assigned texts will result in a failing grade. Written response and the major writing assignment will only be accepted after the **Due** date if prior arrangements have been made with me. Exceptions to this rule will only be made in cases of verifiable emergencies.

How your final grade will be determined: A=100-90; B=89-80; C=79-70; D=69-60; F=59->

Responses-	40%
Final Paper -	40%
Annotated Bibliography -	15%
<u>Class Participation</u>	<u>5%</u>
Total –	100%

Academic Integrity/Intellectual Property/ Plagiarism Policy:

Any student found submitting work other than his or her own will fail the course. There are no exceptions to this policy. Plagiarism is the use of someone (or something) else's thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing in "Works Cited") whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. It is a theft of intellectual property and will not be tolerated, whether intentional or not. **No Generative AI is allowed in the composition of work for this course.**

Student Honor Creed

"As an MSU Student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else do so."

As students at MSU, we recognize that any great society must be composed of empowered, responsible citizens. We also recognize universities play an important role in helping mold these responsible citizens. We believe students themselves play an important part in developing responsible citizenship by maintaining a community where integrity and honorable character are the norm, not the exception. Thus, we, the Students of Midwestern State University, resolve to uphold the honor of the University by affirming our commitment to complete academic honesty. We resolve not only to be honest but also to hold our peers accountable for complete honesty in all university matters. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any unauthorized material in examinations, or to present, as one's own, work or ideas which are not entirely one's own. We recognize that any instructor has the right to expect that all student work is honest, original work. We accept and acknowledge that responsibility for lying, cheating, stealing, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty fundamentally rests within each individual student. We expect of ourselves academic integrity, personal professionalism, and ethical character. We appreciate steps taken by University officials to protect the honor of the University against any who would disgrace the MSU student body by violating the spirit of this creed.

-- Written and adopted by the 2002-2003 MSU Student Senate.

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 contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

Safe Zones Statement

In this classroom you will be treated with respect as a human being - regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged. It is my expectation that ALL students consider the classroom a safe environment.

Course Schedule

Items marked **Read** and **Due** are to be completed on the date they are listed.
(I reserve the right to modify this schedule if I deem it necessary)

Week 1

- 6/1: Introductions, Syllabus and Course Schedule Distribution
Read: *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys
6/6: **Due:** Reading Response for *Wide Sargasso*

Week 2

- 6/8: **Read:** *Infinite Country* by Patricia Engel
6/13: **Due:** Reading Response for *Infinite Country*

Week 3

- 6/15: **Read:** *James: a novel* by Percival Everett
6/20: **Due:** Reading Response for *James*
Proposal for Final Essay

Week 4

- 6/22: **Read:** *Your House Will Pay* by Steph Cha
6/27: **Due:** Reading Response for *Your House Will Pay*

Week 5

- 6/29: **Read:** *Open Water* by Caleb Azumah Nelson

Final Essay

- 7/2: **Due:** Your Final Essay in D2L by 11:59. PM.
Due: Reading Response for *Open Water*