English 2350.007: Textual Analysis and Interpretation

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note: The latest that I usually check my email and cell phone for messages is 4 p.m.

Texts

course packet at UTA Bookstore [P]  
How to Interpret Literature by Robert Dale Parker [IL]  
Passing by Nella Larsen [PA]  
Wasteland by Jo Sinclair [W]  
Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse by Louise Erdrich [LR]  
The Human Stain by Philip Roth [HS]  
The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms

Course Description
This course is designed to introduce English majors, potential English majors, and those seeking secondary certification in English to what is required of them as majors in the English Dept. The course will teach students to (1) identify characteristics of genres, (2) recognize and understand critical and literary terms, (3) develop methods and strategies for analyzing and interpreting texts, and (4) demonstrate a command of these methods and strategies in written work. This course is a prerequisite for all upper-level English courses.

In this course, we will also examine passing, i.e.; the assumption of an identity not one’s own, in order to unravel the complexities of an act that simultaneously reinstates and resists conventional classifications as well as problematizing identity itself. In other words, if a woman can pass as a man, can she challenge the very notions of masculinity she needs in order to affect a credible transformation? If she succeeds, is she no longer her “real” self? We will focus not only on the phenomenon of passing, but on the hierarchical systems that have brought this strategy into being.

Learning Outcomes
1. Students should be able to demonstrate an informed understanding of the many different approaches to analyzing and interpreting texts and films. Students should be able to explain the similarities and differences of those approaches as well as their benefits and limitations.
2. Students should be able to demonstrate an informed understanding of the different modes of inquiry and research within English studies.
3. Students should be able to analyze and interpret texts and films employing close reading skills as well as a variety of other theories and methods that were included in the class.
4. Students should be able to perform independent research, using the MLA bibliography and other methods.
5. Students should be able to express their ideas in clear, logical, organized, concise, and persuasive ways, in both written and oral forms.
6. Students should be able to define many terms within English studies and explain the significance of those terms.
7. Students should be able to respond critically to all course material, using synthesis, analysis, comparison, contrast, critique and evaluation.
8. Students should be able to use web-based scholarly sources in an effective manner.

Course Policies

Attendance
I will grade more on actual participation rather than on mere attendance. However, because this course relies heavily on class discussion and because we cover a lot of material each class period, your attendance is very important. Everyone has three excused absences, which means that you needn’t tell me why you miss three classes. Each absence after three will lower your course grade five points. If you miss six class periods or more, you will fail the course. Given that illness and family emergencies are unpredictable, it would be wise not to use up all three excused absences in the beginning of the semester.

Lateness
Since lateness is a distraction both to me and the rest of the class, I close the door once class has begun, which may be exactly at 1 p.m. Students may only enter the classroom if I open the door again after general announcements or a student presentation. If you cannot come on time, you will be counted late; for every three times that you are late, you will be counted absent. It is your responsibility to see me after class to sign the roll. If there is a structural reason for your lateness, e.g. you have to walk across campus in 10 minutes, please see me immediately.

Late assignments
Reading notes, which must be typed, will be accepted no later than the end of class on the day that they are due. I do not accept late reading notes. Papers handed in after the due date will be penalized a letter grade for each class period they are late. If you are absent, you are expected to turn the work in on time. Emailed assignments must meet the same criteria. If you cannot come to class and are having someone put your work in my mailbox, please ask an English department secretary to note the time on your assignment. Missed quizzes may not be made up.
Special Arrangements
If there are conditions which may affect your performance in this class, and which require special accommodations, please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible so that such arrangements can be made. If you require an accommodation based on a disability, I would like to meet with you in the privacy of my office the first week of the semester to be sure that you are appropriately accommodated.

Student Support Services Available: The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources for more information.

Academic Integrity
Academic dishonesty is a serious offense at any university. If you have presented someone else’s work as your own, I will report you to the Vice President of Student Affairs for disciplinary action and give you a zero on the assignment, which may result in your failing the course. Forms of academic dishonesty include: Collusion—lending your work to another person to submit as his or her own; Fabrication—deliberately creating false information on a Works Cited page; and Plagiarism—the presentation of another person’s work as your own, whether you mean to or not. Even if you put someone else’s ideas into your own words, you must properly credit the source.

Drop Policy
If you withdraw from the course, you must follow university procedures. It is your responsibility to execute these procedures correctly and within the deadlines. I cannot drop anyone from the course.

Necessary Changes
I have tried to make this document as complete and thorough as I possibly could. However, during the course of the semester I may be required to alter, add, or abandon certain policies and assignments. I reserve the right to make such changes as they become necessary.

Student Responsibility
I will abide by the policies in this syllabus. Each student is responsible for reading and understanding this document. I will be glad to clarify any sections a student does not understand. At the beginning of the second week of school, I will ask every student to sign a document saying that the syllabus has been read and understood. Therefore, questions must be asked before that date.

Bomb Threats
If anyone is tempted to call in a bomb threat, be aware that UTA will attempt to trace the phone call and prosecute all responsible parties. Every effort will be made to avoid cancellations of presentations/tests caused by bomb threats. Unannounced alternative sites will be available for these classes. Your instructor will make you aware of alternate class sites in the event that your classroom is not available.

Course Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Breakdown</th>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. PREPARATION FOR PAPERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Reading Notes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In-class writing</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. PAPERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Mini- Response Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Final Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Presentations</td>
<td>20% (one during the semester; one of your paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Satisfactory completion of every assignment is required to pass the class since each category evaluates a different skill. Students who fail more than two letter-numbered sections will fail the course.
It is your responsibility to keep a copy of all your graded papers until after you receive your final grades from the university.

Participation
Your participation grade depends on the quality of your contributions to class discussions.
Writing Assignments

Reading notes
So that you do not let the reading material simply pass in one eye and out the other, I am asking you to do brief typed reading notes throughout the semester. (I will not accept handwritten notes.) These will help you prepare for the papers and exams as well as the class discussions.

1) What are the chapter’s main points? List up to three. Be complete and thorough.
2) List and define at least three words or phrases that appear in bold.
3) List one critic that espouses the chapter’s critical approach and explain her or his position.
4) Relate the assigned work to an aspect of pop culture and/or a current event. (You might want to use one of the words listed in response to the second question.) Refer to a specific quote from a song lyric, newspaper or news magazine, if possible.
5) In one sentence, state the most useful bit of information you were able to glean from this chapter.

Mini-Response Paper
In this short paper, you will discuss your own significant interpretation of a work of fiction in terms of at least one critical strategy. If you wish, you may also use a theoretical position that you have either read or heard presented in class. You must support your argument with at least three examples from the literature. Do not rehash what has been discussed in class.

Final paper
This paper will be longer than, but similar to, the mini-response. Again, it must go beyond class discussion present a unique application of a critical approach, which will include using at least three sources from your annotated bibliography that you will turn in along with your prospectus. It will be 7 to 8 pages long, must have margins no larger than 1.25 inches and use standard 12 point font such as Times New Roman. It must also include a Works Cited page that satisfies MLA guidelines. Make sure this paper is not a summary. Do not rehash what was said in class.

Even excellent insights may never be understood if they are buried beneath unintelligible words, phrases and sentences. Therefore, your final grade will take into account organization, use of transitions and mechanical skills such as grammar, spelling and punctuation. Since page-length requirements demand a certain thoroughness, in addition to deducting 10 points for every day a paper is late, I will also take off 10 points each for short papers, improper fonts and margins that are too large. I may ask you to go to the Writing Center where you will get advice in revising your paper before you write your final draft. In that case, papers that are turned in without documentation from the Writing Center showing that you have had a tutoring session will be given a zero and you will fail the course.

Presentation
Respond to the following questions during your 5-10 minute presentation. Make sure to time your presentation, since I will stop you after 10 minutes. Your grade depends upon the quality of the content, so feel free to choose what presentation style suits you. For example, you may want to sit in your seat, stand in front of the class, give a PowerPoint presentation, or use handouts. I will grade your typed responses to the questions below, as well as your actual presentation, so be sure to answer them thoroughly. Remember to focus on the entire chapter. Be sure to cite your source(s) and indicate direct quotes with quotations marks as you would with any assignment to avoid being guilty of plagiarism.

1) Briefly explicate the critical theory. What does this theory state in terms of how to interpret literature?
2) List and explain at least three key concepts the chapter highlights.
3) List at two concepts that remain unclear. State something that you know about each one of them.
4) Apply the reading to a work of literature that is assigned for that day by analyzing the literature in terms of the theory. Use at least three examples from the literature. If no literature is assigned for that day, you may apply it to a previous work of literature or a poem of your choice. You also may use a song lyric. Please bring enough copies for the entire class, if you choose to use one of the last two options.
5) Conclude your presentation with two discussion-provoking questions that apply to the theoretical and/or literary material.
Course Schedule

Please note:
1) [P] stands for packet.
2) The homework is given on the day it is assigned. It is due the next class period.
3) Reading notes and mini-response papers must be typed and are only accepted on the day that they are due.

Introduction

Week One. Jan 19
W: Course introductions; read Freire in class and discuss theory
WRITE: List the strategies and summarize each in a sentence.

Why Pass?
HW: READ: How to Interpret Literature [IL] 9-39; Passing [PA] epigraph and 5-59; 112-115; 213-218
WRITE: reading note (see “A good reading note” [P])

Week Two. Jan 24 & 26
M: HW: READ: PA 59-82; 337-342; 227-229; “Introduction to Poetry” [P]
STUDY for quiz; bring one question that you would put on the quiz if you were writing it.
UNDERLINE a sentence or passage to discuss in each of the readings.
W: HW: READ: IL 40-76; WL 43-54; “A Matrix of Oppression” [P]
WRITE: reading note

Assimilation and the (Im)possibility of Passing

Week Three. Jan 31 & Feb 2
M: HW: READ: PA 409-417
STUDY for quiz.
UNDERLINE a sentence or passage to discuss.
W: Feb 2 CENSUS DATE (After this date you will earn a “W” if you withdraw before Apr 1, which is the last day to drop.)
W: HW: READ: IL 136-161
WRITE: reading note

Week Four. Feb 7 & 9
STUDY for quiz and UNDERLINE a sentence or passage to discuss.
W: HW: READ: IL 162-186; WL 301-314; excerpt from “Anti-Semitism at High Tide” [P]
WRITE: reading note

Week Five. Feb 14 & 16
M: HW: PREPARE: for in-class essay
W: in-class essay

Challenging Gender and Religious Boundaries

HW: READ: IL 240-277
WRITE: reading note

Week Six. Feb 21 & 23
STUDY for quiz and UNDERLINE a sentence or passage to discuss.
WRITE: reading note
Week Seven. Feb 28 & Mar 2
M: HW: READ: LR 213-227 [P]
W: HW: READ: IL 218-239; LR 336-341 [P]
   WRITE: reading note; BEGIN to write mini-response;; SIGN UP for writing workshop; students who volunteer will email their responses to me before next Wednesday’s class

Week Eight. Mar 7 & 9
M: HW: WRITE: mini-response
W: DUE: mini-response
   writing workshop
   HW: READ: IL 278-286; “But Always Meeting Ourselves” [P]; HS 1-74
   WRITE: reading note

Week Nine. Mar 14 & 16  SPRING BREAK

Week Ten. Mar 21 & 23
M: HW: READ: HS 75-132
   STUDY for quiz and UNDERLINE a sentence or passage to discuss.
W: HW: READ: IL 101-135; HS 133-201; PA 281-283
   WRITE: reading note

Week Eleven. Mar 28 & 30
M: HW: READ: HS 202-247
   STUDY for quiz and UNDERLINE a sentence or passage to discuss.
W: HW: READ: HS 247-284
   WRITE: reading note
Fri: April 1; last day to drop

Week Twelve. Apr 4 & 6
M: HW: READ: “Glossary of Film Terms” [P]
W: watch film
   HW: finish watching film

Week Thirteen. Apr 11 & 13
M: meet in library
   HW: READ: HS 285-361
   STUDY for quiz and UNDERLINE a sentence or passage to discuss.
W: HW: WRITE: prospectus for Critical Analysis Paper, which will include an annotated bibliography

Week Fourteen. Apr 18 & 20
M: conferences on final paper; you must bring your prospectus for Critical Analysis Paper
   HW: WRITE: begin paper
W: discuss material in PA
   HW: WRITE: paper

Week Fifteen. Apr 25 & 27
M: discuss material in PA
   HW: WRITE: finish paper
W: DUE: CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER

Week Sixteen. May 1 & 4
M & W: present papers