ENGL 20923 Literature and Civilizations II
Representative Syllabus

Course Description:

This two-semester course sequence studies the importance of literary, theoretical and dramatic expression in the development of cultural ideas, institutions and values. We will follow the evolution of key cultural concepts and examine how literary texts and other forms of expression shaped the understanding of these concepts and responses to them. The first semester of this course will survey the foundations of British and US civilization, and the second semester will examine developments and responses to these inheritances. Each semester of this course will be organized around at least four central problems confronting the development of culture, and the ways writers articulate and respond to these problems will be traced in key texts and readings. These texts represent the dominant voices of the cultures we live in and have inherited; they also include alternative voices that have, in important ways, remained outside accounts of civilization as it has been traditionally conceived. Tracing the development of literature in English, and in translation to English, through these writers, we will look closely at our reading practices and develop strategies for discussing, interpreting and writing about literature. Students will learn to construct strong interpretations of what they read through class discussion and written analysis. (Required readings, which would be common for all sections of the course, account for about 60-70% of the course time; Works from the optional readings will be selected by individual instructors to meet the specific pedagogical needs.)

Course Objectives:

1. To provide an intellectual framework for later coursework

2. To provide a common body of knowledge concerning the development of human culture and the contemporary world

3. To enhance the awareness of written expression as a central agent of the development of civilizations

4. To encourage the development of broad, historical, cultural and social perspectives as a background for understanding the contemporary world.

5. To develop abilities to recognize and analyze problems and to think and write critically

6. To introduce some of the basic methodologies in the study of language and literature

Assessments:

Reading quizzes 10%
Three short essays, 2-3pp  30%
Two long essays, 5-7pp  40%
Final  20%

Required readings for Semester II:
(Based on 50min., MWF classes)

**Nation/Individual (weeks 1-3)**
Ben Franklin, excerpts fr. *The Autobiography* (2 days)
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* (3 days)
Whitman, excerpts fr. *Song of Myself* (2 days)
Stowe, excerpts fr. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (2 days)

**Industrialization and After (weeks 4-6)**
Blake, “Songs of Innocence & Experience” (2)
Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (2.5)
Melville, “Bartleby” (1)
T.S. Eliot, excerpts fr. *The Wasteland* (2.5)
Annie Besant, “The White Slavery of London Match Workers” (1)

**Sexuality (weeks 7-10)**
Dickinson, selected poems (2)
Yeats, *Crazy Jane Poems* (2)
Tennyson, “In Memoriam” (2)
Morrison, *Sula* (3)

Optional Readings, Semester II

Rousseau, selected readings
Winthrop, “Model/Christian Charity”
Aphra Behn, *The Rover*
Bradford, excerpts fr. “Plymouth Plantation”
*Declaration of Independence*
Black Hawk. *Life of Black Hawk*
Rowlandson, *A Narrative/Captivity and Restoration*
Crevecoeur. *Letters from an American Farmer*
Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineaux”
Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government”

Thoreau, *Walden*
M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey”
Thoreau, *Walden*
Sinclair, *The Jungle*
Dickens, *Hard Times*
*The Killing Floor* (film)
*Brazil* (film)
Bradbury, “There Come Soft Rains”
Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*
Delillo, *White Noise*

Freud, *Dora*
Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*
Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*
James, *Turn of the Screw*
Jacobs, *Incidents/Life of Slave Girl*
Cather, *My Antonia*
Ibsen, *Doll’s House/Hedda Gabler*
Monette, *Becoming a Man: Half/Life Story*
Chopin, *The Awakening*
Faulkner, selected stories
Kushner, *Angels in America* (play)  
Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body*  
James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*  

**Colonialism (weeks 10-13)**  
Joyce, *The Dead*  
Forster, *Passage to India*  
Kincaid, *A Small Place*  
Bronte, *Jane Eyre*  
Leon Damas, “Hiccup” (poem)  
Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*  
Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine* (play)  
Derek Walcott, selected poems  
Erdrich, *Tracks*  
Ngugi, *Weep Not, Child*  
Rushdie, *Shame*  

**Displacement (weeks 13-15)**  
Heaney, selected poems (2.5)  
Ellison, “Battle Royal” (2.5)  
Silko, *Ceremony* (4)  
Zitkala-sa, autobiographical writings  
Danticat, “New York Day Woman”  
Cisneros, *House on Mango Street*  
*The End Game*  
O’Brien, *The Things They Carried* (excerpts)  
Ozick, “The Shawl” (story)  
Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation*  
O’Connor, selected stories  
Roth, *The Counter Life*  
Butler, *Parable of the Sower*  
*Mad Max* (film)  

**Final**