

E 324: American Novels after 1960

Spring 2013 | Unique #35327

MWF 2:00-2:50 | PAR 204

Professor Heather Houser
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office: PAR 228, 471.8766
hours before spring break: W 11-12, F 3-4:30, & by appt.
after break: W 2:50-5 & by appt.

COURSE OVERVIEW & PROMISES

This course covers a selection of US novels, short stories, and a film appearing between 1960 and the present. We begin with works of "classic" literary postmodernism from the 1960s and 1970s and define for ourselves what this elusive but pervasive cultural concept means. The rest of the course then traverses less charted terrain: the contemporary. We'll consider the legacies of postmodernism and innovations in storytelling that have emerged over the past three decades in texts that cover several genres and media forms (novel, short story, graphic, born digital, film). We will also engage themes that are central to post-1960 fiction: technological and media change, pop culture, globalization, and forms of memory and belonging. The following questions motivate the course:

- What are the features of literary postmodernism and postmodern thought? How does postmodernism fit into our story of literary production after 1960?
- How is contemporary fiction in dialogue with social, technological, and political developments of the past 50 years?
- What is the status of fiction writing in the late 20th and early 21st centuries?

By the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Appreciate and interpret contemporary novels using tools of literary study (e.g., close reading, pattern detection, and structure analysis) and literary concepts (e.g. metafiction, metaphor, and globalization).
- Generate your own ideas about a text's form and themes and share them in discussion and lucid writing.
- Collaborate with a group to raise open-ended questions and present hypotheses about an author's work.
- Assess and revise your own and classmates' writing through peer review.

My goal is for you to learn, make discoveries, have fun, and produce the best work possible. Please meet with me and use other on campus resources (see below) if you have concerns about your learning or an assignment.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Course Packet at Jenn's Copies (2200 Guadalupe St., 473.8669). You can download readings instead but must bring them to class (see Tech policy below).

At the University Co-Op. Please buy these editions if you purchase elsewhere.

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomedy* (ISBN: 0618871713)

William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition* (978-0425192931)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1400033411)

Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (9780140280463)

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (006091307X)
 Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (9780684824772)
 Marilyn Robinson, *Gilead* (978-0312424404)
 Gary Shteyngart, *Super Sad True Love Story* (978-0812977868)

You aren't required to buy the film on the syllabus, but you might find it useful to do so.

Blade Runner (The Director's Cut), director Ridley Scott (1982)

EVALUATION

I calculate your grade on a 1000-point scale that I convert to a letter grade at the end of the term. Numbers match letter grades as follows. (UT doesn't recognize the grade of A+.)

A = 940-1000 points	C = 740-769.99
A- = 900-939.99	C- = 700-739.99
B+ = 870-899.99	D+ = 670-699.99
B = 840-869.99	D = 640-669.99
B- = 800-839.99	D- = 600-639.99
C+ = 770-799.99	F = 0-599.99

RESPONSIBILITIES

By taking this class, you agree to complete the following activities that gauge your thinking and learning. Unless I announce otherwise, all reading and written work is due in class on the due date. I'll provide guidelines for the major assignments at least two weeks before they're due.

ACTIVITY	DUE	POINTS
<p><i>Preparation + Participation</i></p> <p>This is a seminar. It thrives when everyone shows up and exchanges ideas. Here's how you participate fully:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively read texts before class: note the language, voice, and structure of the text; identify and respond to passages that strike or trouble you; ask questions of the work. Listen to others and contribute ideas and questions. Do in-class writing and lead group work when relevant. 	Always	150
<p><i>Reading quizzes & exercises</i></p> <p>There will be some unannounced quizzes in class to assess your preparedness. I'll also assign exercises to guide your reading. You'll receive a ✓ (completed), ✓+ (strongly engaged, high-quality thought), or ✓- (incomplete or cursory work).</p>	Throughout semester.	100
<p><i>Collaborative Project</i></p> <p>In groups, you'll develop a guide to a text on the syllabus & present it using multiple media and ~1500 words of text. The project involves analyzing the work's features, raising open-ended questions, and collecting materials to answer those questions.</p>	Final M 4/1 + progress reports	300
<p>2 Essays (draft + revision)</p> <p>First essay (~1000 words)</p>	Draft F 2/8 Revised F 2/15	-- 200

Second essay (1500-1700 words)	Draft M 4/29 Revised W 5/8	-- 250
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SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS¹P = In course packet and on [Blackboard](https://courses.utexas.edu) (courses.utexas.edu)

F = Film. On reserve in Fine Arts Library

The group screening of *Blade Runner* scheduled for Tuesday 2/5 at 7pm is optional. If you can't attend, watch the DVD on reserve at the Fine Arts Library or another copy.

	READINGS & IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Week 1	Detecting Postmodernism	
	M 1/14	• Beginnings
	W 1/16	• John Barth, "Frame-Tale" and "Title" from <i>Lost in the Funhouse</i> (1968) (P) • Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion" (P)
	F 1/18	• Ursula Heise, "Postmodern Novels" (P) • Fredric Jameson, from "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (P)
Week 2	Postmodernism's Challenge to Story, History, & Authority	
	M 1/21	HOLIDAY—NO CLASS
	W 1/23	• Pynchon, <i>The Crying of Lot 49</i> (1965) (1-63)
	F 1/25	• <i>The Crying of Lot 49</i> (64-119)
Week 3	M 1/28	• <i>The Crying of Lot 49</i> (120-52) • Jean-François Lyotard, from <i>The Postmodern Condition</i> (P)
	W 1/30	• Reed, <i>Mumbo Jumbo</i> (1972) (1-63)
	F 2/1	• <i>Mumbo Jumbo</i> (63-121)
Week 4	M 2/4	• <i>Mumbo Jumbo</i> (121-223)
	Paranoid Android: Who's Human?	
	T 2/5	Screening of <i>Blade Runner</i> (optional) 7-9PM, Fine Arts Library (DFA 4.104)

¹ I may have to alter the reading schedule slightly. If you miss class, you're responsible for finding out about schedule changes as well as the content of class discussion.

	W 2/6	• dir. Scott, <i>Blade Runner</i> (1982) (F)	
	F 2/8	• <i>Blade Runner</i>	Draft Paper #1
Week 5	M 2/11	• Peer Review Workshop	Peer Letters
	Postmodernist Discontent		
	W 2/13	• David Foster Wallace, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction" (P)	
	F 2/15	• Wallace, "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men #20" (P)	Revised Paper #1
	Global Media, Bodies, & Environments		
Week 6	M 2/18	• Ozeki, <i>My Year of Meats</i> (1999) (pages TBD)	
	W 2/20	• <i>My Year of Meats</i>	
	F 2/22	• <i>My Year of Meats</i>	
Week 7	M 2/25	• <i>My Year of Meats</i>	
	Family Remembrances: Memory, Self, Community		
	W 2/27	• Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (1987) (xv-100)	
	F 3/1	• <i>Beloved</i> (101-95)	
Week 8	M 3/4	• <i>Beloved</i> (196-324)	Text preferences for project
	W 3/6	• Planning session for web project	
	F 3/8	No class (professor at conference)	Email professor work plan
	M 3/11 – F 3/15	SPRING BREAK—enjoy!	
Week 9	M 3/18	• Robinson, <i>Gilead</i> (2004) (1-124)	
	W 3/20	• <i>Gilead</i> (124-90)	
	F 3/22	• <i>Gilead</i> (191-247)	Progress report
Week 10	M 3/25	• Work session on projects Meet in MEZ 2.120	

	W 3/27	• Work session on projects Meet in MEZ 2.120	
	F 3/29	• Meet w/ professor on projects	Progress report
Week 11	M 4/1	• Examine projects in class	Project
	W 4/3	• Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> (2005) (1-120)	
	F 4/5	• <i>Fun Home</i> (121-232)	
Week 12	Consumer Cyberspace: How Does It Feel?		
	M 4/8	• Gibson, <i>Pattern Recognition</i> (2003) (1-133)	
	W 4/10	• <i>Pattern Recognition</i> (134-199)	
	F 4/12	• <i>Pattern Recognition</i> (200-62)	
Week 13	M 4/15	• <i>Pattern Recognition</i> (263-356)	
	W 4/17	• Born-digital fiction (tba)	
	F 4/19	• Shteyngart, <i>Super Sad True Love Story</i> (2010) (1-96)	
Week 14	M 4/22	• <i>Super Sad True Love Story</i> (97-224)	
	W 4/24	• <i>Super Sad True Love Story</i> (225-331)	
	Fiction Now		
	F 4/26	• James Wood, "Human All Too Human" (P) • Zadie Smith, "This Is How It Feels" (P) • Jonathan Franzen, "I'll Be Doing More of the Same" (P)	
Week 15	M 4/29	• Create class op-ed	Draft paper #2
	W 5/1	• Peer review workshop	Peer letters
	F 5/3	• Endings	
Finals	W 5/8	Revised Paper #2 due (5pm, by email)	

TECH DEVICES

No phones or laptops allowed. iPads/tablets permitted for taking notes and consulting readings only. I'll ban tablets for everyone if I see anyone tweeting, emailing, facebooking, shopping, browsing, etc.

HONOR CODE

I invite discussion and exchange outside of class, but you must abide by the Honor Code:

"The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

Plagiarizing and claiming credit for others' work have serious consequences. Plagiarizing means using any words or ideas that are not your own without citing them. I encourage you to go through [the library tutorial on plagiarism](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism): www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism.

If you aren't sure what constitutes dishonorable conduct, please ask me or consult the [Academic Integrity](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php) site: deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

ABSENCES & LATE WORK

Attendance and participation are mandatory. After 3 absences, your final grade will drop 50 points (out of 1000) and continue to go down with each additional absence. After 9 absences, you cannot receive credit for the course. Habitual lateness will also lower your grade. If you have an illness or other emergency, contact me immediately.

For every day that an assignment is late, I reduce the grade by 1/3 (a B+ would become a B). If you're struggling with an assignment, request an extension at least two days before the deadline. I grant extensions at my discretion.

Special note on religious holy days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of an observed holy day. If you miss a class or an assignment, you'll be able to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

EMAIL PROTOCOL

Email is our primary means of communication outside of class so check it daily for announcements, and I'll respond to your messages in a timely manner in turn. Address emails in a respectful manner. Announcements will also be posted in the relevant section of Blackboard.

ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES

Take advantage of these! They're for you.

- Office Hours
Stop by PAR 228 during scheduled office hours or make an appointment.
- Services
[Documented Disability Support](http://utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd) (utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd, SSB 4.206). Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Services for Students with Disabilities online or at 471-6259 or 232-2937 (video phone).

[Undergraduate Writing Center](http://uwc.utexas.edu) (uwc.utexas.edu, FAC 211) offers free, individualized, expert help with writing at any stage of the process. Appointments and walk-ins available.

The [Harry Ransom Center](http://hrc.utexas.edu) (hrc.utexas.edu) holds David Foster Wallace's papers and manuscripts, and a small number of documents related to John Barth, William Gibson, Toni Morrison, and Thomas Pynchon.

- Books on Reserve at PCL (all 2 hours)

Butler, Christopher. *A very short introduction: postmodernism* | NX 456.5 P66 B88 2002
Accessible, readable overview of concepts of postmodernism. Explores key texts and ideas across fields.

Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or, The cultural logic of late capitalism* | PN 98 P67 J3 1991
Revision and extension of Jameson essay we're reading.

Lyotard, Jean-François, *The postmodern condition : a report on knowledge* | BD 162 L913 1984
Full book from which we're reading an excerpt.

Malpas, Simon, *The Postmodern* | catalog.lib.utexas.edu/record=b6563045~S29 (e-book)
Overview of theories and definitions of postmodernism from across disciplines. Introduction to key thinkers.

A Postmodern reader, eds. Natoli and Hutcheon | catalog.lib.utexas.edu/record=b4943403~S29 (e-book)
Anthology of major original essays on postmodern literary theory and thought.

Woods, Tim. *Beginning postmodernism* (2nd ed.) | On order
Overview of theories and definitions of postmodernism from across disciplines. Introduction to key thinkers.

- Resources for General Literary Study

Cambridge History of American Literature (PS 92 C24, multiple volumes by period and genre)

Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism (BH 39 C62 1995; through LION)

[Introductory Guide to Critical Theory: Postmodernism](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/postmodernism)

(www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/postmodernism)

[Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/titles/9780801884444) (PN 81 J64 2005 & through Library Databases)

[MLA Style & Citation Guide, Purdue OWL](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl) (owl.english.purdue.edu/owl)

Oxford Companion to American Literature (PS 21 .H3 1995)

[Oxford English Dictionary Online](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/online) (through Library Databases)

[Literature Online \(LION\)](http://www.lion.library.utexas.edu) (through Library Databases)