COURSE SYLLABUS

Literary Marriages From Hell:  Tom & Viv and Scott & Zelda
and Sylvia & Ted & Assia

Required Texts:
o F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* (Scribner, 1933; rpt. 2003)
* I will provide numerous class handouts and short texts & visuals for view on doc cam.

* PLEASE BRING THE APPROPRIATE TEXT OR TEXTS TO CLASS EACH DAY. *

Grade Percentages:
Exam 1:  20%
Exam 2:  20%
Exam 3:  30%
Paper:  20%
Class Participation/Involvement/Focus & Enthusiasm:  10%
No final plus-or-minus grades will be given in this course. All 3 exams must be completed.

Course Description:
LITERARY MARRIAGES FROM HELL: Tom & Viv (Eliot) and Scott & Zelda (Fitzgerald) and Sylvia (Plath) & Ted (Hughes) & Assia (Wevill).

The personal lives of authors nearly always find their ways into their works and none more so than in the case of these three pairs of star-crossed marriages:  the Eliots, the Fitzgeralds, and Plath, Hughes & Wevill triangle.  Out of the ashes of their tortured marriages and private agonies rose some literary masterpieces and many enduring works.  We will use the tools of biography, memoir, letters, and above all, the words of the principals, both in their creative and private lives, to decipher and explicate some of the major texts of the twentieth century.  With the Eliots we will focus on that most personal of “impersonal” poems, *The Waste Land*.  We will also view the film *Tom and Viv*.  For F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, we will read Scott’s *Tender is the Night* and a few stories and essays by Zelda.  We will also see an A&E “Tortured Artists Series” documentary about Scott and Zelda:  *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great American Dreamer*.

In the case of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes we will read Plath’s poetry and selections from her journals and her novel, *The Bell Jar*.  We will read Hughes’s last collection of poetry, *Birthday Letters*, a belated response to the tragic end of their marriage and of Plath’s life.  We will see the recent film *Sylvia*, with Gwyneth Paltrow and Daniel Craig portraying Plath and Hughes. And we

In this course the literature, art, and behind-the-scenes material are amazingly haunting and unforgettable documents that testify to the professional and private angst in the participants’ bid to join the literary pantheon.

**Films:** Feature film *Tom and Viv*; documentary FSF: Great American Dreamer; feature film *Sylvia*; (rare) documentary *Sylvia Plath: Voices & Visions* (featuring Plath herself).

All films or film footage will be subject to examinations the same as written texts. Prepare to see all films in class, as pertinent discussions and lecture notes will accompany their viewing. All handouts are considered texts as well and therefore subject to exam questions.

**Course Prerequisites:** Completion of at least 30 semester hours of coursework, including Comp Lit 315, E 603B, E 316K or TC603B.

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodation from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

**JANUARY**

19 T: Intro to class; fill out bio cards; general course expectations, focus, and introduction to goals of the course.


28 Th: Cont. “Love Song.” Other Eliot poems assigned: “Mr. Apollinax,” p. 18; “Sweeney Erect” and “Sweeney Among the Nightingales,” pp. 26 & 36, respectively. [I *may* assign several additional Eliot poems.]

**FEBRUARY**

2 T: Cont. “Love Song”; discuss additional poems & handouts; Modernism handouts.


9 T: Cont. TWL.

11 Th: Finish TWL. Berry’s “Suicide Confirmed…” poem.

16 T: See *Tom and Viv*. *Please view film in full in class: discussions to follow viewings.*

18 Th: Cont. film, *Tom and Viv*.

23 T: Cont. TWL and *Tom and Viv*.

25 Th: Wrap-up material on the Eliots, film. **Exam 1 next class.**

**MARCH**

2 T: **EXAM 1 [reminder that exam dates are fixed].**
Th: Begin Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Read Fitzgerald’s Tender is the Night, pp. 3-86. See F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great American Dreamer (from A&E’s “Tortured Genius” biography series).

T: Cont. Tender is the Night, pp. 86-171. Class handouts and art slides re Zelda.

Th: Tender is the Night, pp. 171-235.

T: SPRING BREAK. Back after this brief break . . . . Enjoy; be safe.

Th: SPRING BREAK. The fun continues.

T: Tender is the Night, pp. 239-315 [end].

Th: Wrap-up Fitzertals. Exam 2 next class.

T: EXAM 2. APRIL (The Cruellest Month)

Th: The Bell Jar, pp. 74-153. Scenes from Sylvia (Gwyneth Paltrow & Daniel Craig).

T: The Bell Jar, pp. 154-244 [the end]. Scenes from Sylvia.

Th: The Bell Jar. Assign Ariel poems.

T: Plath’s Ariel, selected poems to be assigned; see Sylvia Plath: Voices & Visions.

Th: Cont. Ariel poems. Hughes’ Birthday Letters, selected poems to be assigned.


Th: Cont. Plath and Hughes poems.

T: Essay due one week from today. Cont. Plath and Hughes poems.

Th: Discuss essay: format, content, and style.

MAY

T: ESSAY DUE. Wrap-up Plath & Hughes and prep for Exam 3.

Th: LAST CLASS DAY: EXAM 3.

Attendance rolls will be taken at the beginning of each class.

Read assignments by the class date they are due. Check ahead on the syllabus to prepare for longer readings, exams and essay due dates.

Consult Course Policy Statement for many further details about general class comportment and format.

Do your absolute best to avoid late arrivals or early exits—a distraction to all concerned.

All cell phones must be put away from lecture’s beginning to end; this includes sight checking messages, texting, tweeting, twittering, and so on.

Laptops are for note taking only. If you choose to use a laptop for this purpose, you must seat yourself within the first two rows of class.

* The instructor retains the right to vary readings on this syllabus as needed. *

TO A GREAT SEMESTER!