

Spring 2018  
**ENGLISH 1302H: HONORS ENGLISH 2**

Thematic Title: *Contemporary Fiction*

MW 3:30-4:45 PM

Lalumiere Language Hall 384

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Office Hours: MW 12:35ish PM-1:55ish PM or by appointment

“Those who are truly contemporary,” Giorgio Agamben writes, “who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to it. . . . To perceive, in the darkness of the present, this light that strives to reach us but cannot—this is what it means to be contemporary.” This course traces the sense that truly contemporary literature is always slightly out of sync with its present, and always striving towards a moment that is yet to come, across American fiction since 1960. We will seek out this vertiginous sense of the “contemporary” in literary explorations of identity and difference, history and futurity, politics and community, and war and the environment. In particular, we will chase this vertiginous sense of the “contemporary” in prose fiction works that have been selected for adaptation as prestige TV series. From the private lives of individuals and families, to the very public relationships that exist in and between diverse communities, to the nation’s ascent to sole superpower status in the context of the end of the Cold War, to the discovery that the environmental costs of consumer capitalism have now begun to threaten all life on Earth, we will find that American contemporary fiction is always looking forward, with both hope and trepidation, towards an unknown and very uncertain future.

### **LEARNING GOALS**

Upon completing English core studies in literature, Marquette University students will be able to:

- Produce oral and written assessments of literary and cultural texts and / or performances using the language and concepts of one of these two knowledge area disciplines.
- Articulate how literary and cultural texts and/or performances can transform one's understanding of self, others, and communities.
- Apply the methodologies of literary criticism to representative works of literature.

Upon completion of this particular course students will be able to:

- Identify and understand various formal characteristics of both literature and film;
- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural, historical, and political contexts in which various sorts of cultural texts have been produced and consumed;
- Apply techniques of critical analysis as appropriate to diverse literary forms, genres, and media;
- Use literary study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing;
- Read and discuss narrative on the levels of both form and content.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts are available at the BookMarq bookshop on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, though you are not required to purchase them there. Any edition of the books will do.

George R.R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*  
 Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*  
 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*  
 Octavia Butler, *Dawn*

Additional readings and course materials will be made available via D2L, or during class.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Class Participation: 15%	<i>Game of Thrones</i> “Thinkpiece”: 10%
Six D2L Posts: 18%	First Paper: 15%
“Pitching <i>Dawn</i> ” Group Project: 12%	Second Paper: 15%
	Final Paper: 15%

Additional details on all assignments will be distributed in class well in advance of the due date.

## GRADING

Grades will follow the following rubric:

- \* To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A C essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. C essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.
- \* To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.
- \* To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An A essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.
- \* A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.
- \* **A-, B+, B-, C+ (and so on) grades** fall in the gaps between the above categories.

## QUIZZES

I do not like to give reading quizzes; I think they infantilize the college-level scholar. However, this is by necessity a reading-intensive class; if it seems to me that people are not keeping up with the reading, pop quizzes may become necessary despite my philosophical objections. You have been warned.

## **FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK**

Your final paper should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your name* in it, for example, yourlastname-finalpaper.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even forum comments. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments.

Please give your final paper an original title, and include your name, assignment, and due date in a header on the first page.

**All sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.**

## **PAPER SUBMISSION**

Papers should be submitted via D2L's Dropbox by class time on the due date.

Your other written work (which will primarily take the form of forum posts) will be posted on the D2L forums. Generally speaking, these papers will have flexible due dates driven by your own interests and responses. **It is thus your responsibility to make sure you are properly keeping up with this portion of the course in a timely fashion.**

Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

## **TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!**

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not unforeseeable emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often; save backup copies of essential documents, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive.

## **ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

**Consequently, attendance in this class is mandatory.** You should plan on attending every class. Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you ever find you will need to miss a class meeting.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>.

You are allowed **three unexcused absences** over the course of the spring semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by half a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence.** Upon the seventh unexcused absence, you may receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

**Merely being present in class is insufficient for an “A” in class participation.** Each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough.

## D2L FORUMS

This course will make extensive use of the D2L forums at <http://d2l.mu.edu/>. In addition to being a place where you can find electronic copies of the syllabus and other course handouts, D2L also features an online forum where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over. The D2L discussion forums are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions with the class. I will be reading the discussion forum regularly and I recommend you do the same.

Before class on Monday, every student is required to take the following actions:

- \* **upload a picture of their face to their D2L profile**
- \* **write a response to a contemporary adaptation of Sherlock Holmes (the Robert Downey Jr. films, *Sherlock*, *Elementary*, *Mr. Holmes*, the just-announced Millie Bobby Brown film, etc.). Using this text, answer the question “What does Sherlock Holmes mean to us today?”**

After that, students must write **two short responses to each of the *Game of Thrones* episodes we will watch in-class on January 29 and January 31.** Because we will be watching the episodes in class, our discussion that week will primarily be online.

After this, you should write **one post on each of the remaining novels in the course: *The Man in the High Castle*, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, and *Dawn*.** These posts should be completed by noon before one of the class discussions devoted to that text.

Responses should be approximately 250-400 words that move beyond mere plot summary towards interpreting a given text; you may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates. I encourage you to think of your blog comments as possible “seeds” for your papers; feel free to begin to develop your thoughts there.

**Up to two additional posts beyond the required six will count towards extra credit on your final grade.** Additional posts beyond that number, and posts that respond substantively to other students’ arguments, will be looked upon very favorably when I calculate your final grade.

## EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once a day, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions.

I endeavor to respond to all emails within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night before they are due and expect an immediate reply.

### **LAPTOP POLICY**

In-class use of laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. is permitted for access to electronic versions of our texts and for notetaking. However, students *must* refrain from non-class-related computer use, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. I reserve the right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. No use of cell phones will be permitted during class time, except in highly unusual circumstances cleared with me in advance; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

### **CONFERENCES**

**All students are asked to meet with me in a short one-on-one conference at my office at least once during the semester** to discuss the course and your work within it. Please know I am very happy to meet with you individually to discuss either graded work or work-in-progress in excess of this requirement as many times as you like. Simply come to my weekly office hours, or see or email me to set up an appointment.

### **MOVIE NIGHT!**

I will schedule out-of-classtime screenings of the Amazon *The Man in the High Castle* and Hulu *The Handmaid's Tale* pilots if people are interested, probably immediately following class on a Monday night close to the end of that unit.

### **WRITING CENTER**

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center, located in Raynor Library Room 240, at any stage of the writing process. Please visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.marquette.edu/english/writingcenter> to find out how to schedule an appointment and to access the studio's online resources.

### **FLEXIBILITY**

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to the above.

### **ACCOMODATIONS**

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met.

I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting Marquette University's Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building).

ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at [ods@marquette.edu](mailto:ods@marquette.edu).

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue.

Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course.** No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*
- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*
- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette's academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate stories. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

## ACADEMIC FREEDOM

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

## RESPECT

This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here.

Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** negatively impact your class participation grade.

## KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN!

I want this class to be a meaningful and valuable experience for you, both in its own terms and in service of the development of your larger college experience. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or concerns about the way things are going, my door is always open.

### PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

*Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.*

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the listed texts or chapters.

<b>W</b>	<b>Jan 17</b>	<b>FIRST DAY OF CLASS</b> Giorgio Agamben, "What Is The Contemporary?"
M	Jan 22	"Conclusions" from <i>Adaptations</i> [D2L] "Adaptations: Theories, Interpretations, and New Dilemmas" [D2L]  case study: Sherlock Holmes in the 2000s
W	Jan 24	George R.R. Martin, <i>Game of Thrones</i> , 1-71 (Prologue thru Bran II)
M	Jan 29	HBO's <i>Game of Thrones</i> , "Winter Is Coming" [in class, discussion online]
W	Jan 31	HBO's <i>Game of Thrones</i> , "Baelor" [in class, discussion online]
M	Feb 5	George R.R. Martin, <i>Game of Thrones</i> , 525-609 (Eddard XV thru Arya V)
W	Feb 7	Emily Nussbaum, "The Aristocrats" [D2L] Aaron Bady, "The Fantasy of an Enemy" [Web] J.W. McCormack, "How <i>Game Of Thrones</i> Feeds Its Own Thinkpiece Industry" [Web]
M	Feb 12	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> , chapters 1-3
<b>W</b>	<b>Feb 14</b>	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> , chapters 4-7 <b>GAME OF THRONES THINKPIECE DUE</b>
M	Feb 19	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> , chapters 8-10
W	Feb 21	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> , chapters 11-13
M	Feb 26	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (whole book)
W	Feb 28	<i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (Amazon series)  Aaron Bady, "Philip K. Dick's Vision for Resisting Fascism in America" Noah Berlatsky, " <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> : When a Nazi-Run World Isn't So Dystopian" [Web] Todd VanDerWerff, " <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> season 2 is the worst TV show of the year" [Web]
M	Mar 5	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> : "Night, Shopping, Night"
<b>W</b>	<b>Mar 7</b>	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> : "Waiting Room, Nap, Household, Night" <b>PAPER #1 DUE</b>
<b>M-W</b>	<b>Mar 12- Mar14</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>

M	Mar 19	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> : "Birth Day, Night, Soul Scrolls, Night, Jezebel's"
W	Mar 21	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> : "Night, Salvaging, Night" <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (Hulu series) <i>opt</i> : Charlotte Sturgess, "The Handmaid as a Romance Heroine" [D2L]
M	Mar 26	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> : "Historical Notes on <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> " <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (audiobook adaptation)
W	Mar 28	<u>Guest lecture: Katie Sterr</u> Margaret Atwood, "What <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Means in the Age of Trump" [Web] Lili Loofburouw, "How Hulu's <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> succumbed to the feminist curse" [Web]
<b>M</b>	<b>Apr 2</b>	<b>EASTER BREAK</b>
W	Apr 4	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Dawn</i> , Part One
<b>M</b>	<b>Apr 9</b>	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Dawn</i> , Part Two <b>PAPER #2 DUE</b>
W	Apr 11	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Dawn</i> , Part Three
M	Apr 16	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Dawn</i> , debate day (no assigned reading)
W	Apr 18	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Dawn</i> , Part Four
M	Apr 23	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Adulthood Rites</i> (excerpts)  "Octavia Butler Is Finally Heading to TV, Thanks to Ava DuVernay" <i>Dawn</i> presentations prep day (group workshop)
W	Apr 25	<i>Dawn</i> presentations prep day #2 (group workshop)
<b>M</b>	<b>Apr 30</b>	<b><i>Dawn</i> presentations (day one)</b>
<b>W</b>	<b>May 2</b>	<b><i>Dawn</i> presentations (day two)</b> <b>LAST DAY OF CLASS</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>May 11</b>	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE BY D2L DROPBOX BY 10:00 AM</b>

### **FOLLOW FAME: FRIENDS AND ALUMNI/AE OF MARQUETTE ENGLISH**

*On Facebook (page)*: [www.facebook.com/marquettefame](http://www.facebook.com/marquettefame)

*On Facebook (group)*: [www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194](http://www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194)

(search for "Undergraduate English at Marquette")

*On Twitter*: @MarquetteFAME

I will also be inviting you to events in the pop culture and pizza series I run periodically during the semester. I hope you can attend!