

Department of English & Writing Studies

American Cult Classics
English 3470F (001)
Fall 2017

Instructor: Joshua Schuster
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AHB 3G04
Office hours: W 3:30-5:30; TH 12:30-1:30

Teaching Assistant: Nicholas Tostowaryk
SH 2349
Office hours: Thurs 11-12

Course Location: AHB 2R21

Course Date/Time: W 1:30-3:30 pm and
TH 1:30-2:30 pm

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or 1042E or 1042E or both of English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

Cult classics are works of culture that are a little out there, weird, unsettling, compulsive, or uncanny. Cult classic novels are filled with outsiders, marginal lives, oddballs, monsters, and freedom seekers. These characters roam on the edges of civilization and question it. They become cult when they attract us with their anti-normative outsider and outlier status. In this course, we will read a number of different kinds of American cult novels, nonfiction, and film. As we read, we will raise issues about the norms of American life and the seeming rejection of norms for outsider status in these novels. We will treat the novels as telling us something important about how cultural forms operate as frames for making sense of the aspirations and limits of life in different American scenes.

Objectives:

Successful students who complete the course will be able to:

- Analyze novels as narrative vehicles for claims about cultural aspirations in America;
- Discuss and theorize how the novel form elicits cult followings;
- Understand how elements of narrative form and content can become symbolic for social, political, and aesthetic experiences;
- Write an analytical essay with a research component that proposes a compelling thesis on a chosen novel.

Course Materials

Texts:

Jack London *The Call of the Wild, White Fang, and To Build a Fire* (Modern Library)
Theodora Kroeber *Ishi in Two Worlds* (U of California P)
Charlotte Perkins Gilman *The Yellow Wallpaper, Herland, and Selected Writings* (Penguin)
Vladimir Nabokov *Lolita* (Vintage)
Kurt Vonnegut *Breakfast of Champions* (Dial)
Philip K. Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Del Rey)
Colson Whitehead *Zone One* (Anchor)

Methods of Evaluation

Final	35%	
Participation	20%	
Midterm paper	15%	(3 pages)
Final Paper	30%	(6 pages)

Note: All students must pass both the term work and the final exam to pass the course. **And note:** Computers are not allowed in this course.

Midterm and Final Paper: Topics will be handed out in class. Late essays are not accepted. We will use OWL. Essays will be returned by OWL – be sure to read the comments.

Final Exam: The format will include quote identifications, a few short answer questions, and some short essays that will require you to compare different writers on a given topic.

Participation: Your participation is central to this class and is a key component of your growth as a student. Participation includes: being involved in class discussion, participating in group work, and putting real energy into all assignments and readings. **Read the texts before the day they are discussed.**

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and obviously counts for your grade in participation. It is imperative to arrive to each class on time. No unexcused absences are permitted (I am not crazy and I do know that problems arise during the semester – but please supply a legitimate written excuse – see Western policy on this). If you miss a certain number of courses, I will warn you, but already you risk getting a zero in participation and/or dropped from the course.

MLA Documentation: Undergraduate research papers written in Arts and Humanities follow the formatting procedures outlined by the Modern Language Association. The complete guide to this format can be found in the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009). This guide can be found On Reserve in the D. B. Weldon Library, call no: LB2369.M57 2009. The Department of English also offers an overview of MLA documentation, at: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrad/guidelines.html>

Timetable:

Sept. 7 Introduction

Sept. 13 Jack London *The Call of the Wild* 1-50

Sept. 14 Jack London *The Call of the Wild* 50-finish

Sept. 20 Theodora Kroeber *Ishi in Two Worlds* 3-39, 117-146

Sept. 21 **no class**

Sept. 27 Theodora Kroeber *Ishi in Two Worlds* 146-238; Gerald Vizenor "Ishi Obscura"

Sept. 28 Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Herland* 1-62

Oct. 4 Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Herland* 62-finish; Fredric Jameson "Progress versus Utopia – Or, Can We Imagine the Future?"

Oct. 5 Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Herland*
Due: midterm paper

Oct. 11 - Oct. 12 – **Fall Reading Week**

Oct. 18 Vladimir Nabokov *Lolita* 1-142; Leland de la Durantaye "The Art of Morality, or on *Lolita*"

Oct. 19 Vladimir Nabokov *Lolita* 142-179

Oct. 25 Vladimir Nabokov *Lolita* 179-247

Oct. 26 Vladimir Nabokov *Lolita* 247-317

Nov. 1 Alfred Hitchcock *The Birds* (in-class screening)

Nov. 2 Alfred Hitchcock *The Birds* (discussion)

Nov. 8 Kurt Vonnegut *Breakfast of Champions* 1-95

Nov. 9 Kurt Vonnegut *Breakfast of Champions* 95-175

Nov. 15 Kurt Vonnegut *Breakfast of Champions* 175-finish

Nov. 16 Philip K. Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (first half); Recommended: Donna Haraway "Cyborg Manifesto"

Nov. 22 Philip K. Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (second half)

Nov. 23 Philip K. Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Nov. 29 Zora Neale Hurston "Zombies"; Colson Whitehead *Zone One* 1-93

Nov. 30 Colson Whitehead *Zone One* 93-230

Dec. 6 Colson Whitehead *Zone One* 230-finish

Dec. 7 Review

Due: Final paper

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism constitutes an automatic failure of this course and goes on a student's permanent record of conduct. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.

The following is a statement on plagiarism that has been mandated by the UWO Senate: "Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form for plagiarism checking."

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.