205-06 Literature and the Moral Imagination: Literary Outsiders: Hostility and Hospitality

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Literature and the Moral Imagination: ENGL 205-06, Fall 2014

Literary Outsiders: Hostility and Hospitality

Class Time: MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m.  
Instructor: Dr. Anna Newnum  
E-mail: newnuma@xavier.edu  
Office Phone: (513)745-3219  
Mailbox: 123 Hinkle Hall  

Class Location: Lindner Hall 101  
Instructor Office: 243 Hinkle Hall  
Department Office: 236 Hinkle Hall  
Office Hours: M,W: 10-11:30 a.m., F: 9-10 a.m.  

Course Description:

In this course, we will examine how literature relates to the types of decisions that you are making as college students while also exploring how it can help us to understand diverse perspectives. “Literature and the Moral Imagination” will help you not only to improve your writing and literary analysis skills, but also to consider the relationship between literature and ethical issues. Because this course is part of the Ethics/Religion and Society Focus in the core curriculum, you will be expected to synthesize discussions of literature with material from PHIL 100 and THEO 111.

This section of “Literature and the Moral Imagination” focuses on “Literary Outsiders: Hostility and Hospitality.” We will examine how our society and others have treated individuals who are strangers or who are marginalized as well as why competing groups often describe each other as outsiders. Although we think of the words “hostility” and “hospitality” as opposites, in fact they originated from the same Latin word, *hospes*, meaning “guest, visitor, or stranger.” Does this similar origin reveal the difficulty of maintaining a perfectly hostile or a perfectly hospitable attitude toward others, or does the difference between these words reflect the choice that all of us must make when faced with a stranger or an individual we don’t understand? Is the concept of hospitality the most useful way of understanding positive interactions between “insiders” and “outsiders,” or not? As we read literature from a variety of genres, time periods, and locations, we will consider some of the following questions: Why do societies label some groups as outsiders, and how can we respond ethically to individuals in these groups? What important perspectives do outsiders offer? Is it possible for a society to be hospitable to all strangers? What risks are involved in either accepting or turning away those who are different from us? How can opposing groups and individuals in disagreement engage in respectful dialogue, and why do attempts to reconcile differences often end in hostility? How can opposing groups avoid seeing one another as outsiders? I hope that this course will help you to become a more astute reader of literature, but also that it will give you the opportunity to reflect on personal decisions and contemporary social debates that affect your communities.

Texts:

*All texts can be purchased or rented from the Xavier Bookstore. You must purchase editions with the ISBN numbers listed below.*

- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, ISBN: 9781554811038
- *Clybourne Park* by Bruce Norris, ISBN: 9780822226970
- *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell, ISBN: 0393979083
- Additional short readings will be posted on canvas or on our course reserve site. You will be expected to bring a printed copy of these readings to class on the day they are listed.
Core Objectives:
ENGL 205 is one of four courses needed to fulfill the Ethics/Religion and Society Focus in the core curriculum. We will focus on the following core goals:

- **Communication**: Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally. They will formulate clear, arguable, and well-supported theses through the use of an effective writing process. They will improve their ability to dialog with peers.
- **Critical Thinking**: Students will analyze and interpret texts. They will also describe the historical, cultural, and social contexts of texts.
- **Ethical Understanding**: Students will critically read, write about, and reflect on ethical and religious issues of social significance through interpretation of literary texts.
- **Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Approaches**: Students will learn to understand and appreciate the humanities by interpreting literary expression. They will also reflect on literature's interdisciplinary connections with philosophy and theology.
- **Global Awareness**: Students will recognize how past experiences and individual differences (such as gender, ethnicity, class, and geography) influence their interpretations of literature. After reading literature from different perspectives, students will describe contributions made by individuals from diverse groups to local, national, and global communities.

Course Requirements and Policies:

**Participation and Attendance**: Class periods will be primarily discussion-based rather than lecture-based. Consequently, your learning will depend on a positive classroom community. You cannot participate in this community unless you attend class and are prepared to discuss the readings. Your participation grade will be based on both your attendance (you must sign in at the beginning of each class period) and the quality of your comments and in-class written work. Good participation includes both making thoughtful comments during discussion and listening respectfully to classmates. Missing more than four class periods, regardless of the reason for your absences, will result in losing one half of a letter grade from your final course grade for each additional class missed. If you are unable to attend class, please notify me in advance of the class period if possible. It is your responsibility to cover the material from the missed session. While your final course grade will not be directly penalized for four or fewer absences, you will not be able to make up in-class work such as quizzes and discussion credit, which may result in a lower participation or quiz grade.

**Questions and Responses**: Five times during the semester, you will prepare a question for class discussion and post it on canvas. This will help you to join actively in discussions and will ensure that we cover some of the issues that interest you. You will be assigned a group number, which will determine when your questions are due. (Due dates for each group appear on the course schedule). Because I want to read your questions before our class discussion, you must post them on blackboard no later than **10:00am** the day they are due. While I expect you to contribute to class discussion every time we meet, on the days you have a question due, I will call on you to introduce your question and will expect you to help facilitate a conversation about it. To engage in discussion with your peers, you will also respond regularly to their questions on blackboard with several paragraphs of informal writing that will help you to practice for your formal essays. You will receive further instruction on writing and posting responses in a handout. I will not accept late questions or responses.

**Formal Essays**: You will complete two formal essay assignments for which you will receive further written instructions. Before handing in your final essays, you will be required to work on drafts and
to participate in in-class peer workshops. Failure to participate in a workshop will result in losing half of a letter grade on your final essay. Failure to hand in a draft at all will result in losing another half of a letter grade on your paper. Major essay assignments are due at the beginning of the class period noted on the syllabus. Essays not turned in at the beginning of class will be lowered half a letter grade, with added deductions of up to one full grade for each additional day they are late.

**Final Project:** The final project will ask you to craft a proposal for an event that facilitates dialogue on campus or in your community. In addition, you will give a short (five-minute) presentation during which you will pitch your project to the class. Later in the semester, you will receive further written instructions for the final project and presentation.

**Writing Help and Contacting Me:** I enjoy working with students one on one and encourage you to visit me during my office hours or to make an appointment to discuss your papers before they are due. I also encourage you to use the writing center (Conaton Learning Commons 400), which is a resource for students of all ability levels at any stage in the writing process. For more information, call 513-745-2875, or visit www.xavier.edu/writing_center. I am happy to respond to questions via e-mail, and I try to do so whenever possible within 24 hours. Before you contact me, however, please make sure the information you are seeking can’t be obtained from the syllabus or from one of your classmates. If you have concerns about any aspect of this course, your first step should be to contact me. If you have questions about a grade, first be sure that you have read all of my comments on your assignment and then make an appointment to see me in person.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism, which is the use of someone else's words or ideas as your own, is a serious academic offense and is not tolerated at Xavier. Any assignments containing plagiarism will receive an F or a 0, and egregious cases of plagiarism may result in a failing final grade for the course. As a preventive measure, all of your written work will be checked using TurnItIn.com. To avoid any misunderstandings, we will discuss appropriate citation in class.

**Grading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions and Responses</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>5%</td>
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- A work demonstrates deep critical thinking and sophisticated language use. A student who receives an A in this course has consistently completed superior work and incorporated lessons learned from previous assignments to improve upon future ones.
- Earning a B will reflect an above-average commitment to coursework. This means producing polished, thought-provoking, and inventive writings, as well as showing a genuine interest in the subject matter and a consistent willingness to ask and answer difficult questions. B work still meets the standards of A work but may not have the same level of excellence or consistency.
- C is an average grade in college. It indicates satisfactory college-level work.
- **D or below** means that you have not shown an effort towards improvement, have failed to meet the course requirements by completing college-level work, or have hurt your grade through consistently late work, absences, or plagiarism.
Grading Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.9% and below</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WEEK 9:
M 10/20: North and South (338-395).
W 10/22: Waiting for the Barbarians (1-27); Group 4.
F 10/24: Waiting for the Barbarians (29-64); Group 5.

WEEK 10:
M 10/27: Waiting for the Barbarians (68-87); Group 1.
W 10/29: Waiting for the Barbarians (89-139); Group 2.
F 10/31: Waiting for the Barbarians (141-165), "Waiting for the Barbarians after September 11" (on canvas); Group 3.

WEEK 11:
W 11/5: Essay #2 Workshop.
F 11/7: Raisin in the Sun (Act I: 21-75); "Harlem" (on canvas); Group 5.

WEEK 12:
M 11/10: Raisin in the Sun (Act II: 76-130); Group 1.
W 11/12: Essay #2 Due; Raisin in the Sun (Act II: 131-151), “The 10 most segregated urban areas in America” (on canvas); Group 2.
F 11/14: No reading; in class, documentary.

WEEK 13:
M 11/17: Clybourne Park (Act I: 7-42), Guthrie Program Notes (on canvas); Group 3.
W 11/19: Clybourne Park (review Act I).
F 11/21: Clybourne Park (Act II: 43-84); Group 4.

WEEK 14:
M 11/24: Project Proposal Due; Clybourne Park (review Act II).
W 11/26: THANKSGIVING
F 11/28: THANKSGIVING

WEEK 15:
M 12/1: “Child’s Play” (on canvas).
W 12/3: "There Will Come Soft Rains" (on canvas); "To a Terrorist" (on canvas).
F 12/5: Project Workshop.

WEEK 16:
M 12/8: Presentations.
W 12/10: Presentations.
F 12/12: Final Project Due; Presentations.

Final Exam: 12:00-1:50 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19th: (During our exam time, you will write an essay related to the issues covered in this course)