205-05 Literature and the Moral Imagination

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Fall 2014 Xavier University
LIT. & MORAL IMAGINATION: (Engl 205-05), 3 hrs.
MWF 12:00-12:50 p.m.  HAI 9

Instructor: Rebecca Todd
Office: Hinkle 206; Office Hours: MW 1:00-1:50; F 10:00-10:50; or by appt.
Office Phone: 745-2093; Mailbox: Hinkle Faculty Services, Hinkle Lobby
Email: toddr@xavier.edu (Please note that email is probably the least effective way to contact me
in the evening or over the weekend; that being the case, I’ll distribute a home phone number for
use during those times. Please feel free to call me. ☺)

Required Texts
Our texts will be provided either electronically, through Canvas, or in a class handout. If
you’re new to Xavier, please make sure that you have access to the Canvas feature of the
hub.

Prerequisite
Successful completion of Engl 101 or Engl 115 (or transfer credit); Prerequisite or Co-
requisite of Phil 100 and Theo 111

Course Description and Objectives
This course fulfills a Core Curriculum Requirement as the English Department’s
participation in the Ethics/Religion and Society Focus here at Xavier University; our particular
focus will be on the way literary texts inherently reflect or interrogate ethical or moral action. We
will look at the various ways authors “read” the world around them and resist, reshape or retell
what they see. The course is designed to provide opportunities for you to examine the knowledge,
beliefs and values which we bring to fiction and poetry and to judge how these affect our
understanding of the works we read. By analyzing these literary works in very specific ways, you
should be able to further develop your critical thinking and academic reading skills as well as
learning more about how literature provides an intersection between an individual and his/her
culture.

This is not a lecture course; instead, the class will proceed as a discussion, so you will
need to be up-to-date with the readings and prepared to contribute. I have selected works which I
feel not only give us a handle on what literature can be, in its various forms, but which also
present attentive readers with plenty of room for questions and comments. Given the status of
this course, religious interpretations are especially welcome, but please note that no one religion
or faith will be privileged over any other and all interpretations must be integrated with the
demands of the discipline.

Course Requirements

Quizzes: There will be six quizzes overall; I will drop the lowest quiz grade (12.5% of
total).

Two short papers: These two short papers (4-5 pp. typed) are brief responses to some of
the works we read. The first one—due Oct 8th—will ask you to give a close reading of a single
author’s work. The second paper—due Dec 1st—will give you the opportunity to discuss one
work in relation to critical responses that you discover through research. A sheet of specific
guidelines for essays will be distributed later. Writing each of these short papers should help you
to prepare for the exams (15% each of total).

(No paper should be merely a transcription of a class discussion, editorial preface or
commentary. Any secondary sources you elect to use must be properly credited and cited; it is
plagiarism to take someone else’s ideas or words without providing such credit through quotation,
citation and documentation. All papers must be typed [double-spaced, front side only, stapled, 12
pt. maximum, following MLA format]. Papers are due at the beginning of class, in two forms:
first, through Turn It in via a Canvas link and second, through a hard copy in class, on the day designated; I do not, under normal circumstances, accept late papers or email submissions. In special circumstances, I will accept a late paper but will have to penalize it a letter grade for each calendar day (not class day) it’s late. Please plan accordingly.)

Discussion Questions/Class Participation: At least once during the term each student will be responsible for providing three questions, in hard copy and on the board, as a starting point for class discussion. Also included in this area are general readiness for discussion, in-class writings, meeting deadlines, group work, etc. (12.5% of total).

Midterm Exam and Final Exam: For both of these exams, you will be expected to respond to essay questions. You can also expect to have to identify passages from our readings and to answer short questions regarding course materials. (Midterm counts for 20% of the total grade; final for 25%.)

Some Ground Rules

Attendance: By “attend” I mean not only being physically present but mentally present as well. If you absolutely must miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with other students or with me to keep up with what you have missed so that you are prepared for the next class period. As there will be a number of quizzes and in-class writings, it is clearly to your advantage to attend class meetings, as this work cannot be “made up.” Be advised that five days’ absence will necessitate a total grade reduction of 10% and six days a reduction of 20%. Any more than six days’ absence will preclude your passing the course; you must withdraw or receive an F. If you must miss class due to a university obligation—team sports, for example—please let me know in advance and make sure I have the proper paperwork authorizing your absence. I make no other distinction between ‘excused’ and ‘unexcused’ absences. (Inability to put your non-class-related electronics away during class will, of course, result in you being considered absent.) Please note that it is your responsibility, as a college student, to keep track of your absences; I do not necessarily warn students when they have passed a certain benchmark concerning attendance. Habitual tardiness or leaving early will also affect your course grade, as will excessive time out of the room during class.

Conferences: I am going to require one conference for this course, but I encourage you to come see me or contact me, especially as you begin working on your papers. Please feel free to come by during my office hours, call or set up an appointment with me.

Writing Center

The James A. Glenn Writing Center is located in the CLC, Room 400 (513-745-2875). It’s a student-staffed writing center, with tutors available to speak with you about your writing for any class, at any stage, from brainstorming for an assignment to polishing up a final draft. For every substantive tutoring session that you have with the Writing Center for this Lit class, you will—besides getting the benefit of having an interested, non-roommate peer look at your work with you!—earn extra credit points on the Class Participation part of the course.

Grading

The grades awarded in the department are A, B, C, D and F (on the 4.0 scale, with pluses and minuses); your course total must equal or exceed 1.0 for a passing grade. The penalties for plagiarism (taking someone else’s ideas or words without providing proper credit) are in accord with those outlined in the Xavier catalog under the heading “Academic Honesty.” At this level, every student is assumed to be familiar with what constitutes plagiarism, and how to avoid it. All work for this course must be original, completed specifically for this course.

Daily Schedule

(Dates listed are discussion dates, so please have the works read by then)

M 8/25 Introduction to course
   Elements of Literature
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 8/27</td>
<td>Tobias Wolff, “Say Yes”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pattiann Rogers, “Portrait”</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 8/29</td>
<td>Alice Walker, “Roselily”</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9/1</td>
<td>LABOR DAY—No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/3</td>
<td>SPIRIT CELEBRATION—No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 9/5</td>
<td>Raymond Carver, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”</td>
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<td>M 9/8</td>
<td>Robert Olen Butler, “Jealous Husband Returns in Form of Parrot”</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/10</td>
<td>Kate Chopin, “A Respectable Woman”</td>
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<td>F 9/12</td>
<td>Zora Neale Hurston, “The Gilded Six-Bits”</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9/15</td>
<td>Kay Boyle, “Astronomer’s Wife”</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/17</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/24</td>
<td>Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Birthmark”</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 9/26</td>
<td>Flannery O’Connor, “Parker’s Back”</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9/29</td>
<td>Eudora Welty, “Petrified Man”</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10/1</td>
<td>Conference(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10/3</td>
<td>Conference(s)</td>
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<td>M 10/6</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10/8</td>
<td>Essay One is Due</td>
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<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10/10</td>
<td>FALL HOLIDAY—No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10/13</td>
<td>Kate Chopin, “Desiree’s Baby” plus critical essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10/15</td>
<td>Review/Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10/17</td>
<td>Midterm (in large size blue book, in pen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10/20</td>
<td>Dagoberto Gilb, “‘Look on the Bright Side”</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10/22</td>
<td>Zora Neale Hurston, “The Conscience of the Court”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 10/24</td>
<td>Robert Hayden, “Monet’s Waterlilies” and “Night, Death, Mississippi”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
M 10/27  Hayden, “Middle Passage”

W 10/29  Rita Dove, “Parsley”

F 10/31  Allen Ginsberg, “America”

M 11/3   Mark Twain, “The War Prayer”

W 11/5   Frank O’Connor, “Guests of the Nation”

F 11/7   Fred Chappell, “Ancestors”

M 11/10  Yukio Mishima, “Patriotism”

W 11/12  Hanif Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic”

F 11/14  Gwendolyn Brooks, “The Mother” and “A Song in the Front Yard”

M 11/17  Andre Dubus, “A Father’s Story”

W 11/19  Sylvia Plath, poems

F 11/21  TBD

M 11/24  Kate Chopin, “A Pair of Silk Stockings”

W 11/26 – F 11/28 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY—No Class

M 12/1   Essay Two is Due

TBD

W 12/3   Lorrie Moore, “How to Become a Writer”

F 12/5   ZZ Packer, “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere”

M 12/8   Daniel Keyes, “Flowers for Algernon”


F 12/12  TBD

Course Evaluations/Review for Final

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, Dec. 17th, 12:00-1:50 p.m. (in large blue book, in pen)

The small print: This is a “working” syllabus, so I reserve the right to make any necessary changes. Minor changes will be announced and/or negotiated in class. Major changes will be made in writing.