205-17 Literature and the Moral Imagination: Coming of Age in a Diverse Society

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Required Texts:

- Shorter readings, marked with an asterisk (*) in the schedule, are posted on Canvas.
  Please check the syllabus and schedule there for direct links.

The last two titles are available in Kindle or electronic versions. I don’t mind if you use an
electronic text if you must but I prefer that you have a tablet and that you get the paginated
version of
the book by the same publisher so that you can follow along in class. I do not allow laptops in class
except in cases of documented special needs. If I discover you toggling between the course text and
Facebook, email, text messaging, etc. in class you will lose the privilege to use your tablet in class.

Course Description:

This course constitutes the literature component of the Ethics/Religion and Society focus of the
Xavier core curriculum. This is also an elective for the Gender and Diversity Studies minor and
fulfills 3 credit hours of the Diversity Curriculum Requirement. We will read, write about, and discuss
a variety of literary texts with an emphasis on thinking critically about their social and ethical
implications, understanding them not only in terms of our own perspectives but also in relation to the
times and places for which they were produced. In specific, we will focus on coming-of-age
narratives. Some issues we will discuss include how identity is constructed by and through factors
such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality and religion and, of course, age. We will
also consider the relation of the individual to society and how much “coming of age” entails
assimilating to dominant cultural norms and expectations. Please note that the structure and subject
matter of this course demand maturity as well as sensitivity to the opinions and beliefs of others.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- read and write more critically, closely, and effectively;
- present ideas orally;
- conduct and evaluate research in the field;
- understand literature in its social and historical context;
- understand the ethical dimensions of literature;
- understand some of the basic concepts of diversity studies;

Requirements:

Since another course goal is to strengthen and to emphasize the relationships between your
reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, you will read and/or write every day for this course. Two
exams and two analytical essays (7-8 pp., typed, double-spaced) are required. You will also complete a research assignment that involves both a short paper and bibliography and a class presentation. Weekly unannounced reading quizzes and at least one shorter (1 paragraph/1 page) analytical writing assignment will also be required. Quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class. If you are late for class on a quiz day you will receive a zero for the quiz. Please note that due to the nature of the quizzes, they cannot be made up under any circumstances.

Attendance and Participation: Class discussions and in-class activities are essential to this course. Thus if you wish to succeed in this class, you need to attend and participate every day. Participation includes not only coming to class but also arriving prepared, on time, and ready to contribute to class discussions and activities. Your contribution will be measured by the “step up/step out” method. That is, you’ll be expected to offer thoughtful comments during discussion (step up), but you should do so without monopolizing the class or blurt out whatever crosses your mind (step out). Also note that for the duration of the class period, you will be expected to disconnect from your personal technology. No phone calls or texts should be coming in or going out during class. Laptops should be stowed unless you have a documentable need for one. Adult comportment is expected of all students.

If you must miss class, consult as soon as possible with a trusted classmate for any notes and announcements. Attendance will also be taken into consideration when calculating participation grades. Sustained habitual absences, defined as missing a week’s worth of consecutive classes, will result in a grade of VF (vanishing failure).

Grading:

You are responsible for your own grade in this course. You must be actively engaged in claiming an education. I cannot help you with problems in this class if you do not tell me what they are. You are encouraged to make individual appointments to see me, to come to my office hours, to call me at my office, to send me e-mail messages, and, of course, to speak up in class! Be aware that e-mail is not an appropriate venue for discussing certain issues and I do not always check my email on the weekends.

I do not accept late assignments or e-mail attachments. Late is defined as anything turned in after the beginning of the class period in which it is due and I must receive a hard copy of your work at that time. Except in the most dire, unavoidable and documentable circumstances, you must have prior approval from me for any late or missed assignments.

Plagiarism, the use of another person’s words or ideas as one’s own (yes, this applies to anything you find on the internet, too), will not be tolerated. It is against the law. If you plagiarize, it will result in, at the very least, failure of this course and may result in further academic discipline from the University. Don’t do it.

Everything will be graded on a 100-point scale (e.g., 80-82=B-, 83-86=B, 87-89=B+). Assignments will be weighted as follows:

Exam #1 — 15%
Exam #2 — 15%
Paper #1 — 20%
Paper #2 — 20%
Critical review, bibliography, and presentation – 15%
Quizzes and Exercises — 10%
Participation — 5%
Tutoring:
A valuable resource for all students is the Writing Center, 400 Conaton Learning Commons, 745-2875. Tutors can help you on an individual basis with any aspect of your writing at any stage in the writing process. They will not write papers for you nor will they proofread.

Students with Disabilities:
Anyone who feels he/she may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability (e.g.: sensory, learning, psychological, medical, mobility) should contact me to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs as soon as possible. I rely on the Disability Services Office for assistance in verifying your eligibility for academic accommodations related to your disability. If you have not previously contacted Disability Services, I encourage you to do so at 513-745-3280 on the Fifth Floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514 or e-mail Cassandra Jones at jonesc20@xavier.edu, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
All assignments are to be read, viewed or otherwise completed for the day on which they are listed. Any changes to the schedule will be discussed and announced in class.

WEEK I
T 8/26 Please have the syllabus read by today’s class period and come prepared with any questions! We will go over: course expectations, introductions, Critical Review and Presentation* assignment, including where to find Sources for Literary Research*.

WEEK II
T 9/2 Plath, The Bell Jar, ch.s 6-9, (pp. 63-111).
R 9/4 Plath, The Bell Jar, ch.s 10-14, (pp. 112-183).

WEEK III

WEEK IV

R 9/18 Andre Dubus, “If They Knew Yvonne.”* 

WEEK V
T 9/23 Dubus, “If They Knew Yvonne”* cont., and John Berger, “Ways of Seeing.”* Presentation/review:

WEEK VI
T 9/30 O’Brien, “Sister Imelda”* cont. and Jeffrey Weeks, Introduction to Guy Hocquenghem’s *Homosexual Desire.* Presentation/review:

R 10/2 Denton Welch, “When I Was Thirteen.”* Exam review.

WEEK VII
T 10/7 EXAM #1
R 10/9 No Class – Fall Break

WEEK VIII
T 10/14 Joyce Carol Oates, “How I Contemplated the World from the Detroit House of Correction and Began My Life Over Again.”* PAPER #1 DUE.
R 10/16 Oates, “How I Contemplated the World from the Detroit House of Correction and Began My Life Over Again”* cont., and Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.”* Presentation/review:

WEEK IX
T 10/21 Toni Cade Bambara, “The Lesson.”*

WEEK X

WEEK XI

WEEK XII
R 11/13 Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* cont., and Edward Said, from *Orientalism.* Presentation/review:

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WEEK XIII
T 11/18 Sherman Alexie, “Witnesses, Secret and Not.”*

WEEK XIV
R 11/27 No Class – Thanksgiving Break

WEEK XV
T 12/2 Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go, Part Two, pp. 115-203.

WEEK XVI
T 12/9 Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go, wrap up. PAPER #2 DUE.
R 12/11 Wrap up, exam review.

EXAM #2: 1:00 - 2:50 pm, Tuesday, December 16th