

ILACA

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century English Novel

Dr. Susie Thomas

Monday: 3.00-5.00

Tuesday: 1.00-2.00

Set Texts

Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*

Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

Course Description

This course looks at the nineteenth and twentieth century English novel in terms of historical context and literary technique. The novels have been selected, not only because they are among the greatest English novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also because they provide a coherent illustration of the development of the genre itself.

Each novel is primarily concerned with the spiritual odyssey of its hero/heroine; each reflects its own historical period, is a product of its own moral and cultural Zeitgeist; and, in addition, each novel reflects in its own way the 'Englishness' of Englishness literature. Each of these novels relies on the reader's knowledge of the English character and climate, class system and religion; each uses the English landscape (city and rural) as an integral motif. Finally, the course examines new definitions of national identity in the post-Imperial period through Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which opens: 'My name is Karim Amir and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost.'

Each novel will be subject to close critical appraisal and analysis in its own right. As the course progresses, however, each novel will then be considered in relation to its predecessors. Thus, through comparison and contrast students will become aware of the different fictional techniques and styles, and will become involved in a general consideration of the art and nature of narrative and the changes that the novel has undergone in the past century or more.

By the end of the semester the general discussion topics will have included: narrator's voice, point of view, manipulation of reader's response, narrative technique and style, symbolism, realism, modernism, postmodernism and postcolonialism. Literary style and form will be seen in relation to social and historical conditions including: the Industrial Revolution, growth of Empire, Victorianism, the impact of Darwin, anarchism and terrorism, The Great War, changes in the class system, the role of women, and post-war immigration.

Teaching is conducted mainly through seminar discussion and it is expected that everyone will participate fully. There will be short introductory lectures throughout the semester in order to provide the social, historical, literary and biographical background to each text.

Grading Policy

Essay I (Approx. 1500 words. Topic of your choice)	20%
Essay II (Ditto)	20%
Exam I (Close analysis of passage from text)	20%
Exam II (Open book. One essay covering all the novels)	20%
Seminar Paper (Class presentation on one novel)	20%

The final grade will reflect class participation and attendance

Course Outline

9 Feb:	Orientation. Social and historical background. History of the novel; critical terms and approaches.
10 Feb	Background to Charlotte Bronte.
16 Feb	Romanticism and Gothic Novel. Discuss <i>Jane Eyre</i> , chapters 1-20 : style, symbolism, character analysis and religious imagery.
17 Feb	Marxist reading (see Eagleton, <i>Myths of Power</i>)
23 Feb	Discuss <i>Jane Eyre</i> , chapters 21-end . Introduce ideas of psychoanalytic and feminist criticism: the red room, phallic imagery, the 'mad' Mrs Rochester (see Gilbert and Gubar).
24 Feb	Gender roles. Passion vs. Reason.
2 March	Background to Charles Dickens. Serial publication; public readings. Discuss <i>Great Expectations</i> , chapters 1-19 . Introduce concept of linguistic analysis (Derrida and Lacan) through Pip's establishing 'the identity of things'.
3 March	Theme of guilt; narrator's point of view; Dickens's use of rhetoric. Concept of reliable and unreliable narrator (see Wayne Booth, <i>The Rhetoric of Fiction</i>).

- 9 March **Dickens Walk**; visit Doughty Street.
- 10 March Discuss *Great Expectations*, **chapters 20-39**. Comparison of specific passages from Bronte and Dickens. Victorian concept of the gentleman; the bourgeois work ethic.
- 16 March Discuss *Great Expectations*, **chapters 40-end**. Consideration of the endings; reader's expectations and reader-orientated theories (see Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*).
- 17 March EXAM I
DUE ESSAY I
- BREAK
- 30 March Joseph Conrad's Polish background and historical context of the European anarchist movement. Questions posed by the political novel as a genre and political literary criticism. Visit the scene of the bombing, the **London Observatory in Greenwich**.
- 31 March Symbolic significance of time; the Prime Meridian Conference (1884). Representation of the police and Parliament. *The Secret Agent* as the first description of a would-be suicide bomber in English literature and Conrad's relevance to today's debates about curtailing freedom in order to defend freedom.
- 6 April Conrad as a pivotal figure, looking back to a Dickensian tradition (with its evocation of a seedy London) and forward to Modernism. Manipulation of point of view and the effect of temporal shifts; synecdoche and irony. Pessimism; Conrad as precursor of Sartre and Beckett. The significance of Winnie's story; female heroism and self-sacrifice.
- 7 April Background to Jeanette Winterson. Introduce concepts from postmodernist theory: parody, subversion, metafiction. Discussion of use of fantasy and fairy tale; disruption of linear narrative.
- 13 April *Jane Eyre* as an intertext of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Discuss Winterson on gender and sexual stereotypes.
- 14 April Discuss *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* as a feminist and lesbian text. Patricia Duncker on the difference between lesbian feminism and queer theory. Extracts from the biblical Book of Ruth and celebration of female loyalty

- 20 April Background to Hanif Kureishi. Discussion of the ways in which the Empire has informed the English novel (Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism). Immigration as 'colonisation in reverse'; the Empire writes back
- 21 April Discuss *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Part 1): suburbia, the lower middle class, postwar immigration from British India, racism; new definitions of Englishness.
- 27 April *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Part 2): London as the postmodern playground. Introduce concepts from postcolonial theory: mimicry, cultural hybridity, assimilation vs. integration, national identity as performance. Discussion of bi/sexuality (queer themes contrasted with *Oranges*).
- 28 April Compare *The Buddha* and *Great Expectations*: "Fuck you, Charles Dickens, nothing's changed".
- 4 May DUE ESSAY 2
- 5 May FINAL EXAM