

Winter 2012

English 108H: Isolation and Alienation

DWE 1515: Monday / Wednesday / Friday, 2:30pm-3:20pm

Instructor: Charles Boyes

Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday, 1pm-2pm

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About this course:

This course examines ideas and diverse representations of isolation and alienation in the context of various literary (and other) texts. We will encounter a variety of texts, including novels, graphic novels, films, poetry, drama, and critical and cultural theory, some of which may be familiar and others which you will be seeing for the first time. The texts we will examine will help us to address questions of what it means to be alienated: who may be isolated or alienated and under what circumstances, what led to that isolation, what someone might be alienated from, and how the process of isolation/alienation happens (on both a pragmatic and philosophic plane). Throughout our readings and discussions, we will investigate how ideas of isolation and alienation are important to our own identities and to the identity of the society or cultures which we invent and inhabit. We will also examine the ways in which ideas of who is isolated, and why, intersect with received notions of gender, sexuality, power, disability, wealth, race, etc., and what a careful examination of these themes can tell us about ourselves, and our own interactions with society.

Required Course texts:

Beowulf. Seamus Heaney, trans.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*.

Highsmith, Patricia. *Little Tales of Misogyny*.

Ellis, Bret Easton. *Less Than Zero*.

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home*.

Greenberg, Richard. *Take Me Out*.

Please Note: Additional reading materials will be made available throughout the term.

Any edition of the above text is suitable, with the exception of *Beowulf*, which must be the Heaney translation.

Assignments, Evaluations, and Schedule

Assignment	Due date	%
Participation		10%
Class Responses	Various	15%
Mid-Term Test	February 10	15%
Final essay		35%
Final exam	To be scheduled	25%

Date	Readings	Due Dates and Additional Readings
Wednesday January 4	Introduction	
January 9 // January 11	Course Questions: What is a text? What is literature? Texts and Ideology	Tompkins, <i>Sensational Designs</i>
January 13 // January 16 // January 18 // January 20	<i>Beowulf</i>	
January 23 // January 25 // January 27 // January 30	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	
February 1	<i>Freaks</i> (viewing)	
February 3 // February 6 // February 8	<i>Freaks</i>	
February 10		Midterm
February 13 // February 15 // February 17	<i>Little Tales of Misogyny</i>	
February 27 // February 29 // March 2	<i>Less Than Zero</i>	

March 5 // March 7 // March 9	TBD	
March 12 // March 14	Essay Writing Workshops	
March 16 // March 19 // March 21	<i>Fun Home</i>	
March 23 // March 26 // March 28	<i>Take Me Out</i>	
March 30 // April 2		Review Final Essay Due

Participation (10%)

Participation includes attendance as well as completing the preparatory work required to participate in each class. In other words, all readings must be completed before the relevant class and attention should be focused on all lectures and class discussions. Your participation grade will be determined according to how you perform in these aspects. It is your active, regular, and above all, informed participation that will decide the majority of this mark, and not how often you attend or how many questions you ask or answer (though attendance is a prerequisite for participation).

Conduct: Students are expected to take an active role in their education in this course. This means that you will likely receive greater freedom than you have been offered in previous years of education. It also means that you will be expected to contribute towards a positive academic atmosphere, one that is attentive to everybody's learning needs. A classroom is meant to be a place to learn and to debate, which means listening is as important as speaking. Furthermore, throughout this course we may be dealing with topics on which students may hold deep personal beliefs or opinions; all students are expected to treat fellow students and their opinions with respect. This does not mean we must all agree (in fact, lively discussion and debate are greatly encouraged): it simply means that you should show respect when these differences of opinion arise. Keep in mind a discussion should focus on what we say, and not who we are. Students should maintain an open mind towards both their own views as well as the views of others in the classroom and at all times maintain a positive critical vocabulary. At no point will sexist, racist, or homophobic language be tolerated.

Test (15%)

The sixteenth meeting will be given over to a test of your familiarity of the material covered in the course to that point. The test will be administered in class and you will have 45 minutes to complete it. The test will cover key terms (short answer) and your ability to elucidate and evaluate important concepts (short essay).

Class Responses, best 5 of 8 (15%)

You will be invited to respond to a question on each text studied throughout the term. The responses will be completed in class and you will have 30 minutes to complete each one. The responses will be graded out of 5, with one mark given for attendance that day and the remaining two for the quality and coherence of your response. You need only write 5 responses, but may write all 8, if you wish. In any event, only your top 5 marks will be counted toward your grade.

The responses will be written on the final day of study of each text, encompassing, approximately, the final half of the lesson.

Final Essay (35%)

The final essay will be 1800-2000 words in length, double spaced, excluding apparatus. Any additional research *must* be okayed by the instructor (but is, nonetheless, strongly encouraged). The final paper must be formatted using MLA guidelines.

A detailed essay assignment sheet will be distributed in class well before the deadline.

Final exam (25%)

The final exam will take place in the exam period and will cover material from the entire course. You will have 2.5 hrs to complete the exam.

Course policies

Late assignments will be penalized 2% per business day. Requests for extensions will be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis, but will only be granted if consultation takes place *prior* to the due date. Any requests made after the due date will require appropriate documentation.

University policies

Academic integrity: Members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. For more information, see <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>

Note on avoidance of academic offences: You are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for your actions. If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. You can also consult the helpful resources on the Faculty of Arts web page:

http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html.

Discipline: When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy 71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy 71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar, section 1:

http://www.ucalendar.uwaterloo.ca/0405/UW/policy_71.html. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals): <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>.

Grievances: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances), Section 4: <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>.

Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.