English 108H (Winter 2009) – Isolation and Alienation

Instructor: Morgan Tunzelmann
Email: mtunzelm@artsmail.uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: Mondays 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. (or by appointment), PAS 2222
Classes: M 7:00 – 9:50 p.m., ML 349

Course Description
This course studies a variety of works centering on the theme of individuals in crisis, the stress being on people at variance with their inner selves, other people, or their environment. Through close reading of texts, we will consider how ideas of isolation and alienation are manifested through written and visual expression. The course will discuss the process in which wisdom and maturity are gained as the ultimate products of suffering.

Our examination of “Isolation and Alienation” includes particular focuses on “outer” factors such as cityscapes, culture and class, as well as “inner” factors such as sexuality, spirituality and addiction—although, as we will see, “outer” and “inner” causes of isolation or alienation are usually inextricably mixed. Throughout the course, students are encouraged to develop a critical viewpoint toward the terms “isolation” and “alienation”—which may not always refer to negative circumstances.

Course Objectives
By the end of this course, students should be able to:
- Identify and describe some of the stylistic and thematic concerns found in texts of study
- Develop confidence in their own interpretation of literary and cultural texts
- Develop a greater understanding of the conventions of academic writing in the English discipline and apply that knowledge to their own written work

Required Texts
Engl 108H courseware
John Milton, Paradise Lost
Dionne Brand, What We All Long For
Hunter S. Thompson, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas
Michael Ondaatje, In the Skin of a Lion
Marjane Satrapi, Persepolis

Recommended Resource Texts
The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers
The Little, Brown Handbook

Mark Distribution
Reading Journal (includes diagnostic) 15%
Object Text Analysis/Review 20%
Essay (includes 5% for 2 workshops) 30%
Final Exam 35%

Reading Journal (15%) (five journal entries, plus one diagnostic assignment at start of term)
On five specified dates throughout the term, you will be required to prepare a one page (double-spaced) reading journal in response to a prompt provided in class. The purpose of this journal is to get you to devote some time to thinking about the text prior to class and so that you can be prepared for class discussion. This portion of your mark is also designed to allow you more opportunities to hone your analytical writing skills. Each journal is worth 3% and will be graded on a 3-point scale based on acceptable completion of the assignment. (You are allowed one “freebie”; i.e., you may drop your lowest journal mark or miss a journal entry. However, the diagnostic must be completed.)

Reading journals will be submitted in class on the date they are assigned and cannot be handed in late. Please be prepared to share your journals with other class members on occasion.

Object Text Analysis (20%)- February 23rd
Note: Detailed information about this assignment will be provided in class.
You will be required to find a simple “object text” that demonstrates an example of the theme of isolation or alienation. Object texts can include newspaper articles, works of art, building designs (e.g. supermarkets, schools, dorms), video game interfaces—but they must be specific (more about that later). You will then write a short paper that a) briefly describes the text and b) explains how the text exemplifies the experience of isolation or alienation in contemporary culture, ideally by referring to at least one of our course texts. Papers should be approximately 1000 words in length (4 pages) and will be graded based on writing and analyses.

Essay (30%)- March 30th
You will be required to write an original paper based on 1-2 of the primary texts from the course. The essay will be 1500-1750 words in length (6-7 pages). You will be able to choose your own topic, but suggestions will be given in class to facilitate your brainstorming. A first draft of your paper is due on March 16th. We will have one in-class writing workshop to help you improve your understanding of the conventions of academic writing in the English discipline. The essay is worth 30% of your final mark—5% for the workshop, 25% for the completed paper.

Exam (35%)- TBA
The final component of the course is a final exam to be scheduled in April. There will be no exam deferrals without official medical documentation. The exam will cover all course material, and is worth 35% of your final mark. Note: Attending class, keeping up with all readings and taking notes on lecture material throughout the semester are essential to successfully completing the final.
Course Policies

- Course assignments can only be accepted without penalty after the due date if the student provides the instructor with legitimate and documented circumstances. Any requests for extensions must be made in writing, one week prior to the due date, outlining the extraordinary circumstances necessitating additional time. No extensions without penalty will be granted after the due date.
- Assignments not handed to the instructor on the due date will be penalized 3% per day (including weekends). Note: Late journals are not accepted.
- The midterm and the final exam must be written or given at the assigned time, unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.
- All assignments are to conform to MLA format. Instruction on using this documentation format will be reviewed in class.

Email Policies

- I usually reply to student emails within 24 hours during weekdays and 48 hours during weekends; however, this timeframe is not a foolproof guarantee. Students should allow for adequate time in which to address questions and receive responses.
- Students are expected to use professional etiquette when emailing any instructor (that means full sentences, no emoticons, and a basic salutation).
- While many questions can be addressed via email, some questions require an in-person discussion to be addressed effectively. If this is the case, I will ask the student to set up a time to meet in my office.

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.

Plagiarism and Academic Offences

Academic Integrity: in order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Grievance: 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
**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm)

**More on Policy 71:**
- includes cheating, plagiarism (presenting the ideas, words or other intellectual property of another as one’s own), oral or written misrepresentations (fraudulent health claims).
- Proven plagiarism cases result in a failing grade on the exam, test, or assignment; possible disciplinary probation (note in file; further offence will lead to even greater penalties) and possible failed standing in the term. The failing grade on the course remains a permanent part of the academic record.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)

If you need more information on how to avoid plagiarism, please speak to me and/or consult “How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors” [http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html](http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html)

**Class Schedule**
Below is a tentative schedule as to what we will be covering each day of class. Any changes made will be announced. Happy reading!!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>TO READ</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 5th</td>
<td>Course Intro</td>
<td>General discussion:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
<pre><code>                             |                                      | Environment / Community               |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment/Discussion</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 12th</td>
<td>John Milton, <em>Paradise Lost</em> (Books One, Two)</td>
<td>“Fall” of humankind (Western lit); Satan as alienated figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Diagnostic Assignment DUE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 19th</td>
<td>Dionne Brand, <em>What We All Long For</em></td>
<td>Canadian immigrants and cityscape; youth; journeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Prodigal Son</em> (web reference:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Journal #1 DUE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 26th</td>
<td>Brand, <em>What We All Long For</em></td>
<td>Desire; sexuality; relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wallace Stevens, “The Emperor of Ice Cream” (coursepack)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2nd</td>
<td>from Margery Kempe, <em>The Book of Margery Kempe</em> (coursepack)</td>
<td>Spirit and body; hunger; denial; control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Franz Kafka, “The Hunger Artist”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(web reference: <a href="http://records.vlu.ca/~johnstoi/kafka/hungerartist.htm">http://records.vlu.ca/~johnstoi/kafka/hungerartist.htm</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emily Dickinson, “Hope is a subtle Glutton—“ (handout in class)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Journal #2 DUE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 9th</td>
<td>Thomas DeQuincey, <em>Confessions of an English Opium Eater</em> (web reference:</td>
<td>Addiction;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2040/2040_h/2040_h.htm">http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2040/2040_h/2040_h.htm</a>)</td>
<td>Romanticization of addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from Gabor Mate, <em>In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts</em> (coursepack)</td>
<td>Pathologization of addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter S. Thompson, <em>Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Journal #3 DUE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 23rd</td>
<td>Hunter S. Thompson, <em>Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</em></td>
<td>The American Dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Object Text Assignment Due</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| March 9th | Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin Of a Lion*  
Journal #4 DUE | Historical narratives; labour and class struggle; cityscape Essay Writing Tips  
(as above) |
| March 16th | William Butler Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” (coursepack)  
Jorge Luis Borges, “The Immortals” (coursepack)  
Mavis Gallant, “His Mother” (coursepack)  
3 page Essay Draft DUE | Old Age; Dying Essay Draft Workshop |
| March 23rd | Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*  
Journal #5 DUE | Graphic novel; Autobiography; Political History |
| March 30th | Satrapi, *Persepolis* | COURSE REVIEW |