Department of English
University of Waterloo

ENGLISH 108H

Isolation and Alienation

Syllabus

Instructor: Dan Crosby
Office: HH 229A
Phone: ext. 3386
Hours: M 12:00-1:30

The Course

This course surveys the theme of isolation and alienation in works from the Middle Ages to the present. It examines three different genres of literature (poetry, fiction, and drama)—traditional works and more experimental, by male and female writers.

We will consider such questions as:
- what does it mean to be isolated or alienated?
- how do different writers treat the theme?
- what do characters turn to for comfort?
- is wisdom a result of isolation?

Class format will be part-lecture and part-discussion.

The Texts

Eliot, T.S. *Selected Poems*. Faber.
Gardner, John. *Grendal*. Ballantine

Selected Readings (available from instructor)

The Students

Students should above all develop an interest in the course and the materials.

Be prepared at all times to comment on, question, or correct what the instructor or your classmates say. There is no one solution for any query; truth is plural. Your ideas may be silly or absurd, but I would rather hear something silly or
absurd from you than nothing at all. Be prepared, as well, to support your comments with evidence from the texts.

Read all the assigned works before the class discussion. You cannot benefit from the lectures and discussions unless you are familiar with the work. By coming unprepared you insult your classmates; by not coming at all you insult the education you are trying to achieve.

Students with an appetite for Coles Notes (which, I believe, cause blindness and warts) should seriously consider transferring to another university.

The Requirements

Library Assignment A short (250-500 word) report on a critical work (an essay, a chapter or section of a book) discovered by you in the library, and dealing with our theme in any literature, film, music, etc. that you are familiar with.

Due: March 1 (but may be handed in any time before)

(value = 10%)

Short Answer and Participation I expect you to come to class and have something to say. Once during the term you will be asked to provide brief, one-paragraph responses to 2 or 3 questions given in the previous class. At least one response will be shared with your classmates, and all must be handed in to the instructor.

(value = 10%)

Short Essay A short paper (750-1000 words) on an assigned topic.

Due: February 6

(value = 20%)
Major Essay

A longer paper (1500 words) on an assigned topic and demonstrating a working knowledge of our theme, and an ability to assemble your own ideas, critical material, and support from the texts.

Due: April 13

(value = 40%)

Final Exam

Simple, if you have read and understood the texts, and involved yourself in the discussion. Given at the registrar's whim (usually too late, too early, or at the wrong time of day).

(value = 20%)

Essays should be given to me by hand. I have a mailbox in HH 229, but this and any other means of transmission is strictly at your own peril. Essays slipped under my door are libel to be slipped back to you.

Work handed in after the due date is subject to severe penalties.

The Instructor

My name is Dan Crosby and I am a Graduate student in the Department of English. I received my M.A. last year, and am now working towards my Ph.D.

I keep office hours outside of class and enjoy talking to students—so don't hesitate to drop by. I am also available after class or by appointment. Since I am a student myself, I can usually sympathize better with the tribulations of a university career.