English 108H — Isolation and Alienation
Winter semester, 1997

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 — 11:30
Place: AL 212

Instructor: Jacqueline Howse
Office: PAS 1059
Office Phone: 885-2685
Office Hours: TBA

This class will have a dual focus. We will study novels that represent the course theme of isolation and alienation, and we will also discuss issues connected to the study of literature itself. In our discussions of the texts we read, we will examine their representations of various forms of social isolation and alienation. We will also try to determine how literature is made, and why and how we study it. The class is based on discussion rather than lecture; therefore, participants should bring to each class a list of questions designed to generate ideas, and we will use these to begin our discussions.

Required Texts
Douglas Coupland, Generation X

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Yellow Wallpaper

Ursula LeGuin, The Left Hand of Darkness

Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye

Anne Rice, Interview With the Vampire

Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony

Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway

A handbook of your choice.

All texts are available from the university bookstore. Some may be available from the second-hand bookstore.
Course Work

Issue Cards — 25%
Issue cards are 4 by 6 inch index cards on which you write a paragraph or two concerning an issue in each novel that you find intriguing, puzzling, stimulating, etcetera. A good guideline is that you should write on what interests you the most about the subject matter of the novel, the technique of the writer, and/or your own response to either. The purpose of issue cards is not to find a “right answer” about your issue, or to demonstrate what you know, as on an exam. Rather, the purpose is for you to demonstrate that you can branch out in your thinking, that you can speculate, consider, venture into thoughts and ways of thinking that are new to you. Issue cards will not be marked for grammar, but for insight and intelligibility. Although the cards will not be marked for grammar, we may use them to help identify aspects of your writing that you could work to improve. Issue cards are due at the beginning of class when we begin discussing a new novel. Points will be deducted for late issue cards.

Essay #1 — 20%
A short essay (750-1000 words) for which you will devise and consider a question about some aspect of a writer’s technique and how it shapes the novel. The paper itself will not take the form of a question and answer; rather, it should conform to the conventions for academic essays. It is most likely that your paper topic will come from one of your issue cards, but you will have the option of defining a topic separate from your issue card topics. Topics are to be negotiated with me before you begin to work on your paper. Essays will be graded for the quality and depth of thought they exhibit, as well as for the quality of the writing. You will have an opportunity to receive a real reader’s feedback to your paper before you hand it in, as we will use some class time for writing workshops in which you will give and receive guided response to drafts of essays. Points will be deducted for missing or incomplete workshop drafts. The workshop draft is due February 11, and the revised draft is due by 4 p.m., February 28, in the English Department mail room on the second floor of Hagey Hall.

Essay #2 — 25%
The same criteria apply as for Essay #1, with some additions: Essay #2 will require some research, and you will write on a different text that the one for Essay #1. Workshop drafts are due March 18, and revised drafts are due by 4 p.m., April 4, in the English Department mail room.

Preparation/Participation — 15%
Because this is a discussion class, the class will succeed only if the participants prepare ahead; preparation and participation are therefore weighted relatively heavily in the grading scheme. The following will be considered in assigning this grade:

- attendance: more than three absences will result in lost points, unless there is a documented medical reason;
- leading/recording discussion: everyone will take responsibility for leading and recording discussion; a record of the discussion similar to the minutes of meetings will be handed
in at the end of each discussion;

- thoughtful discussion questions: bring two copies of your questions to each discussion, and hand in one copy;

- thoughtful responses to workshop drafts: I will hand out response sheets which you will use when you respond to other writers' drafts; these will be handed in with revised drafts;

- thoughtful responses on issue cards: it will be obvious if issue cards are written ten minutes before class, or if a writer writes them without reading the novels; and it will be equally obvious when a writer puts careful thought into an interested issue card response;

- timeliness: late issue cards, workshop drafts, revised drafts may all result in lost points.

Final Exam — 15%
Most of the work will be done during the semester. The exam will be an opportunity for you to pull together some thoughts and achieve some closure for the course.

Class Schedule
Week 1
Jan. 7 — Introductions and Overview
Jan. 9 — Gilman *ISSUE CARD DUE*

Week 2
Jan. 14 — Gilman
Jan. 16 — Morrison *ISSUE CARD DUE*

Week 3
Jan. 21 — Morrison
Jan. 23 — Morrison

Week 4
Jan. 28 — Rice *ISSUE CARD DUE*
Jan. 30 — Rice

Week 5
Feb. 4 — Rice
Feb. 6 — *WORKSHOP — DRAFT OF ESSAY # 1 DUE*
Week 6
Feb. 11 — Coupland  *ISSUE CARD DUE*
Feb. 13 — Coupland

Week 7
Feb. 25 — Coupland
Feb. 27 — LeGuin  *ISSUE CARD DUE*
*FEBRUARY 28 — REVISED DRAFT OF ESSAY # 1 DUE*

Week 8
Mar. 4 — LeGuin  *ISSUE CARD DUE*
Mar. 6 — LeGuin

Week 9
Mar. 11 — Silko  *ISSUE CARD DUE*
Mar. 13 — Silko

Week 10
Mar. 18 —  *WORKSHOP — DRAFT OF ESSAY # 2 DUE*
Mar. 20 — Silko

Week 11
Mar. 25 — Woolf  *ISSUE CARD DUE*
Mar. 27 — Woolf

Week 12
Apr. 1 — Woolf
Apr. 4 — REVIEW
*APRIL 5 — REVISED DRAFT OF ESSAY # 2 DUE*