English 108H: Isolation and Alienation (Winter 2014)
Tuesday/Thursday/Friday: 3:30-4:20 pm
Room: Hagey Hall 138

Instructor: Dhruba J. Neupane
E-mail: dneupane@uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday
(2:30-3:30) PAS 1284 (and by appointment)

Course Description
Drawing on a variety of literary works across geopolitical and cultural contexts, we will explore the sources and conditions of isolation and alienation and the various responses accorded them. How do conditions of isolation and alienation relate to power, agency, and identity? How do such mechanisms as inclusion and exclusion, classification and hierarchization, and value-judgement, and such constructions as gender, sexuality, class, race, nationality, (ab)normality, (dis)ability intersect with isolation and alienation? What are the consequences of progress, change or stability on real and imagined feelings and experiences of isolation and alienation? We will try to answer these and other questions that we come across during the term.

Course Objectives
During the term, you will be able to:
1. Familiarize with various causes, conditions, and consequences of isolation and alienation;
2. Understand that the forms, contents, economies and shapings of isolation and alienation—political, sexual, racial—vary across times, spaces, cultures, and geopolitical realities;
3. Appreciate the differential roles and affordances of genres in filtering or (re)mediating truths.
4. Demonstrate an ability to critically analyze a text, synthesizing other arguments and inserting your own.

Required Texts:
3. Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild* (nonfiction)
5. Satrapi, Marjane *Persepolis* (graphic novel)
8. *Her* (film)
9. Additional materials (videos, links, articles) as deemed necessary

Expectations
You must bring reading materials to class and you must come to class prepared so that
you can contribute to the process of learning from one another. The key to this class is
this co-learning. In that spirit, active and meaningful participation is expected of
everyone. For attendance and other policy related matters, please refer to relevant
sections below.

Grading
Participation (includes attendance and other activities): 10%
Response Paper: 15%
Class Presentation: 20%
Midterm Paper: 25%
Final Exam: 30%

Critical Response (800 words): Take a position from among various topics and
concepts that stand out to you in readings, class presentations and discussions, and apply
the concept to your own observations and experience. Rather than a summary of a
particular reading, you will demonstrate that your specific position needs to be attended
to. The response should take into account the complexities of an issue. The following
steps might prove helpful:
1. Develop an argument
   Examples:
   - “While issue X has been analyzed from gender and psychological angles,
     the more important role of economy is missing from most existing
     studies...”
   - “I argue that we need to see X differently”
   - “In this response I make a case for...”
2. Position your argument in terms of other arguments, synthesizing other positions
   and showing the strengths and limits underlying them.
3. Justify the importance of your position.
4. (Optional) Pose one or two further-discussion questions.

Class Presentation
You will choose one of the texts on the course outline and prepare a 20-minute
presentation + the last 4-5 minutes for question-answers (total 25 minutes; 40 minutes for
a combined presentation). The presentation should provide contextual, critical, historical,
or cultural material that will enable a better understanding of the chosen text. You may
also refer to other texts or authors discussed in the course. Please speak to me regarding
your topic in advance to the presentation date.

You should try to engage the participants, generate questions and comments, and respond
to them appropriately. Inventiveness and experimentation is welcome.
Provide a one-page outline of the presentation to class members and hand in a page written description of your part of presentation. Please cite all the sources you use. The presentations will be evaluated based on the quality the presentation. If you are co-presenting, make sure that each member has an equal share of responsibility.

Midterm Paper: You will write one formal essay (approx. 1500 words) that will analyze one or more texts on the course. Possible topics will be distributed in class, but you may negotiate your own topic. You are required to submit a proposal with an argument and an overview. Next to that you will have annotated bibliography, with at least 3 peer-reviewed secondary materials.

A) Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (5%): Due Feb 24

B) Final Draft (20%): Due Feb 27

For this assignment, you should develop and expand your own ideas and arguments. Essays must be in the MLA format. You must submit a copy of your proposal and annotated bibliography of at least 3 secondary sources. [More details will be provided.]

Final Exam: The final exam will take place in the exam period and will cover material from the entire course. It will be a combination of short answer and essay.

Class Schedule
Week 1
Jan 6 Introduction
Jan 8 Modern Times (sign up for class presentation)
Jan 9 Modern Times (lecture and discussion) (sign up for response paper)

Week 2
Jan 13 Modern Times
Jan 15 The Great Gatsby (presentation #1)
Jan 16 The Great Gatsby

Week 3
Jan 20 The Great Gatsby
Jan 22 The Great Gatsby
Jan 23 Into the Wild (presentation #2)

Week 4
Jan 27 Into the Wild
Jan 29 Into the Wild
Jan 30 Into the Wild

Week 5
Feb 3 Wide Sargasso Sea (presentation #3)
Feb 5 Wide Sargasso Sea
Feb 6 Wide Sargasso Sea
Week 6
Feb 10 Wide Sargasso Sea
Feb 12 Persepolis (presentation #4)
Feb 13 Persepolis (Essay briefing and rubrics)

Week 7
Feb 17 Persepolis
Feb 19 Persepolis
Feb 20 Discussion: Term Essay

Week 8
Feb 24 “Squatter” (presentation #5) (essay proposal due)
Feb 26 “Squatter”
Feb 27 “Squatter” (Essay due)

Week 9
March 3 “Entering into the Serpent” (presentation #6)
March 5 “Entering into the Serpent”
March 6 TBD

Week 10
March 10 Lake of the Prairies (presentation #7)
March 12 Lake
March 13 Lake

Week 11
March 17 Lake
March 19 Her (movie)
March 20 Her (presentation #8)

Week 12
March 24 Her
March 26 in-class activities
March 27 TBD

Week 13
March 31 [details, final exam]
April 2 Conclusion
  • April 3 (Good Friday Holiday)
  • Final on campus examination likely on April 19
    (Note that this schedule is subject to change and modification)

Late policies
Late assignments will be penalized 5% each day they are late (including Saturday and Sunday) and will not be accepted after one week past the deadline. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis but only if consultation takes place prior to the due date. Any requests made after the due date will require appropriate medical documentation.

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

**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

**Accommodations for Persons 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. If you require academic accommodations (such as alternate test and exam arrangements) please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term and inform the course instructor.