

## LITT 4610-001 Fall 2006

### Senior Seminar—Postmodern American Fiction

MW 3:35pm-5:25pm, Room WQ-224

**Instructor:** Dr. Kristin Jacobson

**Office phone:** (609) 626-5581 **Office Location:** J-236

**Email:** Please use our WebCT email

**Office Hours:** Mondays 1-3pm; Wednesdays 2pm-3pm; and by appointment

**Mailbox:** Arts and Humanities, K-150

**Course Description:** What constitutes postmodern American fiction? This course will address this question from a variety of perspectives: we will examine the definition and status of post-1945 American fiction, analyze how various locations like the city, the home, the wilderness, and the road impact and shape post-1945 American literature and culture, and investigate how late twentieth-century American fiction shapes our own understanding of the American landscape and culture. Thus, this course will examine American literature's cultural and aesthetic geographies. We will discuss a range of postmodern American fiction from its cultural and historical contexts and conduct close readings of the texts' aesthetic constructions and politics. Special attention will be paid to the ways in which these texts locate class, race, sexuality, and gender. We will also read critical essays that attempt to frame our understanding of this period and its literature. All students will write frequently and be expected to share their individual research with the class. The capstone project provides advanced literature students the opportunity to plan, prepare, write, and present a substantive individual research project.

In particular, this course has two essential goals to develop students'

- **Expressiveness:** *to develop skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing*
  - All the written and oral presentation assignments give students practice in these skills
- **Intellectual Development:** *to learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view*
  - Our class discussions will prepare you to perform this skill in your formal written and oral presentation work.

#### Required Texts:

- ***White Noise: Texts and Criticism***. Don DeLillo. (Viking Critical Library 1998) ISBN: 0-14-027498-7
- ***Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology***. Paula Geyh, Fred G. Leebron, Andrew Levy, eds. (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1998) ISBN 0-393-31698-X
- ***Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction***. Christopher Butler. (Oxford 2002) ISBN 0-19-280239-9
- **WebCT:** If you have questions about using WebCT, consult a lab assistant or your instructor.

#### Optional Texts:

- ***MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition***
- ***Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction***. Jonathan Culler. (Oxford 1997) ISBN 0-19-285383-X
- ***A Postmodern Reader***. Joseph Natoli & Linda Hutcheon, eds. (State University of New York Press 1993) ISBN 0-7914-1638-0

#### Additional Resources:

- **Stockton Libraries:** <http://library.stockton.edu/>
  - **Periodical Databases:**  
<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=86&pageID=4>

- **Language and Literature links:**  
<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=86&pageID=150>
- **Heath Anthology Webpage:**  
<http://college.hmco.com/english/lauter/heath/5e/students/index.html>

**Email Policy:**

1. Please use WebCT email for all course-related correspondence.
2. I usually check email each day in the morning. Please plan your email questions accordingly.
3. Visit my office hours with specific questions about course material. If you miss a class, contact a classmate about missed material and then visit my office hours if you have more questions.
4. I do not discuss grades over email. Grades should be discussed in person during office hours or other arranged meetings.

**Accommodation for Students with Special Needs:** Stockton College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations should contact the Learning Access Program located in the West Quad Building, Suite 110 or by call 652-4988. Additional information on the program may be obtained from Stockton web site <http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html>.

**Academic Honesty:** Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and risk failing the course. Other sanctions may also apply. For more information, see <http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=14&pageID=62>.

**Course Requirements:** You will be expected to:

- (1) **Attend class meetings and be prepared.** That means DO THE READING; this is a discussion-based class and if you haven't done the reading, you won't be able to contribute and the class (as well as your grade) will suffer accordingly;
  - a. **Attendance**—Mandatory. You are allotted two absences during the semester for fatigue, burnout, cocktail flu, personal reasons, sick family members, car problems, malfunctioning alarm clocks, etc. For each absence after your first two, your final grade **will be reduced five points per additional absence**, down to and including "F." (Note: I do not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences. If you miss two days and then get the flu and miss another day, you will lose 5 points for the third absence.) This is the capstone course to your Literature degree: regular, spirited class attendance is a crucial component to passing this course.
- (2) **Participate in large and small group class discussions.** This course is what you make of it and will work *only* if everyone participates;
- (3) **Complete all assignments.** Passing the course requires timely completion of ALL of the assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of class.

**Grades**

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|--|-----|
| • Research Paper Proposal                            | 100 |
| • Teaching Presentation with Visual Aid (15-20 mins) | 100 |
| • Short Theory Paper (8-10 pages)                    | 100 |
| • Research Presentation with Visual Aid (15 mins)    | 100 |
| • Annotated Bibliography                             | 100 |
| • Final Research Paper (20-25 pages)                 | 500 |

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**Total— 1000**

- Regular, spirited class participation may assist borderline final grades.

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### **Grading Scale**

|             |             |             |                 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 100-95: A   | 89.9-87: B+ | 79.9-77: C+ | 69.9-67: D+     |
| 94.9-90: A- | 86.9-83: B  | 76.9-73: C  | 66.9-63: D      |
|             | 82.9-80: B- | 72.9-70: C- | 62.9-60: D-     |
|             |             |             | 59.9 & below: F |

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### **Assignments**

- **Research Paper Proposal** (100 points): This proposal will outline the question your Final Research Paper and Short Theory Paper will address. It will map your plan of action. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.
  - **Teaching Presentation w/ Visual Aid (15-20 mins.)**: This presentation will inform the class about an assigned literary, historical, or cultural element significant to our understanding of the assigned reading. You may sign up in a group of 2 students or do the presentation by yourself. Each presentation must use some type of visual aide (for example, a PowerPoint presentation and/or handout) and provide to the class and instructor with a bibliography of at least 5 sources on the topic. All group members should speak during the course of the 15-20-minute presentation.
  - **Short Theory Paper** (100 points): This paper should serve as a shorter version of your Final Research Paper. It will address a focused aspect of the theoretical question your Final Research Paper will address in greater detail. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.
  - **Research Presentation**: The final two weeks of class are set aside for student presentations of their final research paper. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.
  - **Annotated Bibliography** (20 Sources): There are sample annotations available in WebCT. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.
  - **Final Research Paper** (20-25 pages): The capstone project of this class and your Literature degree. This project will represent your best work. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.
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### **Late Assignment Policy:**

I understand that life is full of surprises and sometimes those surprises influence your coursework and your ability to complete assignments. As a community of learners, we also recognize that we have a responsibility to the group, to our instructor, and to ourselves. We understand that every action has a consequence—even when circumstance may limit our power to act. To balance individual and community needs, we have the following guidelines for late assignments.

**Written Assignments:** *Papers are due at the beginning of class.* Late papers will be docked 5 percentage points per day late. So, if a B (85%) paper due on Monday at 3:35pm is passed in on Tuesday at 8:30am, the recorded grade would be B- (80). If it is passed in on Wednesday, the paper would earn a 75. And so on and so forth.

**Paper Extensions:** Any student who asks the instructor **prior to** the due date may receive a 2-day extension from the due date listed on the syllabus. After 2 days the late paper penalty will go into effect. No exceptions. *Due to the College's grade submission deadline for graduating seniors, no graduating senior may receive an extension for the final research paper.*

Of course, the extension policy will only help students who have drafted a paper and follow the expected practice of backing up documents. Back up all your files and you will be a much happier and successful individual. You may not be happy when your computer explodes or disk crashes, but at least you will not be despondent. I also strongly encourage all students to keep a personal

copy of every assignment and to keep all returned assignments with my feedback until the end of the term. **No assignments will be accepted after the last class meeting.**

## Syllabus—LITT 4610—Fall 2006<sup>1</sup>

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### Unit 1—Selecting and Researching A Topic

#### Week 1: Introductions, Themes and Questions

- **Sept 6:** Introduction to course, assignments, students and instructor. Sign up for Teaching Presentation.
    - **Presentation:** Introduction to American Postmodern Fiction (Model Presentation by Dr. J)
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#### Week 2: Introduction to Post-1945 American Fiction's Landmarks

- **Sept 11:** "Introduction" (ix-xxx); "Breaking the Frame" (1-3); Reed "Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down" (55-65); "Fact Meets Fiction" (125-126); Hak Kyung Cha from *Dictee* (161-173)
    - **Presentation 1:** Postmodernism and Narrative Form
  - **Sept 13:** "Popular Culture and High Culture Collide" (193-195); Barry from *Come Over Come Over* (211-215); Baudrillard from "Simulacra and Simulation" (631-637); Bérubé from "Public Access" (595-603)
    - **Presentation 2:** Postmodernism and Popular Culture
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#### Week 3: Introduction to Post-1945 American Fiction's Landmarks

- **Sept 18:** "Revising History" (291-293); Spiegelman from *Maus* (294-300); "Revising Tradition" (393-395); Oates "The Turn of the Screw" (396-409); hooks "Postmodern Blackness" (624-631)
    - **Presentation 3:** Postmodernism and History
  - **Sept 20:** "Technoculture" (509-511); Butler from *Imago* (554-561); Joyce from *afternoon, a story* (576-580); Harpold "Conclusions" (637-648)
    - **Presentation 4:** Postmodernism and New Media
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#### Week 4: A Skeptical Introduction to Postmodern Theory

- **Sept 25:** Butler, *Postmodernism* (1-61); Auster from *City of Glass* (443-449)
    - **Presentation 5:** Definitions of Postmodernism
  - **Sept 27:** Butler, *Postmodernism* (62-127); Gibson "The Gernsback Continuum" (512-519);
    - **Presentation 6:** Postmodernism and the Visual/Theatre Arts
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#### Week 5: The City & Urban Environments

- **Oct 2:** Hassan "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism" (585-595); Vollmann from *The Rainbow Stories* (152-161); Cruz from *Premature Autopsies* (263-270); Burroughs from *Nova Express* (15-25); Coover from *A Night at the Movies* (226-241)
  - **Presentation 7:** Major American Postmodern Authors
- **Oct 4:** Acker from *Great Expectations* (409-415); Kingston from *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (458-470); Delany from *Neveryóna* (470-484) **Final Research Paper Topic Due**
  - **Presentation 8:** Postmodernism and Myth

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<sup>1</sup> Class Schedule subject to changes with notice. Readings and assignments are listed on the day they are due.

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## Unit 2—Planning and Drafting Your Argument

### Week 6: The Country and Natural Environments

- **Oct 9:** Brautigan from *Trout Fishing in America* (37-42); Gass “In the Heart of the Heart of the Country” (65-84); Phillips “Bluegill” (115-120)
    - **Presentation 9:** Literature and Cultural Geography
  - **Oct 11:** O’Brien “How to Tell a True War Story” (174-183); Cantor from *Krazy Kat* (196-211); Doctorow “The Leather Man” (331-338)
    - **Presentation 10:** Deconstruction
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### Week 7: The Country and Natural Environments

- **Oct 16:** Silko From *Ceremony* (321-331); Alexie “Captivity” (341-345); Minh-ha from *Woman, Native, Other* (649-654)
    - **Presentation 11:** Postmodernism and Native American Literature
  - **Oct 18:** Ferré *The Youngest Doll* (484-488); Le Guin “Schrödinger’s Cat” (519-525); Le Guin “She Unnames Them” (525-526); Russ from *The Female Man* (537-547); Haraway from “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” (603-622)
    - **Presentation 12:** Postmodernism and Science
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### Week 8: The Road, Boderlands, and Mobility

- **Oct 23:** Pynchon from *The Crying of Lot 49* (4-15); Abish “Ardor/Awe/Atrocity” (99-110); Anzaldúa from *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (183-191); Anderson from *Stories from the Nerve Bible* (216-225);
    - **Presentation 13:** Postmodernism and Displacement
  - **Oct 25:** Leyner from *Tooth Imprints on a Corn Dog* (242-255); Mason “Shiloh” (271-281)
    - **Presentation 14:** Postmodern Humor
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### Week 9: The Road, Bodernlands, and Mobility

- **Oct 30:** Gifford from *Wild at Heart* (281-289); Daitch “X≠Y” (338-341); Roth from *The Ghost Writer* (306-321)
    - **Presentation 15:** Postmodern Film—David Lynch’s *Wild at Heart*
  - **Nov 1:** Stephenson from *Snow Crash* (561-568); Jameson from *Postmodernism and Consumer Society* (654-663); Maso from *The American Woman in the Chinese Hat* (111-115); Tillman “Living with Contradictions” (120-123)
    - **Presentation 16:** Postmodern Science Fiction
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### Week 10: The Suburb and The Home

- **Nov 6:** Paley “The Pale Pink Roast” (94-99); Capote from *In Cold Blood* (127-141); Eco from Postscript to *The Name of the Rose*
  - **Presentation 17:** Role of Violence in (Postmodern) Literature
- **Nov 8:** Morrison from *Beloved* (301-306); Robinson from *Housekeeping* (488-497); Viramontes “The Cariboo Café” (497-507) **Short Theory Paper Due**
  - **Presentation 18:** Postmodern Identity

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## Unit 3—Revising and Polishing Your Argument

### Week 11: *White Noise*

- **Nov 13:** *White Noise* (1-108)
  - **Presentation 19:** Postmodern American Family
- **Nov 15:** *White Noise* (109-211)
  - **Presentation 20:** Stranger than Fiction: The Bhopal Toxic Leak

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### Week 12: *White Noise*

- **Nov 20:** *White Noise* (212-326) **Annotated Bibliography Due**
  - **Presentation 21:** Postmodern Fiction and A Sense of an Ending
- **Nov 22: No Classes. Thanksgiving Holiday**

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### Week 13: *White Noise*

- **Nov 27:** *White Noise*, Critical Essays, 385-516. Skim all. Students will be assigned one article to read closely. Pay particular attention to how these published authors organize and support their arguments.
- **Nov 29:** Research Presentations

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### Week 14: Presenting, Revising, Polishing

- **Dec 4:** Research Presentations. **Peer Review.**
- **Dec 6:** Research Presentations.

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### Week 15: Presenting, Revising, Polishing

- **Dec 11:** Research Presentations. **Final Research Paper Due.**
- **Dec 13:** Research Presentations.



“Apple Tree,” Piet Mondrian (1944)