

LITT 4610 Fall 2009

Senior Seminar—Contemporary American Domestic Fiction

MW 3:35pm-5:25pm, Housing IV Commons 100

Instructor: Dr. Kristin J. Jacobson (aka Dr. J)

Office phone: (609) 626-5581

Email: Please use our Blackboard email

Office Hours: Mondays 11:30am-12:30pm, Fridays 2:30pm-4:30pm, & by appointment

Office Location: J-236

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Course Description: This seminar explores the genre of American domestic fiction—or novels focused on the home and homemaking—by surveying novels written by both men and women in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It particularly asks students to think about the premise that novels, like people, are often assigned gendered identities based on an author's gender, the novel's subject matter, and the novel's primary readership. Domestic fiction, typically associated with novels focused on the domestic sphere and written by and for women, is perhaps the best-known gendered genre—today sometimes included in the broader category of “chick lit.”

Throughout the course we will discuss the aesthetic, thematic, and contextual factors that define the American home and the genre of domestic fiction. We will also consider how domestic fiction and our understanding of the American home has or has not changed in the past 100 years. For example, if in the nineteenth century men's fiction desired an escape from the domestic sphere, as literary critic Nina Baym contends, and primarily engaged domesticity in terms of property, and women's fiction primarily consisted of sentimental tales about women seeking home and security in marriage, we will consider whether or not there remains distinctly gendered ways of writing about the home in contemporary fiction.

Students should come ready to engage in conversations about the novels' portrayals of the ideal American home, family, and nation. They should also be willing to consider how race, class, age, gender, (dis)ability, and sexuality both limit and expand our and the novels' understanding of home. Students will close read, analyze, and discuss several novels as well as literary and cultural criticism. They will complete an original, researched scholarly essay engaging the seminar's topic (aprox. 25 pages) and two presentations. A shorter paper (aprox. 8-10 pages) and an annotated bibliography will provide the theoretical and scholarly foundations for the larger final paper. Students may miss no more than 2 classes without penalty.

In particular, this course has two essential goals:

- *Develop skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing*
 - All the written and oral presentation assignments give students practice in these skills
 - *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.
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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 <http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html>.

Academic Honesty: Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Academic 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 and all cases will be reported to Academic Affairs. You are responsible for knowing this college policy: <http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=14&pageID=62>. Contact your instructor if you have questions.

Required Texts:

- ***The House on Mango Street***. Sandra Cisneros
- ***A Gesture Life***. Chang-rae Lee
- ***The Corrections***. Jonathan Franzen.
- ***The Poisonwood Bible***. Barbara Kingsolver
- **Blackboard:** Electronic Readings and all course materials are available in Blackboard. If you have questions about using Blackboard, consult a lab assistant or your instructor.

Recommended Texts:

- **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Edition**
 - ***Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms***
 - ***Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice***. Charles Bressler
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Email Policy:

1. Use Blackboard email for all course-related correspondence.
2. I usually check email each day in the morning. Please plan your email questions accordingly and, while I often respond immediately, allow a twenty-four hour time frame for my reply.
3. Always try to visit my office hours with specific questions about course material. If you were absent, contact a classmate with questions about missed material and then visit office hours if you still have questions.
4. Visit instructor office hours to discuss grades. This includes final grades. Grades should be discussed in person during office hours or other arranged meetings. I will not discuss grades via email.

Office Hours: Think of my office as an extension of the classroom and use my office hours to discuss any aspect of the reading and material covered during class: come chat with me about your class projects, writing, questions about the reading, quizzes, lecture or discussion, ideas you wish to develop, reading and interpretive strategies you'd like to try, and so on. Students who visit office hours tend to perform better.

Course Requirements:

In this course, expect to:

- (1) **Attend class:** you are allotted 2 absences without penalty for fatigue, illness, cocktail flu, personal reasons, malfunctioning alarm clocks, doctor's appointments, etc. (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 25 points for the third absence.) **Students entering class after the instructor records attendance or who leave before class ends will be considered absent.** For each absence after your first two, your final grade **will be reduced 25 points per additional absence**, down to and including "F." Regular, spirited class attendance is a crucial component to passing this course. I will not give incompletes at the end of the semester unless arrangements are made well in advance and you have the appropriate reasons outlined by College policy;

- (2) **Attend class meetings prepared:** this means DO THE READING WITH GUSTO; I expect class to be highly participatory, with everyone contributing comments, questions, and insights based on the assigned readings and interpreted through prior and emerging knowledge and experience. I will generally lead discussion at the beginning of the semester and will gradually turn over responsibility to students as the semester progresses;
- (3) **Participate in large and small group discussions and assignments:** Unless otherwise indicated, there will be a reading assignment for every class. Expect to devote a minimum of ten hours per week completing the reading, research, and writing. **ALL students** are expected to do the assigned reading for every class, prior to class, as preparation for class discussions. I am very text-based in my approach to this material, and you should bring your book to every class;
- (4) **Complete all assignments:** Passing the course requires timely completion of ALL assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class. No late/incomplete assignments will be accepted after the last day of class;
- (5) **Unplug:** Silence cell phones, cease text messaging, and do not surf the web or check email during class. An inability to unplug will negatively impact your final grade: **You will lose five points every time your phone disrupts class, I tell you to cease text messaging, and/or am required to ask you to cease other inappropriate uses of technology during class.** All disruptive behavior (e.g., sleeping in class, inappropriate language directed at students/instructor, perpetual lateness, etc.) constitutes grounds for grade reduction and/or dismissal from class.

Grades

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

Total– 1000

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

Assignments

Research Paper Proposal (100 points): This formal proposal will outline the question your Final Research Paper will address. It will also map your plan of action. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.

Literature Review/Theory Paper (100 points): This typed 8-10 page paper should serve as a shorter version of your Final Research Paper or its first (and perhaps second) section. It will outline your critical lens or theoretical approach and review the previous scholarship conducted

on this topic. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.

Annotated Bibliography (20 Sources): Select 20 scholarly sources related to your topic. Include a 1-2 sentence summary of the peer-reviewed article or book chapter and a 1 sentence assessment of how it fits or does not fit into your final paper. See Final Research Paper Assignment Description for more information about each stage in the draft process.

Research Presentation: The final weeks of class are set aside for student presentations of the final research paper. 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.

Teaching Presentation w/ Visual Aid (15-20 minutes, 100 points): This purpose of these presentations is to introduce your classmates to the scholarship written about or related to the assigned novel. Each presenter will summarize and analyze one peer-reviewed journal article or book chapter; all assigned articles/book chapters are available in Blackboard. All students read the article in preparation for the presentation.

The presentations should cover the following:

- Brief description of the source (date of publication, author, peer reviewed source)
- Summary statement of the author's argument and evidence:
 - What does s/he argue? What is the essay's thesis?
 - How does s/he support this argument? Provide a brief overview of what evidence supports the argument and how it is arranged.
- What is the author's methodology or critical lens?
 - Does it, for example, employ: feminism, Marxism, cultural studies, new criticism, psychoanalysis, critical race studies, queer theory, or some other lens? Briefly state how you identified the author's critical lens/methodology.
- What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the author's argument? How does the author's argument apply to the day's assigned reading?

Each presenter will summarize/analyze one article or chapter. The presentation must use some type of visual aide (for example, a PowerPoint presentation and/or handout).

Late Assignment and Revision 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 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.**

Paper Revisions: This course is based on the principle that revisions take place **before** the instructor evaluates a paper for a grade. To this end, consider dropping in during office hours or other arranged meetings to discuss your papers in advance of due dates. Drop in at any stage of the writing process: from your initial brainstorming to nailing down those final brass tacks. The instructor will happily read and comment on thesis statements (usually between 1-3 sentences) via Blackboard email. If you wish the instructor to read longer drafts, drop by her office hours. Additionally, Dr. J encourages you to use your peer resources during the draft and revision process, including Stockton's Writing Center:

<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=70&pageID=2>.



Syllabus—LITT 4610—Fall 2009¹

Unit 1—Selecting and Researching A Topic and Critical Approach

Week 1 Task: Become Familiar with Course Policies, Assignments, Themes and Questions

Sept 2: Introduction to course, assignments, students and instructor. Sign up for Teaching Presentation.

Week 2 Task: Develop background knowledge in domestic fiction and skim novels

Sept 7: Labor Day Holiday. No classes.

Sept 9: *The Poisonwood Bible* (Books 1 and 2, pp. 1-186) **Presentation 1: Armstrong Article**

Week 3 Task: Develop background knowledge on critical approaches to literature

Sept 14: *The Poisonwood Bible* (Book 3, pp. 187-311) **Presentation 2: Baym Article & 3: Fetterly Article**

Sept 16: *The Poisonwood Bible* (Book 4, pp. 312-375) **Presentation 4: Jacobson Article**

Week 4 Task: Brainstorm topic ideas and approaches; Conduct Initial MLA Searches

Sept 21: *The Poisonwood Bible* (Book 5, pp. 376-506) **Presentation 5: Fox Article**

Sept 23: *The Poisonwood Bible* (Book 6, pp. 507-543) **Presentation 6: Purcell Article**

Week 5 Task: Develop initial topic and approach; Hone MLA Searches on Topic

Sept 28: Research Day

Sept 30: *The House on Mango Street* (3-110) **Presentation 7: Olivares Article & 8: Cruz Article** **Final Research Paper Topic Due**

Unit 2—Planning and Drafting Your Argument

Week 6 Task: Begin Research and Annotated Bibliography; Request Interlibrary Loan

Oct 5: *The Corrections* (3-167) **Presentation 9: Hayden Article**

Oct 7: *The Corrections* (168-268) **Presentation 10: George Article**

Week 7 Task: Revise Plan Based on Instructor Feedback and Continue Research

Oct 12: *The Corrections* (269-369) **Presentation 11: Jurca Article**

Oct 14: *The Corrections* (370-455) **Presentation 12: Poole Article & 13: Annesley Article**

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

Week 8 Task: Polish Proposal, Continue Research and Annotated Bibliography

Oct 19: *The Corrections* (459-566) **Presentation 14: Jacobson Article**

Oct 21: Research Day. **Final Research Paper Proposal Due**

Week 9 Task: Draft Short Literature Review/Theory Paper on Your Topic

Oct 26: *A Gesture Life* (1-96, chapters 1-5) **Presentation 15: Kerber Article & 16: Foster Article**

Oct 28: *A Gesture Life* (97-176, chapters 6-8) **Presentation 17: Kaplan Article**

Week 10 Task: Revise and Submit Short Literature Review/Theory Paper on Your Topic

Nov 2: Research and Writing Day.

Nov 4: Research and Writing Day. **Short Literature Review/Theory Paper Due**

Unit 3—Revising and Polishing Your Argument

Week 11 Task: Review Any Remaining Secondary Sources; Revise Final Paper Outline; Complete Annotated Bibliography

Nov 9: *A Gesture Life* (177-305, chapters 9-14) **Presentation 18: Cheng Article**

Nov 11: *A Gesture Life* (306-356, chapters 15-17) **Presentation 19: Lee Article & 20: Dwyer Article**

Week 12 Task: Submit Annotated Bibliography; Review Instructor Feedback; Revise Outline; WRITE!

Nov 16: Writing Day. **Annotated Bibliography Due**

Nov 18: Writing Day.

Week 13 Task: Write, Peer Review, Revise, Repeat as Necessary; Draft Research Presentation

Nov 23: Peer Review of a draft no shorter than 15 typed pages.

Nov 25: No Classes after 3:35pm. Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14 Task: Present, Revise, Polish: Submit Final Paper!

Nov 30: Research Presentations. **Final Research Paper Due.**

Dec 2: Research Presentations.

Week 15 Task: Present, Listen, Learn, Respond

Dec 7: Research Presentations.