

LITT 2145 SPRING 2015

FAMILY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

TH 2:30-4:20pm, Room F203

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Kristin Jacobson

OFFICE PHONE: (609) 626-5581

EMAIL: Please use our Blackboard email

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:45-2:15pm and by appointment

OFFICE LOCATION: F243

MAILBOX: Arts and Humanities, K-150

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course surveys various narratives, such as plays, novels, and films, focused on the American family. We will examine how these popular and literary texts use the family to reflect and to shape individual and national identities. In doing so, we will explore the politics of writing about family: are these stories merely entertaining, sentimental dramas (aka “chick lit”) or can we learn something (more) from them? What criterion should we use to evaluate them? What are their race and class implications? Thus, we will also consider what defines a family narrative, or its generic characteristics: is fiction about family a gendered genre? What close reading tools best help us understand these narratives? These questions and more will frame our discussions, writing, and research projects that ask students to demonstrate a critical understanding of the literature and the cultural contexts from which it emerges.

The course assignments are designed to help students achieve the following academic goals as well as provide opportunities for students to engage as members of Stockton’s arts and humanities community. In particular, this course will develop two essential learning outcomes:

- **Expressiveness:** *develop skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing, especially about narrative (the close reading of literature) and narrative’s cultural contexts.*
- **Application of Learning:** *apply course materials, especially about the close reading of literature and placing literature in cultural context.*

All written and oral presentation assignments give students practice in these two essential skills. We will also focus on:

- **Intellectual Development:** *gain a broader understanding and appreciation of an intellectual-cultural activity: in this case, the range of texts we classify as literature about the American family.*

Class discussions will prepare you to showcase this skill in your formal written and oral presentation work.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- **House of Sand and Fog.** Andre Dubus III. (Vintage 1999) ISBN 0-375-72734-5
- **Boston Marriage.** David Mamet. (Vintage 2002) ISBN 0-375-70665-8
- **Seven Plays.** Sam Shepard. (Dial Press 2005) ISBN 0-553-34611-3
- **A Home at the End of the World.** Michael Cunningham. (Picador) ISBN 0312202318
- **Geographies of Home.** Loida Maritza Perez. (Penguin) ISBN 0140253718
- **Sent for You Yesterday.** John Edgar Wideman. (Mariner Books) ISBN 0395877296
- **Clean House.** Sarah Ruhl. Reading available in Blackboard.
- **Blackboard:** If you have questions about using Blackboard, consult a lab assistant or your instructor.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

- *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Edition* (recommended text)

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 J204 or by calling 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. 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.

EMAIL POLICY: Please keep the following in mind when communicating with me outside of class:

- 1) Use Blackboard email for all course-related correspondence.
- 2) I usually check my email each day in the morning (before 9am). Please plan your email questions accordingly and, while I often respond immediately, allow a twenty-four hour time frame for my reply.
- 3) Check your Blackboard email before asking me if I have responded to your note.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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 writing, the portfolio process, questions about the reading, 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.*

BASIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS: You are expected to:

- 1) **ATTEND CLASS:** you are allotted 4 absences 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 four days and then get the flu and miss another day, you will lose 50 points for the fifth absence. Any exception to this policy requires documentation for all absences and approval for special accommodations with the Wellness Center. **Students entering class after the instructor records attendance, who leave before class ends, or who disappear for a substantial part of any class will be considered absent.** For each absence after your first four, your final grade **will be reduced 50 points per additional absence**, down to and including "F." Regular, spirited class attendance is a crucial component to earning a "C" or better. I will not give incompletes at the end of the semester unless arrangements are made well in advance and you have appropriate reasons and qualify according to college policy;
 - 2) **ATTEND CLASS MEETINGS PREPARED:** this means bring the appropriate text(s) and DO THE READING WITH GUSTO; this is a discussion-based class and if you haven't done the reading, thought a little about it, and have ready access to it, you will not be able to contribute and the class (as well as your grade) suffers accordingly;
 - 3) **PARTICIPATE IN LARGE AND SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS:** this course is what you make of it and will work *only* if everyone actively contributes;
 - 4) **COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS:** passing the course with a "C" or better requires the timely completion of ALL assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class. You risk failing the course if you do not complete all assignments. *It is not my responsibility to make sure that you have submitted all assignments; it is yours.* No late/incomplete assignments will be accepted after the last day of class;
 - 5) **UNPLUG:** silence cell phones before entering class, cease text messaging, and do not surf the web or check email/social media during class. An inability to use technology responsibly will negatively impact your grade: **You will lose five points every time I am required to ask you to cease inappropriate uses of technology during class.** All disruptive behavior (e.g., sleeping in class, inappropriate language directed at students/instructor, perpetual lateness, leaving class frequently, etc.) constitutes grounds for grade reduction and/or dismissal from class. This penalty may be given with or without a verbal warning.
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GRADES

Stockton Play Review & Analysis Paper (3-4 pages)	100
Class Presentation (15-20 mins)	100
Close Reading Quizzes (6 total, 100 points each, lowest score dropped)	500
Close Reading Comparison Paper (6-7 pages)	300

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

STOCKTON PLAY REVIEW & ANALYSIS Paper (100 points; 3-4 typed pages): This paper reviews and analyzes one of the Performing Arts Center's theatre performances. You will attend one of the following: *In the Heat of the Night* (Feb 6), *One Man Star Wars Trilogy* (Feb 13), *Courtyard of Miracles* (Feb 18-22), or *A Year with Frog and Toad* (April 9-12). Specific times and ticket costs are available on Stockton's PAC website: <http://stocktonpac.org/calendar/>.

The paper you write will review and analyze the performance's successes and weaknesses. You may discuss, for example, set design, the actors' performances, the interpretation of the play, costumes, etc. Craft a thesis that focuses on one or two topics to review and analyze. Or, you may focus your review and analysis on close reading one of the play's themes. A paper of this length should not try to evaluate the entire performance and play and/or more than one theme. **Submit the paper within one week after the performance.** *Select a performance to attend and purchase your ticket by 2 February.* **Submit your ticket stub to your instructor within one week of submitting the paper to Blackboard.** See the rubric for additional information.

CLASS PRESENTATION W/ VISUAL AID (15-20 minutes; 100 points): This individual or paired presentation will inform the class about an assigned literary, historical, or cultural element significant to our understanding of the assigned reading. The presentation must incorporate a visual aide (a PowerPoint presentation, video clip, and/or handout) and provide the class and instructor with a bibliography of at least 3 scholarly (peer-reviewed) sources (e.g., not Wikipedia or some other non-peer reviewed resource or website) on the assigned topic. Peer-reviewed articles and books are available in the library stacks, via the MLA bibliography, JSTOR, and ProjectMUSE. See the rubric for additional information.

CLOSE READING QUIZZES (6 total, lowest score dropped; 100 points each, 500 points total): The last day of discussion for each major written text will begin with an in-class quiz. The quizzes pose a question and ask you to select a passage from the reading to close read that addresses that question, or they will frame a topic and present a passage for you to close read based on that topic. Your essay should begin with a clear thesis. You will have the first 45 minutes of class to complete the quiz. Students entering class late will not be given additional time. You may use your book/notes while working on the quiz. The best preparation for the quizzes will be careful reading of the texts and active participation in class discussion. **No make up quizzes will be offered.** Quiz dates listed in the syllabus.

CLOSE READING COMPARISON PAPER (6-7 pages; 300 points): This close reading paper will focus on some aspect of our theme, the family in American literature. Using close reading analysis, it will compare two of the assigned texts. The paper does not require outside research; however, if you incorporate secondary sources, they should come from peer-reviewed journal articles or books. Peer-reviewed articles and books are available in the library stacks, via the MLA bibliography, JSTOR, and ProjectMUSE. See assignment description and rubric for more information

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.

IN-CLASS ESSAY QUIZZES AND PRESENTATIONS: *No make up quizzes will be offered.* If you miss a quiz due to an unplanned or a planned absence, this quiz will count as your dropped score. Additional missed quizzes will earn a zero. If you miss your presentation and there are additional slots remaining, you may sign up for another presentation.

STOCKTON PLAY REVIEW & ANALYSIS: *The paper is due within one week of the performance. Submit the paper electronically via Blackboard.* Late papers will be docked 5 percentage points per day late. So, if a B (85%) paper due on Saturday were passed in on Sunday, the recorded grade would be B- (80). If it were passed in on Monday, the paper would earn a 75. And so on and so forth.

EXTENSIONS: Any student who asks the instructor **prior to** the due date may receive a 2-day extension from the due date. After 2 days the late paper penalty will go into effect. No exceptions. *No student may receive/request an extension beyond the last day of class.* The extension policy will only help students who have drafted the review and back up their documents. You may consider using Dropbox (<https://db.tt/WG1vfHY>) or GoogleDrive (<https://www.google.com/drive/>), both free services. Additionally, using such cloud-based services will help assure you never incur late penalties as a result of forgetting an assignment at home. 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 late/incomplete assignments will be accepted after the last class.**

SYLLABUS—LITT 2145—SPRING 2015¹

REMINDER: STOCKTON PLAY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS DUE 1 WEEK AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

UNIT 1—FAMILY DRAMAS

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS, THEMES AND QUESTIONS

- Jan 20:** Introduction to course, Blackboard, assignments, students and instructor. Sign up for presentation in Blackboard.
- Jan 22:** Shepard's *True West*. Lecture: Key Terms for Close Reading Drama

WEEK 2: DEFINING FAMILY

- Jan 27:** Shepard's *Buried Child* SNOW DAY (ASSIGNMENT POSTED IN BLACKBOARD)
- Presentation 1: Setting in Shepard's Plays
- Jan 29:** Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*
- Presentation 2: Character in Shepard's Plays

WEEK 3: DEFINING ROMANIC LOVE

- Feb 3:** Shepard's *La Turista* **DUE: Email Dr. J in Blackboard with Play and Date Selection for Stockton Play Review and Analysis**
- Presentation 3: Critical Responses to Sam Shepard's Plays
- Feb 5:** Shepard's *Savage Love* **Quiz 1**

WEEK 4: KITCHEN POLITICS

- Feb 10:** Mamet's *Boston Marriage*
- Presentation 4: Historical Context, Nineteenth-Century Boston Marriages
- Feb 12:** *Clean House* This reading is available in Blackboard. **Quiz 2**

UNIT 2—DOMESTIC FICTIONS

WEEK 5: DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIES

- Feb 17:** *Geographies of Home* (Prologue & Chapters 1-10) Lecture: Key Terms for Close Reading Fiction SNOW DAY
- Feb 19:** *Geographies of Home* (Chapter 11-21)
- Presentation 5: Cultural Context, Dominican Republic

WEEK 6: FAMILY MAPS

- Feb 24:** *Geographies of Home* (Chapter 22-31)
- Presentation 6: Critical Responses to Loida Maritza Perez
- Feb 26:** *Geographies of Home* (Chapter 32-end) **Quiz 3**

WEEK 7: IMAGINING HOME AND FAMILY

- Mar 3:** *Sent for You Yesterday* (1-86)
- Presentation 7: Setting, Pittsburg and Homewood
- Mar 5:** *Sent for You Yesterday* (87-126) SNOW DAY

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

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8: REMEMBERING HOME AND FAMILY

Mar 17: *Sent for You Yesterday* (87-155)

- Presentation 8: Cultural Context, Twentieth-Century African American Homeownership
- Presentation 9: Critical Responses to John Edgar Wideman

Mar 19: *Sent for You Yesterday* (156-208) **Quiz 4**

WEEK 9: REDEFINING FAMILY

Mar 24: **Precepting Day—No Class.**

Mar 26: *A Home at the End of the World* (1-79)

- Presentation 10: Cultural Context, Gender Roles and Family
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WEEK 10: MODERN FAMILY

Mar 31: *A Home at the End of the World* (80-180)

- Presentation 11: Cultural Context, Representations of Model American Families

Apr 2: *A Home at the End of the World* (181-255)

- Presentation 12: Critical Responses to Michael Cunningham
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UNIT 3—DOMESTIC MEDIA

WEEK 11: HOMEOWNERSHIP AND FAMILY

Apr 7: *A Home at the End of the World* (256-343) **Quiz 5: 48 Hour Take Home Quiz. Quiz question will be posted to Blackboard at 2:30pm Sunday and due by 2:30pm Tuesday**

Apr 9: *House of Sand and Fog* (1-94)

- Presentation 13: Cultural Context, Iran and Shah Rule
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WEEK 12: PROPRIETY—PROPERTY

Apr 14: *House of Sand and Fog* (94-183)

- Presentation 14: Critical Responses to Andre Dubus III

Apr 16: *House of Sand and Fog* (183-275). Lecture: Key Terms for Close Reading Film and Television

WEEK 13: DOMESTIC LIFE ON THE BIG SCREEN

Apr 21: Final Paper Rough Draft Workshop. Bring in two copies of your typed draft of at least 5 pages

Apr 23: *House of Sand and Fog* (275-365) **Quiz 6**

WEEK 14: FROM BOOK TO FILM

Apr 28: *House of Sand and Fog* Screening. Print and bring viewing guide to class (available in Blackboard)

Apr 30: Last day of class. *House of Sand and Fog* Discussion

- Presentation 15: Cultural Context, Addiction and Depression

Final Close Reading Paper Due

NOTA BENE: readings covered in this course may be considered challenging due to topics that some may find offensive and/or traumatizing. Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. The instructor always tries to forewarn students about potentially disturbing subjects and requests all students aim to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.