

English 481: Theories of Literature and Social Justice

Professors Dawn Keetley and Scott Gordon

Spring 2016

Wednesdays, 1:10pm-4:00pm, Drown 102a

Course Description

This course introduces students to theories of literature and social justice. We will address the following broad (and frequently overlapping) questions: What is literature? What is social justice? How are literary forms (and literary criticism) distinctive in the ways in which they grapple with questions of social justice? How do literary forms reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies? In what ways does literature critique social injustice and imagine new models of more perfect human flourishing? How does literature generate varying emotions in its readers that might serve to promote (or prevent) social justice? While we recognize that much literature itself rather expressly takes on the goal of furthering some idea of a “better” society, the course mostly presumes that the project of “literature and social justice” is about particular reading strategies—strategies we will unearth, debate, and try on during the course of the semester. The majority of the reading will be works of theory and criticism, but we will read several primary works so that we will have some common ground on which we can test our theories.

Course Requirements

Class Participation	15%
CourseSite Postings (weekly)	15%
2 short papers (5-7pp. each)	20%
1 short response paper	10%
Seminar Paper (20pp.)	40%

Academic Integrity: Lehigh University requires all professors to forward suspected cases of plagiarism to the University Committee on Discipline. Here is Lehigh University’s official statement on plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged appropriation of another’s work, words, or ideas in any essays, outlines, papers, reports, or computer programs. Specifically, (1) students who use the exact words of another must enclose those words in quotation marks or show through indentation or type style that the material is quoted and indicate the source, either within the text of their work or in a footnote; (2) students who take ideas from another person or written work, but who either paraphrase those ideas in their own words or else make a few mechanical alterations (rearrange sentences, find synonyms, alter prepositions, punctuation, conjunctions, and the like) must also indicate the source, either within the text of their work or in a series of footnotes clearly indicating the extent of the material paraphrased; (3) students may not turn in as their own work any materials written for them by another person or any commercially prepared materials, such as computer programs and term papers, purchased on or off campus.

For more information about academic integrity: <http://www.lehigh.edu/~indost/integrity.html>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, please contact both your instructor and the Office of Academic Support Services, University Center C212 (610 758-4152) as early as possible in the semester. You must have documentation from the Academic Support Services office before accommodations can be granted.

English 481: Theories of Literature and Social Justice SYLLABUS

What is Literature and Social Justice?

W 1/27

- David Miller, from *Principles of Social Justice* (1999), chap. 1, 2, 12
- LSJ Mission Statement
- Bring in a short poem that you feel is “about” social justice in some way

W 2/3

- Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (2008)

W 2/10

- Iris Marion Young, “Displacing the Distributive Paradigm” from *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), 15-38.
- Nancy Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a ‘Post-Socialist’ Age” (1995), 68-93.
- Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking Recognition” (2002), 107-20.
- Martha Nussbaum, “Capabilities and Social Justice” (2002), 123-35.

Literary Theory and Social Movements

W 2/17

- Raymond Williams, from *The Country and the City* (1973), 1-127
- Stephen Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” (1988), 18-47
- Jane Tompkins, “Sentimental Power” (1985), 267-91

W 2/24

- Raymond Williams, from *Marxism and Literature* (1977), 95-191
- Frederic Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping” (1988), 347-60

Protest Art

W 3/2

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, selection from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852)
- James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel” (1949), 578-85
- Richard Wright, “Bright and Morning Star,” from *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1938), 407-41
- Tommie Shelby, “The Ethics of *Uncle Tom’s Children*” (2012), 513-32

W 3/9

- Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906; Oxford World's Classics, with an introduction by Russ Castronovo, 2010)

W 3/16: SPRING BREAK

W 3/23

- Eugene Jarecki, *The House I Live In* (2012; streaming on Netflix)
- Danielle S. Allen, "Democratic Dis-ease: Of Anger and the Troubling Nature of Punishment" (1999), 191-214.

Literature and Empathy

W 3/30

- Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* (1791)
- Henry Mackenzie, from *The Man of Feeling* (1771)
- Benjamin Rush, from "Thoughts Upon Female Education" (1787)
- Laurence Sterne, selection from *A Sentimental Journey* (1768)
- William Hill Brown, selection from *The Power of Sympathy* (1789)

W 4/6

- Suzanne Keen, "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" (2006), 207-36.
- Suzanne Keen, "Unsympathetic Empathy" (2016), paper delivered at the MLA Convention.
- Saidiya V. Hartman, "Innocent Amusements: The Stage of Sufferance" (1997), 17-48.
- Paul Bloom, "The Baby in the Well: The Case against Empathy" (2013)
- David Kidd, "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind" (2013), 377-80

Shaping Stories for Social Justice

W 4/13

- Mark Bracher, Chap. 1: Cognitive Science for a New Social Criticism; Chap. 6: *The Jungle*; Chap 9: Schema Criticism: Radical Cognitive Politics, from *Literature and Social Justice: Protest Novels, Cognitive Politics, and Schema Criticism* (2013), 3-34, 167-192, 287-296.
- Mark Bracher, "How to Teach for Social Justice: Lessons from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Cognitive Science" (2009), 363-88.

The Case of Ecocriticism

W 4/20

- Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005)

W 4/27

- Rob Nixon, "Introduction," from *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), 1-44.
- Lowell Duckert, "Earth's Prospects," in *Elemental Ecocriticism* (2015)
- Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco, "Days of Devastation: Welch, West Virginia," from *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (2012), 115-175.

W5/4

- bell hooks, chaps. 1, 5, 7, 9, from *Teaching to Transgress* (1994)
- Paul Freire, chaps. 1, 2, from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)
- First-year summer reading book on food (TBA late February/early March)