

Bard College Clemente Course in the Humanities  
Codman Square Health Center | 450 Washington Street |  
Dorchester, MA

*Literature Syllabus*  
*Second Semester, Winter - Spring 2010*

Professor Susan Gorman: 781-337-8763 (home), [sugorm@aol.com](mailto:sugorm@aol.com) (e-mail)

Reading is not a passive activity. In fact, readers are as important to writing as authors are. As we read we decide if what we are reading is interesting, well written, true. If we answer “no” to these questions, we might stop reading. If enough people answer no, the writer is never heard from again. This semester, as we study a selection of classic works from Western literature, we’ll pay attention to the active aspect of reading, encouraging ourselves to really get involved with the texts we examine. We’ll continually consider the idea of “great literature.” Why do some pieces of writing endure for centuries while others disappear? Why do some pieces that disappear reappear and gain classic status? When a book has disappeared, what were its readers saying “no” to? When a book is rediscovered, what are readers saying “yes” to? In considering these and other questions we’ll take into account our readings’ historical, social, and aesthetic surroundings. We’ll consider our own aesthetic opinions, as well. What makes a piece of writing beautiful? Effective? Timeless? Your input will be crucial as we discuss these questions, so please, make the class your own and be ready to share your considered ideas with us all.

**READING SCHEDULE**

Office hours (from 6-6:30) will begin on 3/3

**Literature class #1 Wednesday, 2/24:** The Ancient World  
Homer (9th century BCE ?). *The Odyssey*, Books 1, 9, & 10

**Literature class #2 Wednesday, 3/3:** The English Renaissance  
William Shakespeare (1564-1616). *The Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 2, lines 1-450, pp. 13-39

**Literature class #3 Wednesday, 3/10:** English Renaissance and  
Metaphysical Poets  
William Shakespeare, *Immortal Poems*  
“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” p. 57

“When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,” p. 57  
“When to the sessions of sweet silent thought,” p. 58  
“Farewell: thou art too dear for my possessing,” p. 63  
“Let me not to the marriage of true minds,” p. 66  
“My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun,” p. 67  
“Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow,” p. 74

John Donne (1572-1631) *Immortal Poems*

“Death, Be Not Proud,” p. 89

“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,” p. 91

George Herbert (1593-1633) “The Flower” (photocopy)

Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)

“The Author to Her Book,” p. TBA

“Before the Birth of One of Her Children,” p. TBA

“A Letter to Her Husband, Absent Upon Public Employment,” p. TBA

**Literature class #4 Wednesday, 3/17:** Literature & Writing – bring paper topics, ideas, drafts

**Literature class #5 Wednesday, 3/31:** Classicism and Romanticism

Phillis Wheatley (1753? –1784):

“On Being Brought From Africa to America,” p.TBA

“To S.M. a young African Painter . . .” p. TBA

“To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth,” p. TBA

“Hymn to Evening,” p. TBA

Prefatory material to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of her book (photocopies)

William Wordsworth (1770-1850): *Immortal Poems*

“Tintern Abbey,” p. 255

“The World Is Too Much With Us,” p. 260

**Literature class #6 Wednesday, 4/7:** Realism

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896). *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, chapters 1-5

**FIRST PAPER DUE**

**Literature class #7 Monday 4/14:** Realism

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, chapters 6-10

**Literature class #8 Wednesday, 4/28:** “High” Modernism

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941). “Kew Gardens,” *Monday or Tuesday*, pp. 39-45

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965). “The Hollow Men,” p. 539

e.e. cummings (1894-1962). “next to of course god america i” (photocopy)

**Literature class #9 Wednesday, 5/12:** Modernism: The Harlem Renaissance

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) “Criteria of Negro Art” (photocopy)

Jesse Redmon Fauset (1882-1961) *Plum Bun*, chapter 6

Langston Hughes (1902-1967):

“I, too”

“Let America Be America Again”

“Theme for English B”

“Life is Fine”

“Dream Deferred”

“Motto”

“Dream Variations”

“Same in Blues”

**Literature class #10 Wednesday, 5/19:** Late-Twentieth Century Literature

Gloria Naylor (1950 - ) *The Women of Brewster Place*, “Etta Mae Johnson,” pp. 55-75

**SECOND PAPER DUE**

**Literature class #11 Wednesday, 5/26:** Postmodernism

Junot Diaz (1968 - ) selections

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**2 sets of questions:** Come up with 3 questions each for two different authors’ works (so you may do two sets in one week if we’re reading more than one author that week). These can be questions you’d like to see discussed in class, questions you’d like to ask the author, and/or questions you’re confused about yourself. **Questions are due at the start of the class** in which we’ll be discussing the reading your questions address. For example, if you write a set of questions for *The Tempest*, they are due at the start of class on Wednesday, 3/3.

**1 reaction paragraph:** This is your chance to try out your ideas for a longer paper. Find an issue that is interesting to you in one of our readings and write

a paragraph explaining why the reading interests you the way it does.

**2 completed formal papers:** These are two longer, formal written assignments. Each paper should have

- a clear thesis
- supporting examples, with quotes, from the reading you've chosen to discuss
- analysis of those examples

You may also want to consider the "why is this important" question.

I'll pass out a list of suggested topics or you may come up with one of your own after clearing it with me. You may expand your paragraph assignment into one of these papers.

Paper 1 should be 1-1½ pages in length & is due **Wednesday, 4/7**

Paper 2 should be 2-3 pages in length & is due **Wednesday, 5/19**.

\*\*\* If you want to write your final paper on the Gloria Naylor or Junot Diaz, you may hand in your paper the night of our last class, Wednesday 5/26\*\*\*