Spring Semester 2015

Honors 2010, Exploring Key Concepts in the Humanities
Stewart Library, Special Collections Room
Tues/Thurs 9:00 to 10:15
Taught by Christy Call

Course Description:
While some consider the primary purpose of literature, film, and music to be mere forms of entertainment, this class will examine the revolutionary potential of art to explore and expose issues related to social justice. We will think through questions of whether the exploration and exposure that happens through artistic representations generate a transformative experience within the reader, the listener, the viewer, and then within larger society. After all this is the idea Percy Shelley had in mind when he called poets the hidden legislators of the world. The movies, paintings, literature, photographs, and music selected for the class have been chosen for their power to incite emotion, provoke thought, and instigate profound ethical questions.

Class Format:
This class is discussion based. Together we will gather around a table and discuss ideas, listen to each other, ask critical questions, and formulate meanings. You will find that course materials engage the topic of the class in compelling ways. After reading or viewing course materials, you will want to talk; you will have ideas to express. I will make sure that the environment is comfortable and respectful to all viewpoints. Hearing a variety of views helps us learn from each other. I will not grade you from the standpoint of ‘right’ versus ‘wrong’ answers. Instead I will look for critical thought in terms of developing a capacity for multiple angles of perception, for detecting ramifications, and discovering and articulating meanings. I sincerely want this class to be a touchstone experience in your academic career, one that you keep thinking about even after it ends.

Required Texts:
The Jungle by Upton Sinclair
The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
Tortilla Curtain by T.C. Boyle
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men by James Agee

Musical selections will be announced in class.
Movies will be shown in class.

Class Requirements:
1) Readings:
Reading is essential in the class. Reading well in this class will mean reading more than once. Please annotate the readings by underlining, writing comments on the side of the page, looking up unknown words, etc. Be engaged. Formulate questions. Challenge the writers. Think through to the levels of meaning.

2) Participation/Postings:

A final version of the class syllabus will be presented on the first day.
A percentage of your class grade is based on participation in class discussions. This means that you have to attend class and be prepared. Please stay current on the reading assignments. At times I will ask that each of you post a short response to a reading or a course idea on the Canvas discussion page. This forum will allow us to continue our conversation even outside of class.

Participation = 15% of grade

3) Notebook Responses:
This is a writing intensive course. However, much of the writings will be in notebook format, which encourages an open, experimental, reflective form of prose. Each week you will generate a one-page, single-spaced response to an idea or concept prompted by class discussion and course material. Your notebooks will also contain class notes. While I will not lecture, you will receive specific information in class that will be useful to review. I will collect your notebooks at intervals during the semester and provide feedback. (Please know that I will give you plenty of warning before I collect your writings, so that you may be prepared.) When I read through your writings, my goal is to provide feedback and to have a more extended conversation with you about your ideas.

Notebooks = 65% of grade

- An **excellent** notebook response will address the question/topic, detect its significance, and demonstrate a capacity for sustained reflection about different perspectives, including one’s own. You should reference readings and course materials directly by quoting lines, referencing specific stories or ideas, and then relate these across other encountered materials or lived experiences. Your writings should show a quality of form, so that they are free of major mechanical errors.
- A **satisfactory** notebook response might address the prompt to varying degrees but will not achieve an in-depth level of analysis and reflection.
- An **unsatisfactory** notebook response will demonstrate only minimal effort.

4) Final Project:
At the end of the semester, each student will present a brief but substantive project that showcases an aspect of your learning. You may use any media (film, video, photos, music, or websites) that engages your audience and facilitates their understanding. I will provide detailed information about the projects—including a grading criteria—at the point when you will need to start planning. Think of these projects as opportunities to further communicate ideas with people who have been engaged in similar study. We will also eat lots of good food because we will have earned it!

Projects = 20% of grade

University Policies:

Academic Dishonesty: As specified in PPM 6-22 IV D, cheating and plagiarism violate the Student Code. Plagiarism is “the unacknowledged (uncited) use of any other person’s or group’s ideas or work.” Students found guilty of cheating or plagiarism are subject to failure of a specific assignment, or, in more serious cases, failure of the entire course.

Children in the Classroom: According to PPM 4-23, children are not allowed in classrooms except through prior approval. In this class setting, we ask that you avoid bringing children.

Core Beliefs: According to PPM 6-22 IV, students are to “[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student’s core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student’s request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student’s beliefs.”

Disability Accommodation: PPM 3-34 notes: “When students seek accommodation in a regularly scheduled course, they have the responsibility to make such requests at the Center for Students with Disabilities before the beginning of the quarter [semester] in which the accommodation is being requested. When a student fails to make such arrangements, interim accommodations can be made by the instructor, pending the determination of the request for a permanent accommodation.”

Emergency Closure: If for any reason the university is forced to close for an extended period of time, we will conduct our class via the course Canvas page.