

# CONTEMPORARY BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

English 336

## Course Objectives and Procedures

Contemporary British and American Literature will introduce students to literature genres and authors who are recently and currently writing and contributing to our literary tradition. In our study of these writings, we will use the fundamental tools of literary interpretation in the discussion, analysis, and evaluation of the literature. We will incorporate some principal interpretative theories: formalism, psychological, gender studies, reader-response, and new historicism. Each of these theories will provide specific insights into literary texts that invite analysis from many different perspectives. We will also engage in thoughtful writing and dialogue to help us arrive at a rich understanding of the literature we read and the world in which we live.

### □ Course Goals

- ❖ Apply BYU-Idaho Learning Model to prepare, teach one another, and ponder/prove.
- ❖ Appreciate literary texts as sources of intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic experiences.
- ❖ Explore critical theories that inform the ways experienced readers respond to literature.
- ❖ Develop critical reading skills to analyze fiction, poetry, and drama.
- ❖ Understand the conventions of literature.
- ❖ Apply the critical vocabulary describing literature.
- ❖ Use textual evidence to support literary interpretations.
- ❖ Develop skills for literary research and present information accurately.
- ❖ Document formal writing according to MLA guidelines.
- ❖ Adapt literary interpretations to a general, non-academic audience.

### □ Texts

Foot, Horton. *Three Screen Plays: The Trip to Bountiful, Tender Mercies, To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Grove Press, 1989.

Friel, Brian. *Dancing at Lughnasa*. London: Faber & Faber, 1990.

Halpern, Daniel, ed. *The Art of the Story: An International Anthology of Contemporary Short Stories*. New York: Penguin, 1999.

Stoppard, Tom. *The Coast of Utopia: A Trilogy (Voyage, Shipwreck, Salvage)*. New York: Grove Press, 2007

Any edition of the following books (notice the book grouping options):

#### Novels

Choose **ONE** of these two novels:

Jim Crace *The Pesthouse*  
Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

Choose **ONE** of these two novels:

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*  
John Banville's *The Sea*

Choose **ONE** of these two novels:

Anne Tyler's *Digging to America*  
Louise Erdrich's *The Painted Drum*

Choose **ONE** of these three novels:

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*  
Isabel Allende's *Inés of My Soul*  
Amy Tan's *Saving Fish from Drowning*

#### Plays

Choose **ONE** of these plays:

August Wilson's *Fences*  
Margaret Edson's *W;t [Wit]*

Choose **ONE** of these plays:

John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt: A Parable*  
Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics*

### □ Organization of English 336

English 336 has the following major assignments:

#### *Spori Literary Review* Articles

Students will write four articles for the class magazine *Spori Literary Review*. Each article will fit within a two page template format (approximately 750 words each). The articles demonstrate critical analysis directed towards a non-academic audience. Students will write at least one

article on each of the three genre groupings: fiction/art, poetry/music, drama/film. These articles will become a class magazine representing students' interactions with fiction, poetry, and drama. (100 points for each article)

### Literary Team Discussion Questions

Students will become members of literary teams. For every class period, each team member will generate from that day's readings a total of 5 discussion questions. These questions will be a combination of factual, interpretive, and evaluative questioning. These questions will start each class activity. Students will assemble these questions into a packet to submit at the end of each thematic unit (5 points for each day's questions).

### Literature Adaptations

Students will appreciate contemporary literature by adapting it into a different form. Students will submit two different adaptations. (50 points for each adaptation)

Students have flexibility in determining their literature adaptations. Below are some pre-approved options:

- **Book Cover Design.** Create an original book cover based on any class reading (short story, novel, poem, play, or screenplay).
- **Movie Poster Design.** Create an original movie poster based on any class reading (short story, novel, poem, play, or screenplay).
- **Book Club Discussion Brochure.** Create a two-sided book club discussion guide based on any class reading (short story, novel, poem, play, or screenplay).
- **Senior Companions.** Compare a character, theme, plot, setting, or other literary element based on any contemporary class reading with any other piece of literature written prior to 1965. Write a well-written, developed response (approximately 500 words).
- **Casting Call.** Consider adapting a class reading into a movie. Discuss the actors playing which character, music for the score, or sets for scenes. Focus on one aspect and write a well-written, developed response.(approximately 500 words)
- **Side Kicks.** Place one character from fiction, poetry, or drama with another character from a different fiction, poetry, or drama in a room. How would these characters interact or react with each other? Write a well-written, developed response (approximately 500 words).

- **Author Talks.** Place two different authors from the class readings into a room. How would these characters interact or reach with each other? Write a well-written, developed response (approximately 500 words).

### Reading Quizzes

For each week, students will take reading quizzes on that week's readings. The quizzes will remain open for the entire week from Monday at 1:00 a.m. until Saturday at midnight. (10 points for each quiz).

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS NOT ACCEPTED

### □ Grading and Evaluation

The teacher will evaluate all formal assignments and comment on what works well and offer suggestions for improvement. The teacher will assign a letter grade and record a number grade in the roll book. Most often the number grade follows the breakdown below

A	=	95%	C	=	75%
A-	=	92%	C-	=	72%
B+	=	88%	D+	=	68%
B	=	85%	D	=	65%
B-	=	82%	D-	=	62%
C+	=	78%	F	=	59%

The teacher reserves the write to slightly alter the number points depending on the student's performance. For example, instead of recording a 92% for an A-, the teacher may record a 90%.

### □ Teacher Conferencing

Most student questions and concerns are handled in the classroom through class or individual discussion. Students may schedule an appointment with the teacher for more extended conferencing. Rarely will the teacher read an entire document during a conference but rather will assist the student in identifying the writing frustration and in developing options to solve the communication problems.

Students who wish to conference with the teacher about a graded paper must meet the following two conditions (there are no rewrite options to improve a graded assignment):

1. Wait 24 hours before making an appointment with the teacher.
2. Come to the appointment with a list of suggestions to improve the paper. The teacher will discuss those options with the student.

### ❑ Attendance Requirements

Random quizzes are used to check attendance. The quizzes cannot be made up so class attendance is essential because the quizzes will not be announced. The student has the responsibility to attend class and to be prepared for class. If the student misses class, the student should contact the teacher out of courtesy via office phone-mail or email **prior** to class.

This is a highly interactive course. The success of this course and your individual success depends on your regular presence and promptness, your thorough preparation for class, and your active participation within class. You may have **three class absences without a grade penalty.**

*Please note: I make no distinction between "excused" and "unexcused" absence. You are responsible for saving your absence leave to accommodate unexpected illness or personal / family need.*

Excessive absence will result in *deduction from final average of 1 percentage point per hour of absence over the limit.* If you miss more than four class periods, you will not be able to earn an A in the course. If you miss more than six class periods, the highest grade you can earn in the course is a C. If you miss eight or more classes, you will earn an F in the course.

At the end of the semester, if you have **perfect attendance**, you will have a **bonus of 1 percentage point added to your final average.**

### ❑ E-mail

Students must have access to BYU-Idaho e-mail. If students prefer other email servers, students should arrange with their carriers to forward their campus email directly to them.

### ❑ Academic Honesty

"BYU-Idaho students should seek to be totally honest in all their dealings. They should complete their own work and be evaluated for that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct."

This course will adhere to procedures for handling incidents of academic dishonesty found in the *BYU-Idaho Catalog, 2010-2011*, pp. 68-69.

### ❑ Special Limitations

To accommodate students with special learning, physical, emotional, mental, social, or other limitations, the student must notify the teacher the first week of class. By law, BYU-Idaho is only required to assist those students who make these issues known during the first week.

### ❑ Course Content

If students find an assigned reading offensive or objectionable for any reason, students have the option to choose another reading. For short stories, students may choose another reading from the Halpern textbook. For the plays or novels, students may select other works. Rather than take the online quiz, students may submit a 300-500 word response to the new reading due at the beginning of class.

### ❑ Caveat

The teacher reserves the right to make changes in course content and policy at any time during the semester.

**Contemporary British and American Literature**  
**English 336:1**  
**R. Keller**  
**Fall 2010**

Sep 10 F Introduction to Course

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**Week 1**

13 M Post modernism

15W British Poet: Sean O'Brien  
"Cousin Coat," "Reading Stevens in the  
Bath," "Essay on Snow," and "Postcards to the  
Rain God"  
Martin Amis, "The Immortals," 25

17 F American Poet: Philip Schultz  
"Ars Poetica," "Grandma Climbs"  
Renaldo Arenas, "The Glass Tower," 33

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**Week 2**

20 M Russell Banks, "My Mother's Memoirs, My  
Father's Lies, and Other True Stories," 63  
Richard Bausch, "Aren't You Happy for Me?"  
85

22 W British Poet: Paul Farley  
"Treacle," "A Minute's Silence," "A Tunnel"  
Julian Barnes, "Evermore," 73

24F American Poet: Robert Haas  
"First Things at the Last Minute," "Heroic  
Simile"  
Choose ONE:  
August Wilson's *Fences*  
Margaret Edson's *W;t*

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**Week 3**

27 M British Poet: Kathleen Jamie  
"Mr and Mrs Scotland are Dead," "The Tay  
Moses," "Crossing the Loch," "Lochan,"  
"Pipistrelles," "The Wishing Tree"  
Anne Beattie, "In Amlfi," 96  
Robert Olen Bulter, "Mr. Green," 110

29 W *Spori Literary Review* Article 1 Draft Due  
American Poet: Claudia Emerson  
"Artifact," "Bone," "Homecoming,"  
"Influenza," "Physical Plant," "Stringed  
Instrument Collection"  
Choose ONE:  
Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*  
Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

Oct 1 F British Poet: Ciaran Carson

"Belfast Confetti," "Snow," "Catmint Tea,"  
"Fear"

Choose ONE:

Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*  
Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

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**Week 4**

4 M Raymond Carver, "Are These Actual Miles?" 146  
Vikram Chandra, "Dharma," 162

6 W Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*

8 F American Poet: Ted Kooser  
"A Happy Birthday," "Dishwater," "Flying at  
Night," "Porch Swing in September"  
Sandra Cisneros, "Never Marry a Mexican," 179

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**Week 5**

11 F British Poet: Robert Minhinnick  
"The Yellow Palm," "The Cormorant," "Paradise"  
Jim Crace, "The Prospect from the Sivler Hills,"  
189

13 M American Poet: Louise Glück  
"October," "The Red Poppy," "Vespers"  
Choose ONE:  
John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt: A Parable*  
Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics*

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**15 W Literature Adaptation 1 Due**

British Poet Peter Porter  
"Reading *MND* in Form 4B," "A Chagall Postcard,"  
"Wittgenstein's Dream," "The Pines of Rome,"  
"Well, Fracnis, Where's the Sun?"  
Choose ONE:  
John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt: A Parable*  
Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics*

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**Week 6**

18 M *Spori Literary Review* Article 2 Draft Due  
Lydia Davis, "The House Behind," 199  
Deborah Eisenberg, "The Girl Who Left Her Sock  
on the Floor," 233

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**20 W Spori Literary Review Article 2 Due**

American Poet: Paul Muldoon  
"Symposium"  
Choose ONE:  
Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*  
John Banville's *The Sea*

22 F Choose ONE:  
Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*  
John Banville's *The Sea*

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### Week 7

25 M British Poet: Ian Duhig  
"From the Irish," "Come the Morning," "The  
Lammas Hireling," "Clare's Jig"  
Nathan Englander, "The Twenty-seventh Man," 248

27 W Richard Ford's "Optimists," 279  
Kazuo Ishiguro, "A Family Supper," 338

29 F American Poet: Carl Dennis  
"In Paris," "Thanksgiving Letter from Harry"  
Barry Hannah, "Midnight and I'm Not Famous  
Yet," 307

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### Week 8

Nov 1 M Edward P. Jones, "The First Day," 349  
James Kelman, "Remember Young Cecil," 353

3 W British Poet: Michael Donaghy  
"The Excuse," "Haunts," "The Repertoire," "The  
Brother," "Machines," "Shibboleth"  
Choose ONE:  
Horton Foote's *Tender Mercies*  
Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful*

5 F American Poet: Stephen Dunn  
"Charlotte Brontë in Leeds Point," "The Kiss," "The  
Routine Things Around the House"  
Choose ONE:  
Horton Foote's *Tender Mercies*  
Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful*

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### Week 9

8 M Bobbie Ann Mason, "Wish," 380  
Colum McCann, "Everything in this Country Must,"  
387

10 W **Spori Literary Review Article 3 Draft Due**  
British Poet: Jo Shapcott  
"Pavlov's Physics," "Hairless," "Deft"  
Choose ONE:  
Anne Tyler's *Digging to America*  
Louise Erdrich's *The Painted Drum*

12 F American Poet: Mark Strand  
"From the Long Sad Party," "Man and the Camel,"  
"My Mother on an Evening in Late Summer," "The  
Coming of Light"  
Choose ONE:  
Anne Tyler's *Digging to America*  
Louise Erdrich's *The Painted Drum*

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### Week 10

15 M British Poet: Ted Hughes  
"Pike," "February 17<sup>th</sup>"  
Mary Morris, "The Lifeguard," 424  
Bharati Mukherjee "The Management of Grief" 435

17 W American Poet: Liesel Mueller  
"Curriculum Vitae"  
Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia: Voyage*

19 F British Poet: Robin Robertson  
"Artichoke," "What the Horses See at Night,"  
"Wedding the Locksmith's Daughter," "Swimming  
in the Woods," "The Park Drunk," "Donegal"  
Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia: Shipwreck*

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### Week 11

22 M Non Teaching Days

24 W Non Teaching Days

26 F Thanksgiving Holiday

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### Week 12

29 M Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia: Salvage*

Dec 1 W Graham Swift, "Learning to Swim," 534  
Rose Tremain, "John-Jin," 573

3 F American Poet: Philip Levine  
"Coming Close," "Drum," "Gospel," "Monsieur  
Degas Teaches Art and Science," "On 52<sup>nd</sup> Street,"  
"Ontario"  
Tobias Wolff, "The Night in Question," 637

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### Week 13

6 M Choose ONE:  
Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*  
Isabel Allende's *Inés of My Soul*  
Amy Tan's *Saving Fish from Drowning*

8 W Choose ONE:  
Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*  
Isabel Allende's *Inés of My Soul*  
Amy Tan's *Saving Fish from Drowning*

10 F **Literature Adaptation 2 Due**  
Zoë Wicomb, "You Can't Get Lost," 591

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### Week 14

13 M **Spori Literary Review Article 4 Due**

15 W

17 H Final

