

JOHN JAY COLLEGE, CUNY
445 W. 59th St., New York NY 10019

Spring 2011
Senior LIT 400: Modern Family

Instructor: Dr. Olivera Jokic
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Office Location: NB 7.63.38

TTh 5:40–6:55PM
Room NB 1.123

Office Hours: T 3-4PM and by appt.

Course Topic:

This is a course that engages with the idea of modern family, what Friedrich Engels called “that compound of sentimentality and domestic strife which forms the ideal of the present-day philistine.” This is the kind of family we say we are comfortable with, or we even say that it is the most natural form of family. Yet the concept of the modern family, and the form of this family, have a fascinating history. Literary and non-literary representations of family life and lives of individuals within families will help us to recognize that ideas about selfhood, intimacy, and kinship change over time and that our own are subject to critical analysis and revision.

The modern family continues to bring together a series of contrary impulses and desires: free choice and kinship; self-making and tradition; individualism and sympathy; psychological depth and intimacy; egalitarianism and hierarchy; deep emotion and economic convenience. One way to discuss the contradictions embodied by modern families is to discuss texts which document how and why Western societies began to think of human relations in such unusual and unprecedented ways; and how they continue to do so.

Literature of the period in which the modern family was winning ground, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, can tell us much about how modern family became the norm. It gives us insight into the ways in which human interaction changed radically against the backdrop of dramatic changes in social structure of the emergent “modern society”—industrialization, migration, class mobility, individualism. Our own thinking derives from those strange ideas, and contemporary literature continues to wrestle with their implications.

Required Books (available at JJ Bookstore on 10th Av)

Jane Austen, *Persuasion*
Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*

Course Goals and Aspirations:

This is a writing-intensive (WI) course that rallies all your academic preparation thus far and perfects your skills to prepare you for graduation. Expectations in this course are higher than in any other course you have taken. You are expected to be a better, more proficient student than you have ever been before: you have practiced a long time. I will assume you will need no reminders about the schedule, the standard operations of the

College, the protocol of this class, or your particular duties outlined in the syllabus. We want the course to focus on the substance—the reading, the thinking, and the writing—and not on distractions.

Learning Goals:

Students will interpret a range of texts with attention to the way in which their formal qualities (length, syntax, prosody, poetic form etc.) contribute to their meaning

Students will analyze texts in terms of conventional categories of literary analysis (tropes, plot, characters etc.)

Students will learn about the social and cultural historical contexts of the literary works and genre conventions particular to those historical contexts

Students will analyze and appropriately use secondary and theoretical sources in support of literary analysis.

Students will write critically on the reading in papers that are focused and coherent, well organized, informed by academic research, correctly formatted, clear and grammatically correct.

Work Load:

All students have to do all the work all the time. Your grade will depend on your dependability: you should be in class regularly, read regularly, write regularly, contribute to class discussion regularly, submit all your assignments regularly.

You must be physically and intellectually available. This means that

You will attend the class regularly; three absences will reduce your grade by one letter, and four absences (two entire weeks of class) will result in failure. Two late arrivals will count as an absence.

You will check your email regularly; there is zero tolerance for students who don't check their JJ email. For every email that bounces back from your address, I will deduct 2 points from your total final grade (i.e., if five emails bounce, your grade gets reduced by a full letter). I regularly send emails to all students via Blackboard. Those messages always go to your school address. If those emails bounce back from your email address, I will deduct your grade points.

You will do your reading regularly and discuss it in class with others. Your writing will help you to have something to contribute in class. You will do your writing regularly so you can make your contributions available to other students in the class.

Writing Practice:

As a seasoned college student, you will take regular notes on your reading. This is the basic writing practice for any effective critical reader. This may be writing I shall never see, but writing that will help you compose the writing you will submit to me. All of this writing will contribute to your grade. Some of it will get only comments and a + or a -, indicating that the work is or is not of passing quality. Any - should lead you to read my comments particularly closely, have a conversation with me about what it is that negatively affects the quality of your work, and then promptly implement my suggestions to ensure that you can pass the class.

Response Papers:

For each class meeting in which we discuss a reading, you will submit a one-page double-spaced response paper, i.e., approximately 250 words in a 12-point font, preferably Times New Roman. Each response paper is due by 2pm on the day of the class. The paper on each day should address the reading for that day. I will give you more specific

instructions for each class session. I will occasionally give you specific questions and topics to address in your response papers.

You will post this paper to the “Discussion” section on Blackboard in a timely manner and in the section reserved for that date. You can either attach your file to the space or paste your text into the field.

Drafts (leading up to the Final Paper)

There are 5-, 10-, and 15-page drafts of the final paper due at different dates marked on the schedule. These are opportunities for you to practice writing about a complex topic and in a longer academic form. The topic of your final paper will change because you will become more knowledgeable and your ideas will develop and become more complicated over the course of the semester. Feel free to shift from one thesis to a revised one, from one draft to the next. This is perfectly fine and is a good sign of development as a thinker and a writer. All drafts should be taken to the Writing Center before you submit them to me. I want a receipt from the Writing Center attached to the draft you submit.

Grading

Attendance 10%

Draft 5: 5%

Draft 10: 10%

Draft 15: 15%

Final Draft 20: 20%

Response Papers: 40%

The JJ Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a fantastic resource for all writers, no matter how experienced. **Everyone in this class is required to go to the Writing Center at least FOUR TIMES in the course of the semester.** Each of your drafts requires a visit to the Writing Center. Going there with your drafts will satisfy this requirement. The Writing Center is located at Room 1.68 of the New Building.

Civility in the Classroom

Make sure your mobile devices are silent. Allow others to say what they need to say even if you disagree with them. Do not walk in and out of the classroom during class. Be on time. Don't leave early. Don't make any appointments during class time.

Course Schedule (subject to change):

1/31 Introductions; Capstones & Milestones; Why Modern Family (that's not on TV)?
2/2 Read *Bastard*, Book 4, Epigram 7: “Our fathers did but use the world before;” Hands, “On an Unsociable Family;” Larkin, “This be the Verse;” Boyle, “Education;” Atkinson, “Mean;” Levine, “What Work Is;” Levis, “Family Romance;” Kahf, “My Grandmother Washes Her Feet in the Sink of the Bathroom at Sears”

2/7 Read Wordsworth, “We are Seven,” “Michael”

2/9 Read Blake, “Introduction,” “The Chimney Sweeper,” “Holy Thursday,” “Infant Joy” from *Songs of Innocence*; “Introduction,” “The Clod and the Pebble,” “Holy Thursday,” “The Chimney Sweeper” from *Songs of Experience*

2/14 Loftur Guttormsson, "Parent-Child Relations," OR Maynes, "Class Cultures and Images of Proper Family Life" from *History of the European Family*
2/16 Read Godwin, "On Marriage" from *On Political Justice*; Engels, Preface to the First Edition, Preface to the Fourth Edition, "The Monogamous Family" from *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*

2/21 MONDAY SCHEDULE: NO CLASS! Read Austen, *Persuasion*
2/23 **5-page draft due**; read Austen, *Persuasion*

2/28 Read Austen, *Persuasion*
3/1 Read D. A. Miller, from *Jane Austen, or the Secret of Style*

3/6 Read Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
3/8 Read Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

3/13 Read Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
3/15 Read Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

3/20 Read Steedman, "Nelly's Version" from *Master and Servant*
3/22 Writing (Center) Day (Prof. away at a conference)
3/23 FRIDAY **10-page draft due**

3/27 Read Kafka, "Metamorphosis"
3/29 Read Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten"

4/3 Read Davis, "The Brother-In-Law," "Mothers," "In a House Besieged," "Visit to her Husband," "The Mother," "Problem," "Wife One in Country," "Love," "Our Kindness," "The Family," "The Great-Grandmothers," "A Man from Her Past," "Childcare," "Varieties of Disturbance," "What You Learn About the Baby," "How It Is Done," "Getting Better," "Head, Heart," "My Son"
4/5 Read Hempel, "Church Cancels Cow"

4/10 Spring Break
4/12 Spring Break

4/17 **Student Conferences: Final Writing Project Draft (15 pages) Due**
4/19 **Student Conferences: Final Writing Project Draft (15 pages) Due**

4/24 Read Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*
4/26 Read Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*

5/1 Read Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*
5/3 Read Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*

5/8 Student Presentations
5/10 Student Presentations

5/15 Class Trip
5/17 (?) Final Exam

5/22 Final Project Due (20 pages)