

English 450 V01: Coordinating Seminar

Spring 2021

English Department

INSTRUCTOR	Dr. Leonard Nalencz
CLASS MEETING DAY AND TIMES	R 6:00-8:45pm
CLASS LOCATION	Founders Hall/ The Academy
OFFICE LOCATION	Founders Hall/ The Academy A321
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OFFICE HOURS	Mon 4-6 pm, Wed 4-6 pm, and by appointment

PURPOSE of the SYLLABUS:

Please note that I do not modify the syllabus over the course of the semester. Due dates for assignments and readings **will not change**, even if there are snow days or other unexpected changes to the College schedule. If you miss class, you must watch the video which will be available on Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The subject of our seminar this year is Toni Morrison, a writer of everlasting talent and terrific genius. In this course we will read four novels from the Nobel prize winner: *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Beloved* (1987), and *A Mercy* (2008). We will also read a book of Morrison's literary criticism, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), and her Nobel address speech from 1993. There will be weekly response papers and a final research essay. I suggest that we keep in mind Toni Morrison's own definition of the literary canon as we read this semester: "Classic literature [...] heaves, manifests, and lasts." (3 credits)

PREREQUISITES, CO-REQUISITES, and CROSS-LISTING:

Required for senior English majors.

TEXTS AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:

There are **five** required volumes for this course:

The Bluest Eye (1970). ISBN: 9780307278449

Song of Solomon (1977). ISBN: 9781400033423

Beloved (1987) ISBN: 9780525659273

A Mercy (2008) ISBN: 9780307276766

Playing in the Dark (1992) ISBN: 9780679745426

You need to buy a hard copy of these books and bring them to **every** class meeting. **E-books are not accepted**, unless you have a letter from the administration.

COURSE OBJECTIVES and ASSESSMENT of STUDENT LEARNING

Familiarity and competence in reading in historical context is paramount, and the ability to read in a literary tradition is also desired.

DLO=Department Learning Outcome:

1. Demonstrate basic knowledge of English and American literature in historical context.
2. Develop a critical vocabulary enabling participation in literary discourse.
3. Identify and apply the major theories of literary interpretation and criticism.
4. Write a clear and convincing analysis of at least one primary literary text.
5. Engage in literary research using both print and electronic sources.

6. Produce a persuasively argued paper with bibliography that incorporates primary and secondary sources.

GRADING POLICIES:

Grading is based on the quality of written assignments, quizzes (announced or unannounced), exams, a class presentation, and the frequency and quality of participation in class. (Attendance—or rather excessive absence from class—can also have an effect on your final grade.)

This is a breakdown of those areas:

Weekly class participation/writing	50%
Research essay	25%
Final exam	25%

Course Schedule:

All reading assignments on the syllabus must be completed before the class period for which they are listed. Class participation will account for one quarter of your final course grade; obviously no meaningful insight into a given text can be shared if you are not thoroughly prepared.

January 28: Nobel Prize Lecture (1993) <https://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/?id=1502>; "Recitatif" (Canvas)

February 4: *The Bluest Eye* (Foreword—page 93); Interview with Morrison (Canvas)

February 11: *The Bluest Eye* (p. 97-206) Interview with Morrison (Canvas)

February 18: *Song of Solomon* (Foreword—page 112)

February 25: *Song of Solomon* (p. 113-216)

March 4: *Song of Solomon* (p. 219-337)

March 11: *Beloved* (Foreword - p.116); Morrison reading first chapter link in Canvas).

March 18: *Beloved* (p. 117-222); Interview with Morrison (Canvas)

March 25: *Beloved* (p. 223-324); Introduction to *Beloved* by AS Byatt.

April 1: **Easter Break**

April 8: *A Mercy* (p. 3-95); Interview with Morrison (Canvas)

April 15: *A Mercy* (p. 96-196)

April 22: *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

April 29: Class presentations

May 7: Final essay due (turnitin)

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Honesty

Academic integrity should be reflected in all aspects of student work: examinations, responses, quizzes, and any other materials submitted in fulfillment of course requirements must be the student's own work. All types of academic fraud, the illicit giving and receiving of information on tests, submissions, and plagiarism are all forms of cheating. **Plagiarism is the passing off as your own someone else's words or ideas whether from an electronic or print source.** This copying may be done intentionally or unintentionally by incorrect documentation; it still constitutes plagiarism.

If students are unsure whether a specific course of action would constitute plagiarism or cheating, it is their responsibility to consult with their instructor in advance. It is also the students' responsibility to read the College's full plagiarism policy. The plagiarism policy can be found in hard copy in Humanities Hall and on line on the College's web site: www.mountsaintvincent.edu.

The College of Mount Saint Vincent is committed to helping students to uphold the ethical standards of academic integrity in all areas of study. The instructor has the right to use electronic devices to help prevent plagiarism.

Students who plagiarize will fail that particular assignment, have a required meeting with the Dean of Students, and bear a permanent mention on their college record.

Academic Support Services

The College of Mount Saint Vincent offers a range of academic support services which might be helpful to students in this course; these services are described at <http://www.mountsaintvincent.edu/385.htm>.

Attendance

Students are required to attend all classroom sessions. Students are expected to arrive on time; tardiness and student exits are distracting. Please do not leave during the class period. Use the rest room, get a drink, print out your paper, etc. before you get to class. It is your responsibility as a student to notify the instructor if you miss class and it is your responsibility to make up all work if you are absent.

If, because of the global pandemic, you are not able to attend class in person because either you or someone in your family is sick, **you are required to attend class on Canvas**. I may ask you questions about the previous day's reading and discussion.

You are only allowed one absence this semester, because the class only meets once a week (and I urge you to do everything in your power to attend every class of the semester.) More than one absence will result in an F for the semester, unless you have a note from the administration.

For prolonged absences, the student must notify the Office of Academic Advisement.

Disabilities

Students who need special accommodations or services at the College of Mount Saint Vincent must provide the College up-to-date documentation verifying their specific diagnosed disability. These students should submit their documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Copies of the College's Policy on Students with Learning Disabilities are available in the Office of Admission, the Office of the Dean of the Undergraduate College, the Center for Academic Advising, and the Academic Resource Center. In order for these accommodations to take effect, the student is advised to complete this process as soon as possible after admission to the College. In addition, students must sign an Authorized Release Form at the beginning of every semester that permits the College to disclose the student's special accommodations. All accommodations and services are provided by the Academic Resource Center. Provisions may include note taking or books on tape, testing in the Center, professional tutoring, and additional services as needed. For more information, please see <http://www.mountsaintvincent.edu/1311.htm>.

Additional policies

Online: You need to have your camera on for online class. There will be times when we turn cameras off to do a writing assignment on the discussion page, but you are required to have a working laptop with functioning camera and microphone. You can't take this class on a smartphone: you will need to contribute to discussion threads, and you will need access to a full keyboard and a full screen to do these assignments well. I understand that it can be difficult to fulfill these requirements, but I feel strongly that without a fully working laptop of your own, you cannot be considered present for this class.

Bring your own book to every class We will pay close attention to the novels, and you **must** have your book to participate.

Turn your phone off when you get to class and put it away, out of sight. No laptops, tablets, or E-readers are allowed in-seat (unless you have a note from disability services). Use a notebook and a pen or pencil. Quizzes and exams cannot be made up.

Essay assignment:

Your essay should be 10-12 pages (3,000 words minimum). It must be typed, in 12-point Times New Roman font with one inch margins, and double-spaced. Include your name, course, and a title. The **assignment** is to read at least two peer-reviewed critical essays about one of Morrison's novels, and write an essay that shows how your understanding of the novel changed due to those critical interpretations. You should begin by describing your initial reading of the novel, and then describe the way you thought through the critical approaches. How did those articles strike you initially? Did they seem off base, or confusing? How did you come to understand the authors' perspectives? In your conclusion, see if you can push the critical interpretations further, perhaps by applying their approach to another novel by Morrison that was not discussed.

Class Presentations:

This class is one that will be conducted at a very high level. The expectation is that you will have read and understood the assigned sections of the novel and the criticism. **Every week** you will be expected to lead the class discussion on part of the reading. You may choose or be assigned a theme to examine closely, or you may be asked to do some additional reading to help illuminate part of the novel we are discussing. Please be prepared with notes and with questions for your classmates.