FYWS 151-12   WRITING SEMINAR:  DEVILS & DETAILS
T/R  9:30-10:45 am
Palmer 211

Professor Molinary
Palmer Hall, 304
843-3426
molinarym@rhodes.edu
Office Hours:  (with noted exceptions)
Thursdays 11:45-2:45 or by appt.

Composing Utopia(s) from the Rhetoric of Dissent

The island of Utopia contains in breadth in the middle part of it (for there it is broadest) two hundred miles. Which breadth continues through the most part of the land, save that little by little it comes in and waxes narrow towards both ends, which forming a circuit or compass of five hundred miles fashions the whole island like to the new moon.

—Sir Thomas More, The Utopia

The America of my twenty-year-old father / was beautiful, far away. / It managed to break his heart. / America here, America there, / where is it now, / my father’s America? / America will be my land / with its giant sun and moon, / soft air, blue sky, / a night of feasting / for workman and peasant. …

—Rocco Scotellaro, “There was America”

In other words if everybody even if there had not been a great many but just only as many as there have been if anybody that is everybody had not died there would not be room here and now for anybody who is here here and now. Even in America where there is more space where there is nobody than where there is. Never forget that.

These are ordinary ideas.

—Gertrude Stein, The Geographical History of America

REQUIRED TEXTS
The Master and Margarita [M & M]
The Verso Book of Dissent [VERSO]
Ways of Seeing [BERGER]

The above texts have all been ordered through the Rhodes Bookstore. Please buy immediately if you haven’t already done so. Additionally, students are required to purchase The Communist Manifesto & Other Revolutionary Writings [DOVER], ISBN # 0486424650. This is a Dover Thrift edition and, while not the highest quality, should be quite inexpensive. Including shipping, you should not pay over $9. If you do not wish to purchase online, Burke’s Bookstore will order it for you. Order & have in your possession by the end of the second week of class. HIGHLY recommended text: Phaidon’s Century—a gargantuan photographic history of the twentieth century.

There will be handouts as well and students will, naturally, be building their own additional reading lists during the course of research. Students will need to purchase either a notebook for the exclusive use of bibliographic annotations or index cards for that purpose. Either is acceptable as long as it is consistent.

DESCRIPTION/OVERVIEW
Having been born into a climate of cynicism, it seems that, perhaps, the greatest challenge facing the student of the early 21st century is one of imagination—the ability to imagine beyond the confines of “one’s time,”
out into the ether of the possible. At each turn there appears to be a devil of some metaphorical sort
determined to have us subscribe to a Hobbesian sort of universe wherein humans are irretrievably greedy
and rotten and, hence, in need of an iron-fisted authority to persuade obedience. Even in the introduction
to the Verso Book of Dissent, one is lead rhetorically into similar confines of the impossible despite all the
possibility acted out between its covers.

Beginning, then, with the satirical novel, *The Master and Margarita*, this course seeks to help students
critically interpret their ways to the possible. Our inquiry will be based primarily in the 20th century,
interrogating the Cold War and its implications as we ask “how did we get here?” We will look for the
“devil” in traditional rhetoric as we maneuver into critical interpretation so that students can clear the path
cynicism (but perhaps not satire!) as they imagine and construct arguments for Utopias. Despite.

**COURSE OBJECTIVE & STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

If a student enters into & completes the class with proper measures of humility, curiosity, & passionate
engagement with all the course material, required & suggested, that student will exit the course with
increased measures of humility, curiosity, & passionate engagement with the world; that student will have
affianced herself or himself, in permanent compact, to the bright lights of imagination, intelligent inquiry, &
critical understanding.

Students will be responsible for lively class attendance and participation; for coming to class having read
and annotated the assigned reading (& breathlessly discussing), having written the given assignment; for
keeping abreast of all TBA readings & writings which will be assigned each week rather than ahead of time;
for regular, very brief weekly writings kept in a notebook; for two shorter essays (with drafts); for research
presentation; for one final research paper; and for film viewings IF they can be arranged. Students will also
be responsible for a conference with the professor. IF they are graded at all, weekly writings will be graded
on the “check” system. Formal essays & presentation are worth points: Essay 1 = 15 points; Essay 2 = 20
points; et cetera.

**GRADING**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Daily Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Writings</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay #1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
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Grade Ranges:

F = Work incomplete &/or attendance issues.

D = Work complete but lacking any obvious sign of curiosity or effort;
participation lackluster; &/or attendance issues.

C = Fine. All work complete with signs of curiosity & effort;
attendance & participation also fine. At least one or two drafts for each poem.
Good.

B = Very good verging on excellent. All work completed with verve & curiosity.
At least two significantly different drafts for each poem.
Passionate engagement is evident.

A = Above & beyond. All assignments completed with flair; impeccable participation;
remarkable work in drafts; evidence of further work, i.e. suggested reading or work beyond the basic requirements.
POLICIES

- In any space of collective learning, but in a creative writing class in particular, generosity, courtesy & respect are, perhaps, the most important policies.

- Attendance is crucial, but keep in mind that “attendance” means more than the presence of your physical body in the classroom; your mind & voice need be present & active as well. To count you “present” for any given day, I’ll need to see evidence of a heartbeat—of blood coursing through your veins, lungs taking in air supplying oxygen to your brain & your mouth with words. The classroom is a space of collective learning & it may be a dying breed. Take advantage of this space—actual human bodies in a room, engaged together in human thought, imagination, & the history of ideas.

- No whining or public displays of disaffection. See me straight away if you have a problem. Trust. Trust that there are reasons for everything we do in class even if you can’t yet imagine how or why. Trust that this class is designed to help you become better writers, readers, thinkers—better humans. In that spirit, attempt everything. Don’t simply dismiss any given exercise or assignment. **See me about any documented disability.

- Generally speaking, no late work will be accepted.

- Generally speaking, if you miss class, do not expect comments on work for that week or to have your poem workshoped.

- This classroom is a “safe zone.”

- Professor reserves the right to expel from the class any student who behaves like a troglodyte. The interpretation of “troglodyte” is in the sole purview of the professor.

- Antithetical to the current climate, in the realm of this course, all students are considered adults & all will be treated as such & expected to act as such. You choose to learn or not.

- Please review the Rhodes Honor Code pertaining to plagiarism &tc.

- Finally: because words & their meanings are arbitrary & because one of the purposes of this course is to help students think more deeply, imaginatively, & critically about languages & their implications, the professor retains the right to cuss &/or use language in colorful manner in order to make students think about words.

DAILY SCHEDULE

***Please note that the daily schedule is subject to change. It is the student’s responsibility—within reason—to stay abreast. I like to leave room for spontaneity.

*In general:* Tuesdays will be spent discussing the reading noted for that day while Thursdays will be spent on writing & critical interpretation workshop. There will be readings on occasion for Thursdays & there will most often be very brief writings or exercises due on Thursdays. Please note that a Thursday or two may be cancelled for mandatory conferences.

**Week 1.**  
**Introduction to the class**

**Close Reading & Critical Interpretation**

- 1.17/T: Broods (diagnostic writings) due.
- Discuss “the story” and *The Devil’s Dictionary*
- 1.19/R: Morrison Nobel Address (read)
Write a brief synopsis delineating Morrison’s argument. (1 paragraph)

1.24/T: M&M (through Chapter 12, Book One)
1.26/R: Swift’s “A Modest Proposal”

1.31/T: M&M (through Chapter 22, Book Two)
2.02/R: Workshop [Selections from VERSO]
   First formal essay assigned. (Critical Triangle)

2.07/T: M&M (finish)
2.09/R: 1st draft first short essay due *** 1300 words.

2.14/T: Selections from DOVER & VERSO, TBA
2.16/R: 1st essays drafts workshopedd

2.21/T: DOVER & VERSO tba ***Final draft 1st essay due***
2.23/R: Workshop

2.28/T: DOVER & VERSO tba
3.01/R: 1st draft second essay due ***1600 words.

3.06/T: DOVER & VERSO tba
3.08/R: ***Final draft 2nd essay due***

3.13/T: SPRING
3.15/R: BREAK

ART as Dissent

3.20/T: BERGER
3.22/R: Selections from Chipp (handouts)

3.27/T: BERGER *approve topics for research*
3.29/R: Workshop

4.03/T: No class. Library research.
4.05/R: Easter Break

4.10/T: Library Research. No class.
4.12/R: ***Research Presentations***

4.17/T: ***Research Presentations***
4.19/R: Workshop

4.24/T: TBA
4.26/R: ***Last class***Research papers due for peer review***3000 words.

****FINAL VERSION RESEARCH PAPERS DUE 1 MAY, 5PM****