English Senior Seminar, Fall 2010

Topic: Studies in the Novel

This class will undertake a sustained consideration of the novel as an artistic medium, with attention to several key concepts and problems, including realism, historicism, and postmodernism. In the first ten weeks of the term, we will study two significant works of fiction, Walter Scott’s Waverly (1814) and David Mitchell’s Cloud Atlas (2004). Waverly was Scott’s first novel; he was known to that point as a poet, and he published Waverly anonymously. Its tremendous popularity spawned many imitators and shaped the taste of the English reading public for a generation. It also created a new sub-genre, which we now call the historical novel, and which had significant impact on the evolution of the novel in broader terms. Mitchell’s very recent book is in part a playful return to the concerns of the historical novel—indeed it opens with scenes set roughly during the time of Scott. But Mitchell’s book moves much more widely and in this way comments on the movement of the novel as a medium of literary expression. While reading these texts, we will consult major critical statements on the novel as a genre, focusing on the issues most relevant to these two texts.

The purpose of this course is to guide and support you as you develop an independent statement of your own on a major work of fiction, reading a novel both within the history of the development of its genre and within the history of its time and place. The first eight weeks of the term are designed to immerse you in one of contemporary literary history’s most vigorous and fascinating disputes, i.e. the ongoing argument about why the novel emerged as a distinctive genre in the eighteenth century, why it attained such dominance in the nineteenth, and why it changed so much in the twentieth. Our critical and theoretical readings all ask versions of these questions, trying to understand the way that literary genres experience and register historical change. The focus of the class will shift gradually from common readings to individualized study, as each student brings these questions to bear in the reading of a particular novel.

Course Texts
- Scott: Waverly (Penguin Edition)
- Mitchell: Cloud Atlas
- Gibaldi: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers

Other readings in handouts or posted on Moodle.

Course Requirements
Preparation: Both the novels and the critical readings assigned for this course will require careful and deliberate preparation for class. Texts should be read and (at least partially) re-read before each seminar meeting. Mark your texts vigorously, take notes, and record your responses and questions. While I
have assigned occasional responses and short papers, successful preparation for class requires that you distill your ideas about each reading into particular questions and observations.

**Seminar Participation** is mandatory, and you should regard it as your responsibility to contribute actively to each class discussion.

**Presentations** are required at several points during the term. Most importantly, the semester will culminate with the formal presentation of your research, in two extended class sessions at the end of the term. I will provide specific guidelines for these assignments. Check your schedule now and make certain that you will be able to participate in final presentations.

**Workshop Participation** will insure that everyone in the course receives detailed feedback on drafts and proposals from peers in the course. You will be assigned to a workshop group based on the subject of your research project, and you will be expected to provide careful responses to the members of your peer group.

**Writing** for the course must be original, must be prepared solely for this course, and must conform to all of the standards of academic honesty embraced by the Rhodes Honor Code. All writing must be submitted in hard copy; no email attachments unless prior permission is obtained. **Late Papers** will drop one third of a grade per day late. (I.e. a B paper turned in one day late becomes a B-, two days late a C+, etc.) No late make-ups will be permitted for pre-scheduled oral presentations unless excused by permission at least 24 hours in advanced.

**Absences and Late Arrivals:** You may miss up to three classes without excuse or penalty. More than four absences, for any reason, will lower your grade significantly and may be grounds for failing the course. If you are repeatedly late or unprepared for class, you will be counted as absent.

**Grades**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 1 (5 pages) on Scott and the rise of the novel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2 (5 pages) on Mitchell and Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
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<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 3 (20-25 pages) Independent Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal Writing and seminar participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Oral Presentation of Independent Research</td>
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Schedule of Readings and Assignments
Expect some alterations and additions as we proceed. If you are absent from class, you are responsible both for the material covered that day as well as for any schedule changes set while you were absent. Unless otherwise noted, readings not contained in course books will be posted to the our Moodle site.

8/31 Lukacs, from *Theory of the Novel*
9/2 Begin Scott

9/7 excerpt from Richardson’s *Pamela*; Fielding, *Shamela*
http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/shamela.html
9/9 Watt

9/14 Scott
9/16 McKeon

9/21 Scott
9/23 Lukacs, from *Historical Novel*

9/28 Finish Scott
9/30 Trumpener, Brenkman

**Friday, 9/31: Paper 1 Due by noon at Palmer 316**

10/5 Kafka, *Metamorphosis*
10/7 Lukacs, “Realism in the Balance”

10/12 Mitchell
10/14 Adorno, Brecht

10/19 *Fall Break – No Class*
10/21 Mitchell

10/26 Jameson
10/28 Mitchell

11/2 Harvey
11/4 Finish Mitchell

**Friday, Nov. 5: Paper 2 due by noon at Palmer 316**

11/9 & 11/11 Readings from recent research on the novel: Choose an article from one of two recent major collections and prepare to discuss it in class.

**Monday, 11/15: Formal Research Proposal due**
11/16 Workshop groups convene to discuss proposals
11/18 TBA

**Monday 11/22: Annotated Bibliography due**
11/23 Workshop of bibliographies
11/25  Thanksgiving – No Class

11/30  Final Presentations
12/2   Final Presentations
12/7   Final Presentations

Final Papers due during Exam Week
Revised Schedule

10/19    Fall Break – No Class
10/21    Rushdie through p 393
10/26    Finish Rushdie. (Individual Conferences with Bigelow this week)

**Paper II Due in Class:** 1000 Words on *Midnight’s Children*

10/28    Barnaby and Sangari (Both on Moodle)
          Organization of Workshop Groups in Class

11/2     Joint session with Newstok Section on Auerbach, “Philology and Weltliteratur” (Moodle)
11/4     **Final Research Proposal Due in class,** 1000 Words, with suggested excerpt or article for assigned reading
          In-Class Presentation of Proposals

11/9     (11/9 – 11/23: Discussion of Student-Assigned Readings, schedule TBA)
          Strategy Session with Workshop Groups in Class
11/11    Student-Assigned Readings

11/16    Student-Assigned Readings
**Tuesday, 11/17 by 9PM:** Draft of a 1000-word section of your paper dealing with a novel.
          Email to your workshop group with copy to  Bigelow
11/18    Workshop; Student-Assigned Readings

**Sunday, 11/22 by 9PM:** Draft of a 1000-word section of your paper dealing with historical context or criticism.
          Email to your workshop group with copy to  Bigelow
11/23    Workshop; Student-Assigned Readings
11/25    Thanksgiving – No Class

11/30    **Complete drafts** due in class.
12/2     Final Presentations (class will run until 5pm)

12/7     Final Presentations (class will run until 5pm)
12/9     Workshop groups discuss Drafts

**Final Papers due Monday, 12/14 by noon at Palmer 316**