

English 485, Fall 2014  
Office: Palmer 319  
Office Hrs: M 1-2, W 2-3:30 & by appt  
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## ENGLISH SENIOR SEMINAR

### Topic: Studies in the Novel

This class will consider 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)  
Edgeworth     *Castle Rackrent* (any edition will suffice)  
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 a major presentation of your research, in special class sessions at the end of the term. I will provide specific guidelines for these assignments.

**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 advance.

**Absences and Late Arrivals:** You may miss up to three classes without excuse or penalty. More than three 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**

Short Paper 1 (1000 words)	10%
Short Paper 2 (1000 words)	10%
Research Proposal	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Seminar Paper (approx. 7000 – 8000 words)	40%
Seminar participation & short presentations	10%
Final Oral Presentation of Research	10%

#### **Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

Expect some alterations and additions as we proceed. Unless otherwise noted, readings not contained in course books will be posted in my public folder.

9/2	Lukacs, from <i>Theory of the Novel</i>
9/4	Scott 1-59
9/9	Watt
9/11	Scott 60-151
9/16	McKeon; Excerpts from Richardson, <i>Pamela</i> and Fielding, <i>Shamela</i>
9/18	Scott 151-252

9/23 Finish Scott, 252-365  
9/25 Lukacs, from *Historical Novel*  
**Friday, 9/25: Paper 1 Due by noon at Palmer 319**

9/30 Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*  
10/2 Trumpener  
  
10/7 Modernism Readings (Woolf, Porter)  
10/9 Lukacs, "Realism in the Balance"

10/14 Mitchell, Begin *Cloud Atlas*  
10/16 Jameson

10/21 *Fall Break – No Class*  
10/23 Mitchell  
**Friday, Oct 24: Paper 2 due by noon at Palmer 319**

10/28 Barth  
10/30 MLA Guide (location TBA)

11/4 Mitchell  
11/6 Esty  
**Friday, Nov. 7: Preliminary Research Proposal due by noon at Palmer 319**

11/11 Finish Mitchell  
11/13 Workshop groups convene; discussion of proposals

11/18 Individual Meetings  
11/20 Working Session (location TBA)

**Monday 11/24: Annotated Bibliography due**

11/25 Workshop of bibliographies  
11/27 *Thanksgiving – No Class*

12/2 Final Presentations (Evergreen Room, King Hall)  
12/4 Final Presentations (Burrow 426)

12/9 Final Presentations (Burrow 426)

**Final Papers due Tuesday, December 16 by noon at Palmer 319**

RHODES COLLEGE  
Department of English

Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

**Attendance:** The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

**Deadlines:** Writing assignments, test, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfillment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

**Submission of all work:** All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

**Intellectual honesty:** All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.