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ENGL 485-02, Senior Research Seminar - Studies in the Novel, Fall 2015

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Authors	Bigelow, Gordon
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English 485, Fall 2015
Office: Palmer 319
Office Hrs: M 4:15-5:30, F 1-2:30 & by appt
bigelow@rhodes.edu

Gordon Bigelow
Phone: x3980

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 criticism's most vigorous and fascinating conversations, i.e. the ongoing debate 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 available electronically in Bigelow's public folder.

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. Electronic texts must be printed and marked up with notes for class. Students without the day's text will be considered absent.

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

Presentations will conclude our semester's meetings together. Each student will offer a major presentation of her/his 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 bibliographies 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 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 (3-4 pages)	15%
Short Paper 2 (3-4 pages)	15%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Seminar Paper (minimum 20 pages)	50%
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.

- 8/31 Lukács, from *Theory of the Novel*
9/2 Scott 1-66
- 9/7 *Labor Day: No Class*
9/9 Watt
- 9/14 Scott 66-209
9/16 *Bigelow Away at Conference: No Class*
- 9/21 McKeon; Excerpts from Richardson, *Pamela* and Fielding, *Shamela*
9/23 Finish Scott (209-365)
Friday, 9/25: Paper 1 Due by noon at Palmer 319
- 9/28 Lukács, from *The Historical Novel*
9/30 Trumpener, from *Bardic Nationalism*
- 10/5 Modernism Readings (Woolf, Porter)
10/7 Lukács, "Realism in the Balance"
- 10/12 Mitchell, Begin *Cloud Atlas*
10/14 Jameson, "Postmodernism"
- 10/19 *Fall Break – No Class*
10/21 Working Session: Doing Research on Novels (Barret 033)
Friday, Oct 23: Paper 2 due by noon at Palmer 319
- 10/26 Mitchell
10/28 Barth
- 11/2 Mitchell
11/4 Esty
Friday, Nov. 6: Preliminary Research Proposal due by noon at Palmer 319
- 11/9 Finish Mitchell
Bring 3 copies of Research Proposal to class
- 11/11 Jameson, from *Antinomies of Realism*
Prepare proposals for workshop group discussion in class
- 11/16 (Individual Meetings)
11/18 Working Session: *MLA Handbook* (Barret 033)
Friday, 11/20: Annotated Bibliography due by noon at Palmer 319
Email copies of Annotated Bibliography to Workshop Group

11/23	Prepare bibliographies for Workshop discussion
11/25	<i>Thanksgiving Break: No Class</i>
11/30	Working Session (Barret 033)
12/2	Final Presentations (Burrow 426)
12/7	Final Presentations (Burrow 426)
12/9	Final Presentations (Burrow 426)

Final Papers due Monday, December 14 by 3pm 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.