

Literature and Controversy (Fall 2021)

Instructor: Manu Chander

Office Hours: By appointment (online only)

Email: mchander@rutgers.edu (best method of contacting me)

N.B. I typically respond to messages within 24-48 hours

Course Description:

This class looks at controversial works of art and literature, weighing the various arguments surrounding the texts and considering the motivations of different participants. We will focus on 3 cultural “case studies”: the rise of the public sphere in Romantic-era Britain, race the American South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and sex and violence in contemporary literature and film. In doing so we will think about the relationship between art and society, the way that texts both participate in and transform social dialogue. How have race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality historically factored in critical reception? Why is art a continual site of cultural contestation? How do aesthetic controversies reflect fundamental beliefs that structure society?

Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Books:

- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Bedford/St. Martin, ISBN 0312400292) – N.B. this is the **recommended edition** but you may use a different edition, including this free online version:
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/76/76-h/76-h.htm>
- Richard Wright, *Native Son* (Harper Perennial, ISBN 9780061148507) – N.B. this is the **recommended edition** but you may use a different edition
- Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Vintage, ISBN 9582701048) N.B. this is the **recommended edition** but you may use a different edition
- Stanley Kubrick, *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)—you can purchase the film in any format or rent it

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course you will be able to

- describe the history of literary controversies from the nineteenth century to the present day
- analyze rhetorical strategies and formal/stylistic choices made by artists and critics alike
- evaluate critical arguments surrounding works of art

- formulate thoughtful arguments about the relative merits of a given work of art

Course Requirements:

You are expected to participate and contribute to the class by posting in discussion boards. For each discussion board you should reply to at least two other classmates. There will be also be regular quizzes to assess your comprehension of the readings and lectures. There will be two exams, each featuring several short-answer questions and one essay question. The cumulative final exam is completely essay based.

Grade Breakdown

- Regular Quizzes 5% (total)
- Two Exams 20% (each)
- Final Exam 30%
- Online Attendance and participation (including Discussion Posts) 25%

Grading Response Time

Quizzes and Discussion Board posts will be graded within one week of the due date. Exams will be graded within two weeks.

N.B. Unless we have worked out an arrangement in advance, I will not accept late work.

Grading Scale

Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Final grade averages scored between | 90% and 100% will equal A |
| | 85% and less than 90% will equal B+ |
| | 80% and less than 85% will equal B |
| | 75% and less than 80% will equal C+ |
| | 70% and less than 75% will equal C |
| | 60% and less than 70% will equal D |
| | 0% and less than 60% will equal F |

On Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's work as your own, in large part or in small part. Plagiarism is also failure to give credit where credit is due. Do not plagiarize. Consequences for plagiarizing include immediate failure for the course and possible further action at the institutional level. For further information, see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>

Netiquette

“Netiquette” is network etiquette, the dos and don’ts of online communication. When posting to our discussion board or communicating with others in our class, please remain courteous. Below are the guidelines we will follow in this course.

- Be professional and courteous
- Be respectful of other points of view
- Avoid using slang and abbreviations because they can lead to misinterpretation
- Do not capitalize all letters because this suggests shouting
- Think and proofread before you submit

Time Commitment

To be successful in this course, we estimate that you will need to commit to at least 9 hours of coursework per week for the fifteen-week semester. Some weeks will require more time, some less.

Attendance and Participation Policy

There are no on-campus meetings for this class. You are expected to login to the course at least three times per week to ensure you do not miss pertinent postings, messages, or announcements.

Dropping the Course

In order to withdraw from a course, it is not sufficient to stop posting assignments or contributing to discussion. In accord with university policy, students wishing to withdraw from a course must do so formally through the Registrar’s office. It is the student’s responsibility to complete all forms. If this is not done, the instructor must assign a grade of F at the end of the semester.

Required technological skills:

- Ability to utilize Blackboard

Required equipment / materials

- Computer, Internet access

Technical Problems

In the online environment, there is always a possibility of technical issues (e.g., lost connection, hardware or software failure). Many of these can be resolved relatively quickly, but if you wait to the last minute before due dates, the chances of these glitches affecting your success are greatly increased. Please plan appropriately. If a problem occurs, it is essential you take immediate action to resolve the problem. Technical questions should be directed to the Student Help Desk in Hill Hall 109:

help@newark.rutgers.edu

973-353-5083

<http://ncs.newark.rutgers.edu/hd>

Serving Students with Disabilities

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact [the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled](#), participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the [Registration form on the Office of Disability Services web site](#).