ENGL 2000-R11  
Texts and Contexts: Contemporary Fiction  
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 6-9pm  
Location TBA  
Summer I 2020

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English and Comparative Literature  
TWR, 9-10pm

Course Description  
This course will examine some major writers of contemporary fiction, with particular  
emphasis on writers of color. Possible authors include Junot Diaz, Gish Jen, Jhumpa  
Lahiri, and others. Writing instruction will be a major part of the course.

Texts  
- Jhumpa Lahiri, Unaccustomed Earth (available in the university bookstore).  
- Viet Nguyen, The Refugees (available in the university bookstore).  
- James Kim, “Eloquentia Perfecta” (available on Blackboard).

Course Requirements  
Midterm and Final Paper (35% each): Two 7-8 page papers analyzing one of our literary  
texts, using the critical and theoretical concepts discussed in class. The final paper will  
take the place of the final exam.

Close Readings (20%): A series of writing assignments designed to help you develop the  
skills necessary for insightful literary analysis. You will ultimately be expected to  
produce four close readings over the course of the semester.

Class Participation (10%): You will be expected to contribute actively to class discussion.  
For guidelines on your class participation grade, see the sheet attached.

Policies  
Attendance: You are allowed two absences. If you exceed the number of allowed  
absences, you will automatically fail the course. You will be counted absent if you come  
to class more than 15 minutes late, come to class late on a regular basis, come to class  
unprepared, or miss a scheduled appointment with the instructor.

Late Work: You are allowed two late assignments. If you exceed the number of allowed  
late assignments, you will automatically fail the course. You will be charged with one  
late assignment for each class period that your work remains overdue. Homework  
submissions will not be accepted over email.
Classroom Etiquette: You will be expected to behave respectfully toward your instructor, your classmates, the course materials, and the learning environment. That means, among other things, no side conversations, no passing notes, and no sleeping in class. If you behave disrespectfully on a consistent basis or in a particularly egregious way, you will be subject to penalties determined solely by the instructor’s discretion.

Emergencies and University-Sponsored Activities: If you must take an absence or a late assignment due to an emergency or university-sponsored activity, please provide a note from a doctor, dean, or coach. If you provide such a note, you will not hurt your final grade, but you will still be using an allowed absence/late assignment. Moreover, if you have already used up your allowed absences/late assignments, you will be retroactively penalized for them. For this reason, it would be best to save your allowed absences/late assignments for genuine emergencies.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is any act, deliberate or not, that misleads a reader about the source of ideas, language, or data in a piece of written work. The deception may be deliberate, in which case the plagiarism is a reflection of the personal integrity of the writer, or it may be accidental and a result of carelessness or ignorance of rules of attribution. In either case, the result is plagiarism and constitutes an act of academic dishonesty. If you plagiarize, you will be subject to severe disciplinary sanctions, including automatic failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the University.

Paper Consultations: If you would like feedback on your written work, you are welcome to visit my office hours at any point during the writing process. You are also welcome to visit the tutors at the Writing Center. However, please refrain from soliciting feedback via email. As a medium, email is inherently unsuited to the Socratic forms of conversations necessary for effective writing instruction. If you’d like feedback on your work, then, get it the old-fashioned way; talk to someone face-to-face.

Accommodations: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services.
Criteria for Class Participation
Your class participation will be graded on a scale from zero-to-four, four being the highest. Please note that, although I will make every effort to include as many voices as possible in discussion, it is ultimately up to you to participate in class.

Preparation
- Absent. (0 points)
- Present, not disruptive. (1 point)
- Adequate: knows basic reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them. (2 points)
- Good: knows reading facts well, has thought through their implications. (3 points)
- Excellent: has analyzed reading exceptionally well, relating it to other course materials (e.g., other primary and secondary readings, other discussions, other courses, etc.). (4 points)

Frequency
- Does not participate. (0 points)
- Minimal. Tries to respond when called upon but does not offer much. (1 point)
- Adequate. Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called upon. (2 points)
- Good. Contributes well in a consistent and ongoing way. (3 points)
- Excellent. Contributes in a very significant, active, and ongoing way. (4 points)

Sophistication
- Does not participate. (0 points)
- Minimal. Offers brief contributions, showing little engagement with the conversation. (1 point)
- Adequate. Offers straightforward, unelaborated information (e.g., plot summaries straight from the reading). (2 points)
- Good. Offers interpretations and analysis of course material (i.e., more than just facts) to class. Responds to other students’ points; thinks through own points; questions others in a constructive way; offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion. (3 points)
- Excellent. Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of readings: puts together discussion threads to develop new questions that take the class further into the material. Keeps analysis focused; responds very thoughtfully to other students’ comments; contributes to cooperative argument-building; suggests alternative ways of approaching material; and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate. (4 points)
A Note on Our Historical Moment
Public events since the 2016 Presidential Election have legitimated ugly actions and set a tone that is fundamentally at odds with the aims of higher education. It is the values and pedagogies associated with the Fordham mission, however, that will continue to set the tone in our classroom. In the language of the university mission statement, these values include a “commitment to research and education that assist in the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of justice, the protection of human rights, and respect for the environment.” Members of this class can expect to continue an education that promotes “understanding of and reverence for ways of life other than their own,” and to continue their preparation “to live in and to contribute to an increasingly multicultural and multinational society.” As with all courses of study at Fordham, the aim of ours is to foster “life-long habits of careful observation, critical thinking, creativity, moral reflection, and articulate expression.” Fordham’s full mission statement is available online at: http://www.fordham.edu/info/20057/about/2997/mission_statement
Schedule of Readings and Assignments
The class will be divided into two groups, and the groups will take turns submitting close reading exercises. By the end of the semester, you should have a total of four close reading exercises.

Tuesday, May 26
Welcome to the Course
We’ll get to know each other, review the syllabus, examine a poem, and get acquainted with the art of close reading.

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Unit 1: Jhumpa Lahiri
Wednesday, May 27
Read “A Temporary Matter” (available as PDF on Blackboard)
Read “Unaccustomed Earth,” pp. 3-59
Review the section on close reading from the EP packet

Thursday, May 28
Read “Heaven-Hell,” pp. 60-83
Read “A Choice of Accommodation,” pp. 84-127
Close Reading #1 due for Group A

Tuesday, June 2
Read “Only Goodness,” pp. 128-173
Read “Nobody’s Business,” pp. 174-219
Close Reading #1 due for Group B

Wednesday, June 3
Read “Once in a Lifetime,” pp. 223-51
Read “Year’s End,” pp. 252-293
Close Reading #2 due for Group A

Thursday, June 4
Read “Going Ashore,” pp. 294-333
Close Reading #2 due for Group B

Read the section on “Problem Statements” from the EP packet. In class, we’ll learn the basic elements of a successful academic introduction. Time permitting, we’ll review and evaluate some sample problem statements.

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Unit 2: Writing Instruction  
Tuesday, June 9  
Workshop on Introductions  
Write an introduction on one of our previous readings, using the “instructions for problem statements” from the EP packet as a guide. In class, we’ll workshop some of your introductions.

Wednesday, June 10  
How to Write Successful Thesis Statements  
Revise your introduction in light of the writing insights gleaned from our last discussion. Read the section on thesis statements from the EP packet. In class, we’ll learn the basic elements of a successful thesis statement. Time permitting, we’ll workshop your thesis statements in light of what we’ve learned.

Thursday, June 11  
How to Write Effective Conclusions  
Revise your introduction again in light of the writing lessons covered in our last class. Read the section on conclusions from the EP packet. In class, we’ll go over the basic structure of conclusions. You will be given class-time to draft a set of conclusions to go along with your introductions. (Bring a laptop if you have one.)

Also read the sections on main claims and body paragraphs in the EP packet. In the second half of class, we’ll learn the basic parts of a successful argument. Then we’ll examine and evaluate some examples of main claims and body paragraphs. Finally, we’ll see how to develop a list of supporting claims, as well as a fully fleshed-out body paragraph.

Midterm papers will be due via Blackboard by Midnight, Monday, June 15  
Revisions will be due 48 hours after I return the papers to you

Tuesday, June 16  
How to Write Clear, Graceful, Effective Sentences  
Bring a copy of your midterm paper. In class, we’ll learn how to write clear, graceful, effective sentences. You will be given class time to practice what you have learned by revising your own papers.

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Unit 3: Viet Nguyen’s The Refugees  
Wednesday, June 17  
Read “Black-Eyed Women,” pp. 1-22  
Read “The Other Man,” pp. 23-48  
Close Reading #3 due for Group A
Thursday, June 18
Read “War Years,” pp. 49-72
Read “The Transplant,” pp. 73-98
Close Reading #3 due for Group B

Tuesday, June 23
Read “I’d Love You to Want Me,” pp. 99-124
Read “The Americans,” pp, 125-50
Close Reading #4 due for Group A

Wednesday, June 24
Read “Someone Else Besides You,” pp. 151-80
Read “Fatherland,” pp. 181-207
Close Reading #4 due for Group B

Thursday, June 25
Final Paper due via Blackboard by the beginning of the exam period

Important Administrative Dates

Wednesday, May 27
Last day to drop/add

Monday, June 15
Last day to withdraw without incurring a WF, last
day to designate a course pass/fail