

Literature & Cultural Studies

RIT, College of Liberal Arts;
Department of English

Professor Elena Sommers, PhD

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Zoom only Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 11 am-1 pm

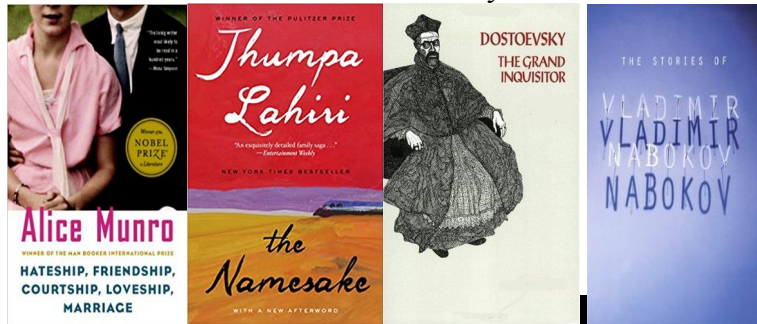
Zoom Office Hours policy:

- I'm always glad to talk to you about the course. But! ☺ I am teaching 100 students, so please **let me know about a Zoom office hour in advance. I can then reserve your time slot and send you a Zoom invite.**
- Camera and mike **have to be on and in working order** to conduct the office hour. We will not be communicating through a chat or with your camera off. If you do not have a camera on your computer, borrow one **and then schedule an office hour with me.**

Note added by RIT Administration: under unforeseen circumstances, I may have to alter course requirements, assignment deadlines, attendance expectations, and grading procedures.

Course description:

In this course the world literary giants and masters of storytelling will take you on an intellectual journey that will provide material for critical commentary and cultural understanding.



Required texts:

1. Jhumpa Lahiri. The Namesake. ISBN-10: 0358062683 and ISBN-13: 978-0358062684
2. Alice Munro. Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage.
3. Vladimir Nabokov. The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov. Vintage International. ISBN: 978-0-679-72997-6
4. Feyodor Dostoevsky. The Grand Inquisitor: With Related Chapters from the Brothers Karamazov. ISBN: 0872201937; Hackett Publishing Company. **Note: This version only. Other editions will not have the chapters we need.**

Course Format:

As part of your grade, you are expected to 1) read the material, 2) write two formal Essays and (possibly) short myCourses responses. This approach requires that you take responsibility for your participation in the class by doing the reading, completing assignments, and moving the class in new directions.

Our e-mail communication: I have over 100 students this semester. In order for us to communicate professionally, respectfully, and effectively, all e-mails to me should include the following 4 things:

- 1) A greeting: Hi Dr. Sommers,

- 2) Your first and last name,
- 3) The title of the course you are in: ...
- 4) Correct spelling and organization.

Your e-mail might look like this: **Hi Dr. Sommers, this is Stephen Tranter from... I have a question: Thank you.**
Stephen

I will respond to student e-mails within 24-48 hours on weekdays unless the issue is such that requires me to check with university administration or make other inquiries.

I will respond to weekend e-mails by end of Monday unless the issue is such that requires me to check with university administration or make other inquiries. Use myCourses for access to the most up-to-date course information.

Writing Assignments and Grading:

Writing, like reading, requires pacing, preparation and review. Avoid writing your Essays the night before the deadline. You owe it to yourself to produce thoughtful, well-edited writing.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance & Meaningful Class Contribution: 20%.

By **Meaningful Class Contribution**, I understand professionalism in classroom behavior, which includes:

- student's discussion of **the specifics of a given short story/article** and **Discussion questions**.
- following my instructions and being open to constructive criticism;
- preparation of essays/written responses, meaningful participation in discussions, satisfactory completion of assignments;
- overall positive attitude towards a positive class environment.

2. Reading is to be completed by day indicated on schedule.

3. Essays: Essay # 1 – 25%, Essay # 2 – 25%. All papers carry letter grades.

4. Alternate Cover/ Favorite Passages Projects (2): each accounts for **10 % of your final grade (20% total)**.

For this project :

- You will choose the author you liked the most (from the ones we studied in class).
- You will create an alternate book cover for this author's work. The cover has to reflect the spirit of the author's writing (stock image from google images is fine).
- You will choose 1 substantial quote (**from the same author**, but not from this author's interviews) that connected with you on an intellectual/emotional level.
- You will describe your new book cover & give the reasons the quote resonated with you in a short response (word count will be assigned).
- You will include the visual image of the newly created cover in your response.

5. Policy for the submission of written work:

- **All assignments and essays are due on myCourses on the specified due date/time.**
- **Due dates are firm** (see Late policy below).

- **Do not e-mail me your assignments at ANY point for ANY reason, but see Late Assignment Policy.**
- **Late ESSAY submission Policy: if you missed an ESSAY DEADLINE (applies to essays only) for ANY reason, you have 1 month to submit late work into a Late Folder Only (no penalty and no deadline extensions for any reason after this date). This means:**
 - 1) **This assignment will not be graded until April, after all other the assignments.**
 - 2) **You will not have** feedback from me.
 - 3) **You will not know** a certain percentage of your grade associated with the assignment **until a much later date. Reason:** I have over 100 students in several courses & grade systematically one course at a time. Once one assignment “batch” is graded, I move on to another course with its own Essays & deadlines.
- **Students with official documented disability accommodations sent to me by the RIT DSO office: same Late Assignment policy applies. See above.**
- **Do not submit assignments at the last second as it takes the myCourses system a few seconds to upload your work.** If the assignment is due at 11: 59 pm, and you click “submit” at 11.58 pm, you will miss the deadline and the system will lock you out.

6. Required Format for All Assignments

- **All assignments must be submitted as WORD or PDF files. Word is preferred. Reason: WORD files** make it possible for me to grade/provide written feedback – **correct your mistakes, underline, circle, etc.**
- All assignments must be word-processed. Screen shots will get an automatic “F.”
- All assignments must use 12-pt Times New Roman font.
- All assignments must be double-spaced.
- All assignments should have 1” margins.
- **No screen shots of handwritten work.** Screen shots will get an automatic “F.”
- **Do not e-mail me your work for ANY reason. It will not be opened or graded.**
- **Do not use Google Docs.** Google Docs do not open within the myCourses system.
- **Do not try to stretch your essay by inserting additional spaces b/w paragraphs.**
- **Do not include a title page**
- All essay and formal writing assignments must use MLA style, from the headers to the pagination to the citations. Wallace Center website for citation info: <https://library.rit.edu/citations/mla-format> or MLA: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01>
- **Plagiarism:** any student engaged in plagiarizing will fail the course and will be reported to the Dean of the College. **I will assume that you are aware of the definitions of plagiarism and will educate yourself about this notion if you are not.** See RIT Honor Code and RIT Academic Honesty Policy: <https://www.rit.edu/twc/academicintegrity>.

7. The Writing Commons will correct your papers before submission! A digital appointment is free & effective! The Writing Commons provides free writing instruction at any stage of the writing process. Whether you need help getting started, developing ideas, properly formatting your citations, or if you are struggling with grammar and mechanical issues, the Writing Commons helps students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies. **To**

schedule an appointment to improve your writing, please see **Writing Center Site:**
<https://wallacecenter.rit.edu/services/writing-commons>

8. Essay writing: Choose a topic that encourages you to ask significant questions about the work; the purpose of an analysis paper is to understand the works more clearly after having examined them carefully. Regardless of the specific topic, be sure to have a thesis that allows you to organize your paper around *a central idea that argues a point about the work*. Remember that you are always examining a problem, and ***your answer must therefore develop an argument***.

The first paragraph should define the problem you are going to examine. Subsequent paragraphs need to look closely at the evidence of the text, establishing an ***answer from specific incidents and details in the novel/story***. An essay needs to develop an argument, and each paragraph should be thought of as a step in an argument, advancing the case beyond the point reached at the end of the previous paragraph. Each step in the argument must ***develop from the actual evidence of the text***.

When you look at a scene, you are looking for its significance in the larger context of the work. If you focus on the details of the text and then move from the details to larger conclusions, you are on the right track. You will be revealing your grasp of the novel/story as a whole, you will be demonstrating your ability to look closely at, respond to, and interpret the details of the text, and you will be showing your powers of developing a larger argument.

9. Evaluation summary:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| • Essay # 1 | 25% (4 double-spaced pages) |
| • Essay # 2 | 25% (4-5 double-spaced pages) |
| • Alternate Cover/Best Line Project # 1 | 10% |
| • Alternate Cover/Best line Project # 2 | 10% |
| • MyCourses Assignment | 10% |
| • Attendance/Meaningful class contribution | 20% |

****Meaningful class contribution is:** student's discussion of **the specifics of a given short story/article** and **Questions to Answer/Discussion questions**.

10. Disability notice: if you have a documented disability, please have DSO send me relevant information so course appropriate and RIT approved accommodations can be set in place.

Course Schedule
(subject to adjustment)

Tuesday, January 17

Group # 1 (last name ending in letters A to L)

2 things:

- Class Intro/syllabus discussion. **Order/buy/borrow required texts. These editions/translations) are carefully selected based on the quality and affordability for the students. Please stick with these versions/editions of the texts.**
- “Ivory Tower-Is College Worth the Cost?” screening & discussion

Thursday, January 19

Group # 2 (last name ending in letters M-Z):

2 things:

-Class Intro/syllabus discussion. **Order/buy/borrow required texts. These editions/translations) are carefully selected based on the quality and affordability for the students. Please stick with these versions/editions of the texts.**

-“Ivory Tower-Is College Worth the Cost?” screening & discussion

Group # 1 HW: finish the film on myCourses (under Content – click and go). Be ready to answer the Questions.

Handout (also under Content on myCourses)

Complete your answers and bring to class. Do not upload on myCourses

Name (print):

Film *Ivory Tower. Is College Worth the Cost?*

Be specific and base your answers on the details of the film only

Complete your answers and bring to class. Do not upload on myCourses

1. The film argues that Harvard University passed down a certain “DNA” to other universities, which created a race BETWEEN higher educational institutions and a tension WITHIN higher educational institutions.
What is the nature of this race BETWEEN universities? Answer here:
What is the nature of this tension WITHIN universities? Answer here:
2. The film argues that “college tuition has increased more than any other good or service since ... [insert year].”
3. The film argues that the largest percentage of growth/hires on college campuses since 2005 is [insert info].
4. What is the reason behind Arizona State allowing unprecedented “party pathways” for the students?
5. Why is this an ethical issue? Be specific.
6. How did Cooper Union College sustain free tuition model for over 150 years? Specifically- what allowed such financial freedom? Be specific.
7. What did the Cooper Union College student protest argue? State in 1 sentence here:
8. Why did the MOOC experiment fail? Be specific.
9. Is Higher Education is a democratic right or a privilege? Elaborate:
10. Should Higher Education be a benefit for absolutely everyone? Elaborate:
11. Is self-education a viable alternative to the traditional & costly residential college experience? Elaborate.

First Author: Jhumpa Lahiri



Tuesday, January 24

Group # 1 (Tuesday Group):

HW:

3 things:

1) Read **Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "A Temporary Matter."** I came across a free PDF online: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/http://djrabb72.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/6/9/22696388/a_temporary_matter.pdf

2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion.

3) Bring your filled out answers to the film *Ivory Tower*. Is College Worth the Cost?" to class.

Group # 2 (Thursday Group): no class for you today, but do the same above reading/prep for Thursday

Jhumpa Lahiri

Questions to Answer

"A Temporary Matter"

1. What is the story essentially about, if you had to condense it into one sentence?
2. What impact do the power outages have on the couple's relationship? The lack of electricity allows the couple to achieve something. What is it?
3. The importance of communication within a marriage is a prevalent theme here. What causes a communication breakdown in the relationship between Shukumar and Shoba?
4. The story is told from the third-person perspective of Shukumar. We understand the events in the story through his experiences. The story unfolds largely in memory as each item Shukumar touches triggers a memory to a happier time in the couple's life together. What are those items? What are the times each triggers?
5. Environment plays a key role in the story. What is the role of darkness? What is the significance of the melting snow?
6. Food and cooking, an important part of Indian culture, plays a significant role in this story. In happier times, Shoba would prepare lavish meals. Shoba's trips to the market are exhilarating for Shukumar in the beginning of their marriage. How does this change and why?
7. "Food in these stories is a talisman, a reassuring bit of the homeland to cling to." How do food and meal preparation maintain links to the characters' homelands? What other talismans—items of clothing, for example—act as "reassuring bits of the homeland"?

8. What does the future hold for the couple? How do you know?

Thursday, January 26 Group # 2:

HW:

3 things:

1) Read **Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "A Temporary Matter."**

I came across a free PDF online:

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://djrabb72.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/6/9/22696388/a_temporary_matter.pdf

2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion. Be prepared to substantiate your argument with a quote from the text

3) Bring your filled out answers to the film Ivory Tower. Is College Worth the Cost?" to class.

Jhumpa Lahiri

Questions to Answer

"A Temporary Matter"

1. What is the story essentially about, if you had to condense it into one sentence?
2. What impact do the power outages have on the couple's relationship? The lack of electricity allows the couple to achieve something. What is it?
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5. Environment plays a key role in the story. What is the role of darkness? What is the significance of the melting snow?
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7. "Food in these stories is a talisman, a reassuring bit of the homeland to cling to." How do food and meal preparation maintain links to the characters' homelands? What other talismans—items of clothing, for example—act as "reassuring bits of the homeland"?
8. What does the future hold for the couple? How do you know?

Group # 1: no class for you today, but read in advance
HW: 1) Read chapter 1 of the novel Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*. 2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion. Please be prepared to substantiate your argument with a quote from the text, so that we know the narrative supports you 😊

Tuesday, January 31

HW:
1) Read chapters 1-2 of *The Namesake*.
2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion. Please be prepared to substantiate your argument with a quote from the text, so that we know the narrative supports you 😊

Thursday, February 2

HW:
1) Read chapters 3-4 of *The Namesake*.
2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion. Please be prepared to substantiate your argument with a quote from the text, so that we know the narrative supports you 😊

Tuesday, February 7

HW:
1) Read chapters 5-6-7 of *The Namesake*.
2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion. Please be prepared to substantiate your argument with a quote from the text, so that we know the narrative supports you 😊

Thursday, February 9

HW:
1) Read chapters 8-9 of *The Namesake*.
2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion. Please be prepared to substantiate your argument with a quote from the text, so that we know the narrative supports you 😊

Tuesday, February 14

HW:
1) Finish novel the novel *The Namesake*.

2) Be ready for a detailed analysis and class discussion. Please be prepared to substantiate your argument with a quote from the text, so that we know the narrative supports you ☺

Thursday, February 16

TBA- built in space for flexibility in case such is needed

Tuesday, February 21

Draft of Essay # 1 due for in-class peer-review.

Thursday, February 23

Continue polishing your essay based on the peer-review feedback.

*******Reminder: The Writing Commons will correct your papers! Make a digital appointment! It's free & effective ☺. To schedule:**

<https://wallacecenter.rit.edu/services/writing-commons>

Tuesday, February 28

Essay # 1 due by 11:59 pm on myCourses.

Thursday, March 2

Alternate Book Cover/ Best Line Project due.

Tuesday, March 7

TBA- built in space for flexibility in case such is needed

Spring Break!