

THE NOVEL

**Dr. Nadeen
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Washington Hall 110

Office Hours:

Wed 2:30-4:30

Fri 11:15-12:15

and by appointment

Assignments

15% — Paper 1 on Baldwin and Cisneros – 1500 words – due 10/11 (Abstract due 9/30)

20% — Paper 2 on Butler, Gen, and Lee – 2000 words – due 11/15 (Abstract due 10/30)

15% — Quizzes (5 throughout the semester)

25% — Final exam

20% — Attendance and participation

5% — Self-evaluations (due with final exam)

Course description

We will read 20th and 21st century multiethnic North American fiction by writers who explore what it means to be a person in our dynamic and tumultuous modern world. Centering immigration, citizenship, indigeneity, race, gender, and sexuality in their stories, our protagonists chart their tremendous narratives, document their epic journeys, and make sense of their humanity in worlds that were not made for them. What does heroism, leadership, authenticity, and individuality mean for those who have historically been marginalized and underrepresented? Our exploration of the novel form in conjunction with these histories will lead us towards a greater understanding of narrative, individuality, and humanity in the modern era.

Required texts

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956)

Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)

Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (1979)

Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (1995)

Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996)

Teju Cole, *Open City* (2011)

Tommy Orange, *There There* (2018)

Laila Lalami, *The Other Americans* (2019)

Esi Edugyan, *Washington Black* (2018)

Other materials (links to external resources, etc.) will be available on **Canvas** (<http://canvas.wlu.edu>)

Writing Center

The **Writing Center on campus (Leyburn M11)** is not a tool for remedial purposes, but a crucial resource for writers of every skill and background. Good writing relies on feedback from other perspectives; I encourage you to visit the Center frequently in order to solicit feedback and improve your writing.

<https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/writing-center>

Syllabus change policy

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Formatting

All essays should be turned in with Times New Roman 12pt font, 2.0 spacing, and 1-inch margins all around.

Please include your name, essay title, the pledge, and your word count. Please adhere to [MLA style](#).

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Students majoring in English will learn how to

1. write clear, persuasive analytical essays driven by arguments about texts;
2. read closely, recognizing subtle and complex differences in language use;
3. seek out further knowledge about literary works, authors, and/or contexts, and document research appropriately, adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty;
4. derive pleasure and edification from a broad range of texts;
5. in optional creative writing courses, create literary texts and revise them to convey greater power and control.

Class policies

Absences and late submissions

Attendance in this class is crucial for your success. You may have two unexcused absences during the semester, no questions asked. Further absences require permission or documentation or they will impact your grade. Perpetual tardiness and/or leaving class early will also affect your grade. Please e-mail me when you expect to miss class and/or if issues come up.

Late submissions will lose a third of a grade per late day (e.g. A to A-). Papers more than 3 days late will not be accepted.

Accommodations

Students requesting accommodation will need to provide appropriate documentation of: (1) a disability, which is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; and (2) a need for accommodation, by virtue of the specific functional limitations of the disability, to have equal access to educational opportunities. It is the responsibility of a student with a physical or mental disability who may require any type of accommodation to make the accommodation request in a timely manner. In order to ensure sufficient time for the eligibility and accommodation decision process and to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations, a student should contact the Title IX Coordinator and Director of Disability Resources, Elrod Commons 212, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia 24450, (540) 458-4055 and submit the documents required for consideration of disability accommodations during the first month of the fall or winter academic terms. Requests submitted after the first month of either of those academic terms, or requests submitted with incomplete documentation (including insufficient testing data), could result in a delay of consideration and action on the request until the the following academic term. The student will need to complete a “Request for Accommodation of Disability” form, obtain a copy of the most recent medical or cognitive testing documentation, and schedule an interview with the designated administrator.

General guidelines

Please devote the 60 minutes of class to listening attentively to everyone in this space. We are covering difficult and sensitive topics so your full attention is required. Do be mindful of your participation — make sure you respond to the questions posed during our discussions directly and efficiently, and do not forget that your classmates need to be able to participate as well.

Bring the books with you to each class. Laptops are not permitted unless accommodations require that you have one. Phones must be kept out of sight. Any distracting behavior — attempting to text discreetly, browsing through social media, etc. — will be cited, and you will be marked as absent for the class. Fiddling with technology during class is rude and distracting, both to me and your peers, and a colossal waste of your time and tuition money. If you are dealing with an emergency that requires you to be on your phone, please do not come to class.

I encourage you to attend office hours whenever you need to talk through ideas and issues, even early on in the semester. Please check your W&L e-mail at least once a day to keep up to date with any possible changes to our schedule. Expect responses to your e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours over the weekend.

Honor System & plagiarism

Students will be held to the standards of the W&L **Honor System**. The inclusion of your name on all assignments indicates that you have understood and abided by the pledge, whether you write the pledge or not.

Plagiarism is a **serious offense**. It is imperative that you review the university's statement on plagiarism before turning in any assignments: <https://libguides.wlu.edu/plagiarism>

Plagiarism consists of but is not limited to the following: presenting another person's ideas or language as if they were your own, copying (words AND ideas) from the Internet, and failure to acknowledge and properly cite the sources of the language and/or ideas presented. Re-using language from a paper you have previously written for another class is unacceptable. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please check in with me ahead of time. It is your responsibility to be aware. You may find this plagiarism test useful: <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/test.html>

Course Schedule

Friday, September 6

Introductions

Intro to the novel

Monday, September 9

What is a novel?

William Deresiewicz, "How the Novel Made the Modern World," in *The Atlantic*

Wednesday, September 11

Why do we read novels?

Joanna Scott, "The Virtues of Difficult Fiction," in *The Nation*

Watch for Friday: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The danger of a single story," TED Talk

Friday, September 13

Whose novels do we read? On representation

"You don't have a home until you leave it and then, when you have left it, you never can go back."

Monday, September 16

James Baldwin, Giovanni's Room, p1-43

Wednesday, September 18

James Baldwin, Giovanni's Room, p44-102

Friday, September 20

James Baldwin, Giovanni's Room p103-169

"They will not know I have gone away to come back"

Monday, September 23

Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street, Introduction to p25

Wednesday, September 25

Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street, p26-66

Friday, September 27

Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street, p67-110

"As a kind of castaway myself, I was happy to escape into the fictional world of someone else's trouble."

Monday, September 30

Octavia Butler, Kindred, p9-107

Wednesday, October 2

Octavia Butler, Kindred, p108-188

Friday, October 4

Octavia Butler, Kindred, p189-264

QUIZ #1

Paper #1 abstract due

"American means being whatever you want, and I happened to pick being Jewish"

Monday, October 7

Gish Jen, Mona in The Promised Land, p1-103

Wednesday, October 9

Gish Jen, Mona in The Promised Land, p103-215

Friday, October 11 — NO CLASS (Reading day)

Paper #1 due

"In every betrayal dwells a self-betrayal"

Monday, October 14

Gish Jen, Mona in The Promised Land, p219-304

Wednesday, October 16

Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker, p1-99

Friday, October 18

QUIZ #2

Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker, p100-230

"Perhaps this is what we mean by sanity: that, whatever our self-admitted eccentricities might be, we are not villains of our own stories."

Monday, October 21

Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker, p231-349

Wednesday, October 23

Teju Cole, Open City, p1-75

Friday, October 25 — NO CLASS

Go to any of the events listed on Canvas & write a brief summary

"I wanted to find the line that connected me to my own part in these stories"

Monday, October 28

Teju Cole, Open City, p76-159

Wednesday, October 30

Teju Cole, Open City, p160-259

Friday, November 1

Paper #2 abstract due

No reading - mid-semester discussion

"She spent years trying to mold me into someone she could be proud of, but I had been so busy breaking out of that mold that I hadn't noticed all the ways in which I was already like her"

Monday, November 4

Laila Lalami, The Other Americans, p1-105

Wednesday, November 6

QUIZ #3

Laila Lalami, The Other Americans, p106-201

Friday, November 8

Laila Lalami, The Other Americans, p202-301

"Being Indian has never been about returning to the land. The land is everywhere or nowhere."

Monday, November 11

Class visit from Lorri Olan, Associate Director of Career and Professional Development

Wednesday, November 13

Tommy Orange, There There, p1-97

Friday, November 15

Paper #2 due

Tommy Orange, There There, p98-187

"I was nothing to you. You never saw me as equal. You were more concerned that slavery should be a moral stain upon white men than by the actual damage it wreaks on black men."

Monday, November 18

QUIZ #4

Tommy Orange, *There There*, p188-292

Wednesday, November 20

Esi Edugyan, *Washington Black*, p1-119

Friday, November 22

Esi Edugyan, *Washington Black*, p120-258

Thanksgiving holiday

Monday, November 25 — NO CLASS

Wednesday, November 27 — NO CLASS

Friday, November 29 — NO CLASS

Course conclusion

Monday, December 2

QUIZ #5

Esi Edugyan, *Washington Black*, p259-384

Wednesday, December 4

Class visit to Watson Pavilion, “Breaking the Chains: Ceramics and the Abolition Movement” exhibit

Friday, December 6

Conclusion, final take home exam prompts released

FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM & SELF-EVALUATION DUE BY WED DEC 11
