

**English 132.003: Short Story and Novel—Spring 2008**  
**“Contemporary American Dreams, Visions, and Voices”**  
**MWF 11:30-12:20 207 ARM**

Dr. Lisa Wellinghoff  
Office: Colson Hall 327, 293-2047  
Office Hours: MW 10-11:15, T 9-9:45 and by appointment  
Email (the best way to contact me): [lisa.wellinghoff@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:lisa.wellinghoff@mail.wvu.edu)

**Required Texts:**

Jack Kerouac. *On the Road*.  
Edward Abbey. *Fire on the Mountain*.  
Paul Auster. *The New York Trilogy*.  
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. *Arranged Marriages*.  
Bob Dylan. *Chronicles*.  
Margaret Atwood. *Oryx and Crake*.  
Tobias Wolff, ed. *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*.  
Critical articles as posted on Webct/Ecampus or as handouts.

**Course Description/GEC Goals:**

Stories and novels often reflect the anxieties and hopes of the decade. We will study contemporary American stories and novels to determine the origins and mindsets of our culture. We will consider how the conventions of short stories and novels reflect us—our past, present, and future. We will consider what makes a novel and what makes a story, including the reasons writers write (or say they write), what themes and metaphors they use to reflect us, the roles that landscape and environment and technology play in their texts, what they say about the American Dream, about freedoms given and freedoms taken, about what it means to be a voice of America, an artist, a singer of a nation, and what the future may hold for America.

We are exploring the American Dream in this class and how authors are challenging, supporting, criticizing, missing, desiring, and romanticizing it. Within that dream, lie the hallmarks of American identity: individualism, mobility, innovation, diversity, optimism, criticism of ourselves and our country, multiculturalism, rising out of one class into another. All of these themes and issues arise in our texts and will be discussed both as a snapshot of the time the text was written and as a part of how we view ourselves today. Discussion, essays, and tests will require students to analyze these themes and ideas and express their own visions of American Culture. Contemporary articulation of America from the 1950s to today will be explored in order to understand our present visions of America.

**Policies and Procedures:**

This class will discuss a variety of opinions and ideas that you may or may not agree with or find interesting. Regardless, I expect all students to respect their peers, as well as me, and keep in mind that without diversity, without contraries, we would have no progression. As future scholars, we strive for the enlightenment, not narrow mindedness. Respect each other and come to class curious, not hostile or indifferent. Turn all cell phones to silent mode. Come to class prepared. Check your tentative calendar often. Check WebCt often, at least once a day. Changes will be posted under announcements.

**Late Work:**

Late work will result in an F for that grade. Beware: any work left in my mailbox or the English drop box may not be picked up on time and will be considered late. Work is due at the beginning of each class period on the day it is due. Do not email papers or work to me unless I ask you to do so.

**Attendance:**

If you miss 3 or more days of class, your final grade will go down one letter. Missing 5 or more constitutes grounds for failure. If you need to miss class, talk to me about it early. If you must be absent, it is your responsibility to check with a classmate to discover what you missed or inform me at least 2 class periods ahead of the date of your intended absence. Attendance is not just showing up for class. It includes *participation* in class discussions and on WebCt. In addition to regular class attendance, you will be responsible for all assigned reading material. Much of class time will consist of discussions of material read; student input is necessary. Attendance is a part of your participation grade. Chronic lateness or tardiness will affect your grade. Each day late is a .5 days absent. If there is a reason you will be late to class, let me know the first day of class. Come to class prepared, read assigned materials for class, come ready to discuss the readings, take responsibility for your work and your level of motivation in this class.

**Grading and Course Assignments:**

We will write three essay tests and write essay questions/reading responses on WebCt/Ecampus in this class. Our class discussions, journals, posts, blogs, essays and tests will allow us to display our knowledge of Contemporary American themes and identity. We will write journals and blogs based on our goals in this class that will teach us to read and write critically about American literature. The reading responses/questions on WebCt are designed to help you engage with the texts and learn how to write about and analyze literature. They will also help you review for your tests and be discussed in class. Almost every week you will respond to the reading assignments, blog, and journal on WebCt for an accumulative grade. You should journal at least 3 times and blog at least 6 times.

|        |     |                   |     |
|--------|-----|-------------------|-----|
| Test 1 | 10% | Reading Responses | 30% |
| Test 2 | 20% | Blogs, Journals   | 10% |
| Test 3 | 20% | Participation     | 10% |

**Reading Responses:**

Almost each week, I will give you topics to write about that are due by Friday's class on Ecampus. They will be posted on WebCt/Ecampus in the assignments section. These topics will ask you to think critically about what you have read and support your ideas with evidence from the text. These are sample essay questions. These will be informal writing assignments, essay length (2-4 pages). They are designed to prepare you for the tests and papers, as well as highlight the major themes or questions of the text that reflect or expand Contemporary American notions of itself. My comments on your work are more important than your actual grades in the sense that they will reveal the strengths and weakness of your analysis. From them, you will learn how to improve your arguments in the future. They will each be graded based on how well you answer the questions and how well you use the text to support your answers. You will write 8 of them and the lowest grade will be dropped. An average of those grades will become the reading response grade (30%) of your final grade.

**Blogs/Posts and Journals:**

On Ecampus you will journal and blog. Journals are read only by me. They can be a response or question to a reading or assignment. You must do this 3 times. If you do, you get an A, if you do not you get an F. Blogs will be read by the whole class. They should be reactions, interesting ideas etc. about the texts or the discussions in class. You may also respond to another person's blog post. You must do 6 of them to get an A. If you do not, then you get an F. I will add up the number of blogs and journals that you do and that number will determine your final grade for this activity which is 10% of your final grade. You will have until 4/25 to do this. (9 posts and journals equal an A+, 8=A, 7=A-, 6=B, 5=C, 4=C-, 3=D+, 2=D, 1=D, 0=F)

**Essays and Critical Articles/GEC Goals:**

We must read and outline two critical articles written about two of the novels we are discussing. Authors of both articles are scholars writing about the themes we discuss in regards to each book. This will provide us with a model of critical analysis. We will see the ways in which we can read and write about the novels themselves and learn about the structure, culture, and history of those novels. We will learn about the time period in which

the novel or story is written and apply that to the novel's importance as a human artifact, a piece of art, and a piece of history. This is our goal in all the informal and formal writing for this class. We will also learn how to discuss novels and the form itself, a major goal of the class. We will consider how others value the novels and how those novels reflect certain aspects of humanity and culture like mobility, the desire to rebel, etc. We will then learn that short stories also express aspects of humanity similar to the novels we have discussed. We will see the differences between the two forms, but we will also see the overarching aim of literature is to reflect us, our external and internal environments, and how each genre allows us (and our author's) to do so. An assignment sheet will be given for each article detailing how to outline it. Grades will be determined by how well you answer the questions and use the articles as support. That article will be given a grade which will be averaged with your Blog and Journal grade to reflect the Blog and Journal grade, which is 10% of your final grade.

### **Participation:**

Participation is worth 10% of your grade. If you come to class and miss less than 3 excused absences, if you read the required material, if you take or make up all of your tests, if you contribute to our online community, you will receive an A for participation. See the grade descriptions for A, B, C, D, and F participation criteria. If you miss 4 classes, you slip to B level participation. If you miss 5, you slip to C. If you miss 6, you slip to D. Any more is an F.

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism means representing someone else's work as you own. It includes recycled papers, stolen papers, internet papers, bought papers, roommate/friend written papers, etc. It will result in a failing grade for the course. I report all incidents of plagiarism.

### **Special Needs:**

If you have special educational or physical needs which require accommodation please see me if I can help you in any way.

### **Tentative Calendar**

#### Week 1

- 1/14 Introduction to the course/Syllabus
- 1/16 Discuss From *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories* "Intro" and "Rock Springs"
- 1/18 Con't Discussion of "Rock Springs"; Introduce *On the Road*

---

#### Week 2

- 1/21 No Class—MLK Day
- 1/23 Discuss *On The Road* (part one, pages 1-108); Discuss pages 249-253 of critical article.
- 1/25 Discuss *On The Road* (part two, pages 109-179) Discuss pages 253-258 of critical article; Question 1 on "Rock Springs" due on WebCt by noon

---

#### Week 3

- 1/28 Discuss *On The Road* (part three, pages 179-end) & pages 258-260 of critical article
- 1/30 Homework on article due; Intro to Ed Abbey
- 2/1 Discuss "Wickedness" from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*; Question 2 Due on WebCt by noon

---

#### Week 4

- 2/4 Discuss *Fire on the Mountain*: Chapters 1-4
- 2/6 Discuss *Fire on the Mountain*: Chapters 5-8
- 2/8 Discuss *Fire on the Mountain*: Chapter 9-10; Question 3 Due

---

#### Week 5

- 2/11 Review for Test 1  
2/13 Test 1  
2/15 Multiculturalism; Discuss from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*: “The First Day” and “Girl”
- 

Week 6

- 2/18 Discuss Arranged Marriages: Pages 1-71  
2/20 Discuss Arranged Marriages: Pages 72-168  
2/22 Discuss Arranged Marriages: pages 169-230; Question 4 Due
- 

Week 7

- 2/25 Discuss Arranged Marriages: 231-300  
2/27 Discuss “Moonwalk” from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*  
2/29 Discuss “Rules of the Game” *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*; Question 5 Due
- 

Week 8

- 3/3 Postmodernism and Identity; Discuss *New York Trilogy: Introduction & City of Glass*  
3/5 Discuss *New York Trilogy: Ghosts*  
3/7 Discuss *New York Trilogy: The Locked Room*; Question 6 Due
- 

Week 9

- 3/10 Discuss NYT critical article  
3/12 Discuss War and Identity; Discuss “Talk of Heroes” from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*  
3/14 Discuss “The Things They Carried” from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*
- 

Week 10

- 3/17 Review for Test 2  
3/19 Test 2  
3/21 No Class
- 

Week 11 Spring Break

---

Week 12

- 3/31 Perspectives: Past, Present, Future; Discuss “Chronicles” Chapters 1-2  
4/2 Chronicles Chapters 3-4  
4/4 Chronicles Chapter 5
- 

Week 13

- 4/7 Discuss “The Fat Girl” from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*  
4/9 Discuss “Men Under Water” from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*  
4/11 Discuss “Where are you Going, Where Have You Been” from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*; Question 7 Due
- 

Week 14

- 4/14 Discuss *Oryx and Crake*: Chapters 1-5  
4/16 Discuss *Oryx and Crake*: Chapters 6-10  
4/18 Discuss *Oryx and Crake*: Chapters 11-15 ;Question 8 Due
- 

Week 15

- 4/21 Discuss “Aunt Granny Lith” from *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*  
4/23 Catch Up Day  
4/25 Last Lecture
-

Week 16

4/28 Review for Test 3

4/30 Review for Test 3

5/2 NO CLASS

Monday 5/5 **Test 3:** 0800 to 1000 All classes meeting at 1100 or 1130.....MWF

---