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SS 010
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Winter 2009
MWF 12:00-12:50
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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE SYLLABUS
511.01: CONSTRUCTING CLASS IN AMERICA

Course Description

One of the reigning contemporary myths of the United States is that it is a classless society. A variation of the same idea is that the nation is a uniformly middle class society. This has not, however, always been a reigning myth of the nation, nor has it gone unchallenged in periods when it has been a dominant idea. There has been an active discourse on the nature of class in America, and literature has contributed significantly to developing this discourse. This course examines literary constructions of class in the United States. We will study the development and historical changes in ideas about class, the nature of class struggle in a nation that often denies it experiences such struggle, and contemporary theories about the history and nature of class formation.

Required Texts

J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i>	James Agee and Walker Evans, <i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i>
Rebecca Harding Davis, <i>Life in the Iron Mills</i>	Philip Levine, <i>What Work Is</i>
Booker T. Washington, <i>Up from Slavery</i>	Bharati Mukherjee, <i>Jasmine</i>
Sinclair Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i>	Richard Powers, <i>Gain: A Novel</i>
	Course Pack

Course Requirements

Percentage of Final Grade

Short Essay (approx. 5 pages).....	30%
Long Essay (approx. 8 pages)	40%
Reading Responses	20%
Class Presentation/Discussion Facilitation	10%

Grading System

You must complete all written work to qualify for a passing grade.

Grade conversions on the University of Calgary's 4-point system are as follows:

A+/A = 4.0	B = 3.0	C = 2.0	D = 1.0
A- = 3.7	B- = 2.7	C- = 1.7	F = 0
B+ = 3.3	C+ = 2.3	D+ = 1.3	

About Reading Responses

You will contribute to an ongoing, on-line discussion of our readings for four of the assigned readings. Reading responses must be posted to the discussion board on Blackboard by noon the day before class discussion. You may choose which of the eligible readings you wish to respond to. Contributions may take several forms: 2-3 thought-provoking questions to spark discussion; a response to a posted question; a response to or elaboration on a previous response; an analysis of an assigned text; a summary and/or critique of a published analysis of an assigned text; a personal response; or some combination of the

above. With the exception of the first kind (the questions), reading responses should be about 300 words in length. More information about reading responses is available on Blackboard.

About Class Presentations and Discussion Facilitations

Working in groups of three or four, you will be responsible for presenting material on or leading one class discussion over assigned readings. Presentations or discussions may take many forms. You may present historical and contextual material on our readings, summarize published scholarship, offer your own analysis of a text(s), ask questions and lead discussion, design a group activity, or combine several of these things. Student-led presentations/discussions will last approximately 30 minutes. Additional guidelines are available on Blackboard. I will pass around a sign-up sheet on the first day of class so that you may choose the readings you wish to help facilitate. If you are absent on the day of your class presentation for unexcused reasons then you will not receive credit for it and will not be permitted to make it up. However, if you can provide proof that your absence was for legitimate reasons (illness, family emergency, death in the family, etc.), then you may re-schedule for another date.

About Class Participation

Because this is a class that will demand considerable participation, your effort and involvement are essential to a successful learning experience (not only for you, but for your classmates). You should come to class with all necessary materials and prepared to take part in workshops, to participate actively in small- and large-group discussions, to offer considered responses to assigned readings, and to respond respectfully and thoughtfully to other students' ideas. A good way to gauge your level of participation is to ask yourself, "How would this class function if everyone participated exactly as much as I do?"

Late Papers

You have the option of turning in one written assignment up to a week late without penalty. This policy applies to the reading responses and the first essay. Class presentations may not be completed late, and the final essay may be turned in late only with permission. If you turn in an assignment more than a week late, or if you turn in a second assignment late, your grade on the work will be lowered by a third of a grade for each late day (i.e., an A paper that is one day late will receive an A-, two days late a B+, and so on; weekend days and holidays are counted in this total). You do not need to inform me that you are exercising your late paper option; I will keep track of this information.

Turning in Assignments

Please make all efforts to turn in assignments directly to me. If this is not possible, take your assignment to Social Sciences 1152 and put it in the drop box, where your work will be date-stamped and placed in my mailbox. Please keep a copy of your assignment in case of loss. Papers cannot be returned by staff in the department office. Papers may not be delivered by email.

Students with Disabilities

Please contact me during my office hours and coordinate with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) if you have a disability that requires some modification of seating, evaluation, or other class requirements. I will be happy to make appropriate accommodations for you.

Student's Guide to the Presentation of Essays

The English Department offers useful information about expectations for student essays at the following website:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/guide.htm>

Academic Regulations and Schedules

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is below.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2008/when/index.htm>

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please read the attached statement on plagiarism and consult the websites below for additional information. If you are concerned about the possibility of plagiarism in any work you do in this class, talk to me before handing it in and/or consult *The MLA Handbook*. Plagiarism is both easy to commit and easy to avoid.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/honesty/plagiarism>

http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2008/how/How_MB.htm

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/study/plag.html>

Grade Appeals

For information on the grade appeals process please consult the following University Calendar links. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2008/how/How_K.htm

http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2008/how/How_KA.htm

http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2008/how/How_KB.htm

English Department Website

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please consult our website.

<http://www.english.ucalgary.ca>

**511.01: CONSTRUCTING CLASS IN AMERICA
READING SCHEDULE**

Jan. 12	Introduction	
Jan. 14	Theory: Traditional Marxism, Class in America	Marx and Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> , “Bourgeois and Proletarians,” and “Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties” (Link in Blackboard) Jameson, “Five Theses on Actually Existing Marxism” (Blackboard) Mantsios, “Class in America” (Course Pack—CP) Krugman, “For Richer” (Blackboard)
Jan. 16	Theory: New Marxism	Resnick and Wolff, “A Marxian Theory of Classes” (CP) Schocket, “The Veil and the Vision” (CP)
Jan. 19	Theory: Anti-Marxism and Alternatives to Marxism	Weber, “Class, Status, Party” (CP) Pakulski and Waters, Excerpts from <i>The Death of Class</i> (CP) Walkowitz, Prologue to <i>Working with Class</i> (CP) Recommended: Burke, Introduction to <i>The Conundrum of Class</i> (Reserve) Peter, Chapter 7 of <i>The Concept of Class</i> (Reserve)
Jan. 21	Literary Theory and Suspicion of Class Student Presentation	Dimock and Gilmore, Introduction to <i>Rethinking Class</i> (CP) Jones, Introduction to <i>American Hungers</i> (CP) Reading Response Due Noon, Jan. 20 (Optional) Recommended: Felski, “Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame, and the Lower Middle Class,” <i>PMLA</i> Jan. 2000 (Blackboard)
Jan. 23	Colonial Class	Crèvecoeur, <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> , Prefatory Material – Letter II
Jan. 26	Colonial Class Student Presentation	Crèvecoeur, Letter III, “What Is an American?” Reading Response Due Noon, Jan. 25 (Optional)
Jan. 28	Industrial Class in the 19 th Century	Davis, <i>Life in the Iron-Mills</i>
Jan. 30	Industrial Class in the 19 th Century Student Presentation	Davis, <i>Life in the Iron-Mills</i> Reading Response Due Noon, Jan. 29 (Optional)
Feb. 2	Slavery and Class	Washington, <i>Up from Slavery</i> , Preface – Chap. 4
Feb. 4	Slavery and Class	Washington, <i>Up from Slavery</i> , Chaps. 5-10
Feb. 6	Slavery and Class	Washington, <i>Up from Slavery</i> , Chaps. 11-14
Feb. 9	Slavery and Class Student Presentation	Washington, <i>Up from Slavery</i> , Chap. 15 – End Reading Response Due Noon, Feb. 8 (Optional)
Feb. 11	Agrarianism and Class	Garland, “Under the Lion’s Paw” (CP) Markham, “The Man with the Hoe” (Blackboard)
Feb. 13	Constructing the Middle Class	Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i> , Chaps. 1-3
Feb. 16	Reading Week	No Class
Feb. 18	Reading Week	No Class

Feb. 20	Reading Week	No Class
Feb. 23	Workshop	Short Essay Rough Draft Due (Bring Thesis Statement and Outline to Class)
Feb. 25	Constructing the Middle Class	Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i> , Chaps. 4-18
Feb. 27	Constructing the Middle Class	Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i> , Chaps. 19-22 Short Essay Final Draft Due
Mar. 2	Constructing the Middle Class	Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i> , Chaps. 23-27
Mar. 4	Constructing the Middle Class	Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i> , Chaps. 28-30
Mar. 6	Constructing the Middle Class Student Presentation	Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i> , Chap. 31 – End Reading Response Due Noon, Mar. 5 (Optional)
Mar. 9	Class in the Depression	Agee and Evans, <i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> , Photos, “Preface” – “Near a Church”
Mar. 11	Class in the Depression	Agee and Evans, <i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> , “Colon,” “Money,” “Clothing”
Mar. 13	Class in the Depression	Agee and Evans, <i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> , “Education,” “Work”
Mar. 16	Class in the Depression Student Presentation	Agee and Evans, <i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> , “Part Three: Inductions,” “Shady Grove,” “Two Images,” “Title Statement” Reading Response Due Noon, Mar. 15 (Optional)
Mar. 18	Industrial Class in the 20 th Century	Levine, <i>What Work Is</i> , “Fear and Fame,” “Coming Close,” “Every Blessed Day,” “Growth,” “Innocence,” “Among Children,” “What Work Is”
Mar. 20	Class and Immigration	Mukherjee, <i>Jasmine</i> , Chaps. 1-6
Mar. 23	Class and Immigration	Mukherjee, <i>Jasmine</i> , Chaps. 7-13
Mar. 25	Class and Immigration	Mukherjee, <i>Jasmine</i> , Chaps. 14-19
Mar. 27	Class and Immigration	Mukherjee, <i>Jasmine</i> , Chaps. 20-23
Mar. 30	Class and Immigration Student Presentation	Mukherjee, <i>Jasmine</i> , Chap. 24 – End Reading Response Due Noon, Mar. 29 (Optional)
Apr. 1	Contemporary Class	Powers, <i>Gain</i> , pp. 1-56
Apr. 3	Contemporary Class	Powers, <i>Gain</i> , pp. 56-103
Apr. 6	Contemporary Class	Powers, <i>Gain</i> , pp. 103-153
Apr. 8	Contemporary Class	Powers, <i>Gain</i> , pp. 153-206
Apr. 10	No Class	
Apr. 13	Contemporary Class	Powers, <i>Gain</i> , pp. 206-306
Apr. 15	Contemporary Class Student Presentation	Powers, <i>Gain</i> , pp. 306 – End Reading Response Due Noon, Apr. 14 (Optional)
Apr. 17	Wrap-up, Course Evaluations	
Apr. 20-30	Final Exams	Long Essay Due Noon, Apr. 27

