

Spring 2007
English 389
TuTh, 11:00-12:15

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Office Hours: TuTh 3:00-5:00 p.m.
& by appt.

Selected Authors: J.M. Coetzee

The substantive focus of this course is to read--closely, carefully, assiduously--novels and essays/critical exegeses/interviews by one of the most important contemporary “postcolonial” writers, J.M. Coetzee. This focus will include sustained attention to contexts--of historical moment, location (geographical and epistemological), ideological investments--through which his work becomes, and/or is made, meaningful.

Texts (available from Oberlin Bookstore):

J. M. Coetzee, *Dusklands*
-----, *In the Heart of the Country*
-----, *Waiting for the Barbarians*
-----, *Life and Times of Michael K*
-----, *Foe*
-----, *Age of Iron*
-----, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*
-----, *Disgrace*
-----, *Youth: Scenes from Provincial Life II*
-----, *The Slow Man*

In addition to the texts above, I have put several essays and interviews by Coetzee on Electronic Reserve (ERES). Some familiarity with Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* will not go amiss so I encourage you to read it; there is even an edition available which has an introduction by Coetzee.

Tentative Schedule:

Feb 6:	Introduction; details about course readings, papers, etc.
Feb 8, 13, 15:	Interviews numbered 1-6; "Jerusalem Prize Speech" ; essays on Fugard, Breytenbach, Gordimer; "The Novel Today"; "What is a Classic? A Lecture"; and "Realism" (all on ERES)
Feb 20, 22, 27	<i>Boyhood</i> and <i>Youth</i>
Mar 1, 6, 8:	“Introduction” and “Idleness in South Africa” from <i>White Writing</i> (on ERES) and <i>Dusklands</i>
Mar 13, 15:	<i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>
Mar 15, 16:	Conferences for Paper 1
Mar 20:	Paper 1 due; no class

Mar 22:	“Confession and Double Thoughts” (on ERES)
Mar 24- Apr 1:	Spring Break
Apr 3, 5:	<i>In the Heart of the Country</i>
Apr 10, 12:	Selections from Daniel Defoe’s <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> ; and <i>Foe</i>
Apr 17, 19:	<i>Age of Iron</i>
Apr 18, 19:	Conferences for Paper 2
Apr 23:	Paper 2 due
Apr 24, 26:	<i>Life and Times of Michael K</i>
May 1, 3:	<i>Disgrace</i>
May 8, 9:	Conferences for paper 3
May 8, 10:	<i>Slow Man</i>
May 11:	Paper 3 due

Method of Instruction:

The course will be conducted through discussion, sometimes facilitated by me, but most of the time facilitated by small groups of students. On the first day of class, I will divide you into groups made up of approximately 5-6 students; each group will lead the discussion for two (textual) units--setting up the issues to be discussed and/or raising questions that will help organize class discussion--one prior to the Spring Break and one after. Each member of the group will write a short one-page paper elucidating the issue/question s/he initiated in the group. These papers will count for 10% each towards your grade and should be submitted on the first day of each discussion unit. Though a small group will lead the discussion for a given unit, this does not exempt the rest of the class from 1) reading the assigned material, and 2) contributing their own thoughtful comments and/or questions to the discussion.

Attendance:

It should go without saying that you are expected to do all the reading for the course on time. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences for this class. For every day you miss beyond that, your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade (e.g., if you have 4 absences your grade will go from B+ to B; if you have 5 absences, it will go from B+ to a B-, etc.)

Papers:

In addition to two 1-page papers on your presentations, you will write three 7- to 10-page papers. You are free to choose the topic for the paper and the approach or approaches through which you wish to frame it. However, in each paper, you must present a sustained, well-developed argument organized around a central, explicitly stated thesis. You should make your critical assumptions explicit as well, and, as far as possible, reflect on those assumptions in the course of your essay. You are encouraged (though not required) to show me early drafts of your paper for comments. You may also revise papers 1 and 2 after they are graded for a better grade. For obvious reasons, the same is not possible for paper 3.

Due dates for papers:

Paper One: March 20

Paper Two: April 23

Paper Three: May 11

Papers must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. on the dates they are due. You will be penalized a grade per day (e.g., lowered from B+ to B) for unexcused late submissions. You can ask for extensions, but only by contacting me before the date the paper is due.

Grades:

The one-page papers will count for 20% (10% each); the three 7- to 10-page papers will count for 60% (20% each); and class participation will count for the remaining 20%. You cannot pass the course unless you have completed all your written work.

Honor Code:

In this course, as in all others, you are expected to adhere to the spirit and letter of the Honor Code and to sign the Honor Code on all work you turn in. ("I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.")