

ENG 376: British Novel II

Dr. Scott O'Neil

Course Times: Tuesday/Thursday

Course Location: Online

Office Hours: T/R 12:30-1:30 and by appointment

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Description and Objectives

This course will explore the British novel in terms of two key elements—who was writing them and how they were being read. On the first element, we will discuss the nature of authorship. Who has control of a narrative? What creates an author's "identity"? In what way does the nationality of that author come through in the text—or rather, what is it exactly that distinguishes a novel as a *British* novel rather than an American, Brazilian, Japanese, etc.? We will also explore other aspects of authorial identity including issues of race, gender, and queer identity. On the second element, we will spend time looking at how a novel's mode of production serves to construct meaning, looking at serialized novels, adapted novels, collaborative authorship (especially in graphic novels), and the role of performance in audio books. As we explore this myriad of topics, we will ultimately gain a better understanding of the literary role of the British novel and how that role evolved from the height of the British Empire, through the period after WW II, and into contemporary examples.

Required Texts:

- *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens (we will be using a digital edition online. See Blackboard site for link)
- *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
- *Empire of the Sun* by J. G. Ballard
- *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson (we will be using the audiobook version of this text)
- *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith
- *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons

All other texts and some secondary readings will be available through our course Blackboard page or (in the case of several videos) linked to our class page on my professional website.

I have also arranged for the Seymour Library (161 East Ave, Brockport, NY 14420) to acquire extra copies of each of the course texts for the purpose of this course. You must have, or get, a public library card in order to sign out the copies from Seymour.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade in the course will be calculated as follows:

- 20% -- BB discussion lead
- 15% -- BB responses/participation
- 25% -- Short Responses
- 10% -- Paper pitches (2—like the HGTV Reno plans for homeowners)
- 30% -- “Conference” Paper (8-10 pages)
- Optional Final Exam

Reading and Participation

The reading for each day is listed below on the syllabus next to the appropriate dates; please read, annotate, and think about the reading far enough in advance to participate on or before the participation deadlines. I would encourage you to be as specific as possible in your participation (page numbers, external links, etc).

Blackboard Participation

There will be two different kinds of Blackboard discussion. On certain course dates (see course calendar below), some of you will be designated as discussion leaders. On those dates, you will be responsible for *starting* and *facilitating* a discussion topic based on the reading for that day’s class. Such discussions are generally based on open-ended questions—is there a detail from the text that is puzzling you? Are you seeing a theme or a trend in the reading? Do you see a way to link that days reading to the larger themes of the class? Remember, the goal isn’t to introduce and solve a problem all in one post. You are looking to start a discussion, not make a point/argument. On days that you are *not* responsible for being a discussion leader, you will be required to *join* the conversations begun by others. You must add at least one post to each thread, though you may make more than one if a discussion particularly interests you. The number of posts is a bare minimum requirement—the *quality* of the posts will be the key determining factor for that part of your grade—again, be as specific as possible in your posting (page numbers, links, etc). Course dates marked with your group (see below to determine your group) are days that you will be a discussion starter.

Blackboard Group organization:

Last name begins with A-E: **Blue Barracudas**

Last name begins with F-L: **Silver Snakes**

Last name begins with M-Q: **Purple Parrots**

Last name begins with R-Z: **Orange Iguanas¹**

¹ I will likely have a very high opinion of your cultural upbringing if you recognized these references without Googling.

Short Responses

Short responses should be about one full typed page in length. Responses might expand on a class discussion; they might branch off and consider questions we did not have time to consider in class; they might consider a key image or passage that shapes your view of the work as a whole. Each response should focus on specific passages (or in some cases, one work) read for the course.

Because these responses are fairly short, you are not expected to fully develop and defend a complex thesis. This is your chance to further explore something that confused you or intrigued you about the reading in question – in a focused way. A good short response will lead to an interesting discussion in class. You will write four of these short responses over the course of the semester. There are no set due dates for these responses, however you can only submit one short response in any given week. Over the course of the semester, you must respond to at least one primary and one secondary reading.

Paper Pitches

At about the mid-point of the semester, I will ask you to submit and then workshop two pitches for potential papers. More information on this assignment will be forthcoming in course videos

Paper

Successful papers will develop an argument driven by your interests and connected to the themes of the course. Where the earlier assignments are designed to get you “thinking out loud” about your ideas and reactions to these novels, the paper should be a polished argument where you construct a claim, situate that claim within the scholarship on the topic, and support that claim with an analysis of one or more texts.

Policies

Contacting Your Instructor

I will be delighted to discuss your suggestions, ideas, and concerns about this course with you. You should feel free to drop by during my office hours. If those times are inconvenient, please e-mail me. I’m happy to make other arrangements. Please e-mail me in advance if you need to cancel an appointment.

The best way to contact me is via e-mail. **I will respond to all e-mails within 24 hours**, and I request that you show me the same courtesy. However, I am not permanently attached to my computer (and I have a flip phone. Seriously). **I do not generally check my e-mail between 10 PM and 10 AM.**² Please plan your electronic communications accordingly.

² This is a lie, but you shouldn’t really expect a response that late at night. ☺

Written Work

All writing assignments should be typed and double spaced with one-inch margins. Please use 12-point Times New Roman font. All writing will be handed in electronically via email; **All assignments must be in .doc or .docx format, or I will not be able to open them.**

Course Schedule

8/27 INTRODUCTIONS

8/29 **R:** Read *Dracula*, chapters 1-4. **Barracudas**

9/3 **T:** Read *David Copperfield* sections 1-3 (I-III, which includes chapters 1-9), and read through the “Victorian Serial Novels” link under “More about” on the same page. **Snakes**

9/5 **R:** Read *Dracula*, chapters 5-13, watch mini-lecture (link on Blackboard). **Parrots**

9/10 **T:** Read *David Copperfield* sections 4-5. Also read Emily Steinlight’s article “‘Anti-Bleak House’: Advertising and the Victorian Novel” (on Blackboard). **Iguanas**

9/12 **R:** Read *Dracula*, chapters 14-18. Also read Leah Richards’ article “Mass Production and the Spread of Information in *Dracula*” (on Blackboard). **Snakes**

9/17 **T:** Read *David Copperfield* sections 6-7. **Barracudas**

9/19 **R:** Read *Dracula*, chapters 19-27. **Iguanas**

9/24 **T:** Read *David Copperfield* sections 8-9. **Parrots**

9/26 **R:** Watch the film version of *Empire of the Sun* (link on Blackboard). **Barracudas**

10/1 **T:** Read *David Copperfield* sections 10-11. **Snakes**

10/3 **R:** Read *Empire of the Sun*, section one (chapters 1-19). Also read Roger Luckhurst’s article “Petition, Repetition, and ‘Autobiography’: J. G. Ballard’s *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*” (on Blackboard). **Iguanas**

10/8 **T:** Read *David Copperfield* sections 12-14. **Parrots**

10/10: **R:** Read *Empire of the Sun*, section two (chapters 20-31) and watch mini-lecture (link on Blackboard). **Snakes**

10/15 **No Class. Brockport's Fall Break.**

10/17 **R:** Read *Empire of the Sun*, section three (chapters 32-42). **Barracudas**

10/22 **T:** Read *David Copperfield* sections 15-20 and watch mini-lecture (link on Blackboard). **Iguanas**

10/24 **R:** Paper Pitches—**Iguanas and Parrots**

10/29 **T:** Paper Pitches—**Snakes and Barracudas**

10/31 **R:** Listen to the Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2 of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and watch mini-lecture (link on Blackboard—please watch mini-lecture before listening to the novel). **Parrots**

11/5 **T:** Listen to Chapters 3-6 of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. **Barracudas**

11/7 **R:** Listen to Chapters 7-8 and the end credits of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Also read Mara Reisman's article "Integrating Fantasy and Reality in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*" (on Blackboard). **Snakes**

11/12 **T:** Read *White Teeth* "Archie 1974, 1945" (chapters 1-5). **Parrots**

11/14 **R:** Read *White Teeth* "Samad 1984, 1857" (chapters 6-10) and watch mini-lecture (link on Blackboard). **Iguanas**

11/19 **T:** Read *White Teeth* "Irie 1990, 1907" (chapters 11-15). Also read Benjamin Bergholtz's article "'Certainty in Its Purest Form': Globalization, Fundamentalism, and Narrative in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*" (on Blackboard). **Snakes**

11/21 **R:** Read *White Teeth* "Magid, Millat, and Marcus 1992, 1999" (chapters 16-20). **Barracudas**

11/26 **T:** Read *Watchmen* chapters 1-4 and watch mini-lecture (link on Blackboard—please watch the mini-lecture before you begin the reading for this text). **Iguanas**

11/28 **No Class. Thanksgiving Break**

12/3 **T:** Read *Watchmen* chapters 5-8. **Parrots**

12/5 **R:** Read *Watchmen* chapters 9-12. Also read Maaheen Ahmed's article, "Comics and Authorship: An Introduction" (on Blackboard). **You're off the hook. I'll post some discussion questions instead.**

Last Day to hand in Short Responses

Exam TBD