

Brooks Landon
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Spring 2009

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Office Hours: MWF 12:30-1:30
and by appointment

**POSTMODERN FICTION (8:2):
OVERVIEW AND COURSE GOALS
MWF 10:30-11:20 EPB 105**

The **ICON** page for this course is active and will be extensively used. Check it regularly.

Texts, mostly in the order of reading (books at Prairie Lights)

Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology. Geyh, LeBron, Levy
Et Tu, Babe? Mark Leyner
Infinite Jest. David Foster Wallace
The Intuitionist. Colson Whitehead
Motherless Brooklyn. Jonathan Lethem
Choke. Chuck Palahniuk
Falling Man. Don DeLillo
Against the Day. Thomas Pynchon

(Yes, that's a **bazillion** pages of reading, but (a) the stuff is fascinating and mostly fun, (b) we won't read it as closely as is the norm for literary texts, and (c) this is college—what do you expect?)

Course Description:

Postmodernism means many different things in many different contexts. Postmodern architecture is not the same as postmodern fiction and postmodern fiction comes in more flavors than a well-known ice cream purveyor has flavors. Postmodern fiction comes after modern fiction, but modern fiction still gets written. Postmodern fiction is a reaction against modern fiction, but still shares many of its concerns and characteristics. Postmodern fiction is a mess. And, whatever it was, it's almost certainly over, possibly replaced by a sensibility that is post 911.

For purposes of this course, I'll consider postmodernism largely in terms of Lyotard's description of it as a resistance to meta-narrative ("big" narratives that claim to explain everything, such as religion or Marxism) and of Jameson's description of it as a "cultural dominant" (an attitude or atmosphere that pervades everything). More specifically, I define postmodernism as the culture of the easy-edit, a time when science and technology allow us to

change just about anything. And I define postmodern fiction as fiction that rises from or responds to postmodern culture.

It's probably more accurate to speak of postmodernisms than of a single postmodernism and its almost certainly more accurate to speak of postmodern fictions than of a single postmodern fiction. So we'll read a broad range of very different books.

Several of the works we will read are quite long. Start your reading early. To insure that your reading keeps pace with my lectures, I will give occasional unannounced reading quizzes. These quizzes are very basic, very broad, focused on the larger themes of postmodernism.

The reading quizzes will count for roughly 25% of your grade for the course. Another quarter of your grade will come from a relatively short answer midterm. Your final essay exam will supply another quarter of your course grade. And the final quarter will come from a paperish writing project, based on the handout "That's SOOOO Pomo.". More on this later.

Course format: Postmodern fiction, for better or for worse, is primarily a lecture course. But I will ask questions and will entertain questions, even if the large size of the class precludes sustained discussion.

Course goals: I intend this course to give you (1) a solid introduction to some of the canonical texts of postmodernism, (2) a preliminary introduction to the concerns and assumptions of literary and cultural postmodernism.

Postmodern Fiction Weekly Syllabus Spring 2009

Approximate Class Schedule (Nothing will happen ahead of this schedule, but we may run a bit behind at times)

Week one

W Jan 21	Pomo Overview
F Jan 23	Pomo Overview

Week two

M Jan 26	<i>Norton</i>
W Jan 28	<i>Norton</i>
F Jan 30	<i>Norton</i>

Week three

M Feb 2 *Et Tu, Babe?*
 W Feb 4 *Et Tu, Babe?*
 F Feb 6 *Et Tu, Babe?*

Week four

M Feb 9 *Infinite Jest*
 W Feb 11 *Infinite Jest*
 F Feb 13 *Infinite Jest*

Week five

M Feb 16 *Infinite Jest*
 W Feb 18 *Infinite Jest*
 F Feb 20 *Infinite Jest/Norton*

Week six

M Feb 23 *The Intuitionist*
 W Feb 25 *The Intuitionist*
 F Feb 27 *The Intuitionist*

Week seven

M Mar 2 *Motherless Brooklyn*
 W Mar 4 *Motherless Brooklyn*
 F Mar 6 *Motherless Brooklyn*

Week eight

M Mar 9 *Choke*
 W Mar 11 **Midterm Exam**
 F Mar 13 *Choke/Norton*

Week nine

M Mar 16 Spring Break
 W Mar 18 Spring Break
 F Mar 20 Spring Break

Week ten

M Mar 23 *Norton*
 W Mar 25 *Norton*
 F Mar 27 *Norton*

Week eleven

M Mar 30 *Falling Man*
 W Apr 1 *Falling Man*
 F Apr 3 *Falling Man*

Week twelve

M Apr 6 *Falling Man/Norton*
 W Apr 8 *Norton*
 F Apr 10 *Norton/SOOOOO Pomo Projects Due*

Week thirteen

M Apr 13 *Against the Day*
 W Apr 15 *Against the Day*
 F Apr 17 *Against the Day*

Week fourteen

M Apr 20 *Against the Day*
 W Apr 22 *Against the Day*
 F Apr 24 *Against the Day*

Week fifteen

M Apr 27 *Against the Day*
 W Apr 29 *Against the Day/Norton*
 F May 1 NO CLASS

Week sixteen

M May 4 *Norton*
 W May 6 *Norton*
 F May 8 *Norton/Final Review*

FINAL EXAM: 12:00 P.M. Tuesday, May 12 2009

Course Policies

Very Important note: I need to hear from anyone who has a disability which may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please see me during my office hours to discuss whatever we need to work out.

Please Remember:

1. You are responsible for everything presented in class; **videos will be included on quizzes and exams. Most videos are not available for viewing if you miss them when presented in class.**

2. I like seeing your smiling faces. **Miss more than six classes and your grade will be lowered one letter; miss more than eight and you will fail the course. Period.** Late arrivals are very disruptive—please be here on time. Leaving class after taking a quiz is unacceptable and the quiz will be counted as a 0.

3. We can work out almost any problem related to schedule or class format. I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability which may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please talk with me after class or during my office hours. The folks at Student Disability Services, 3101 Burge Hall (5-1462) can also be very helpful in these matters and handle Student Academic Accommodation Request Form.

4. If you have concerns about the design or conduct of this course or grading in the course, you should first discuss the matter with me. I'm amazingly flexible on most things and even reasonable on some. If we cannot resolve the issue or you feel you cannot discuss the matter with me, you should make an appointment with Associate Chair for Undergraduate Programs in the Undergrad Office in 308 EPB (335-0454). If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, you should make an appointment with the Chair of the English Department.

5. CLAS Policies are posted on the ICON site