

E 314L: Banned Books & Novel Ideas

Fall 2013 | 3:30 – 5:00 Tues. & Thurs. | FAC 9

Instructor: Eric Detweiler

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Office: FAC 16

Office Hours: Mon. 10:30-12 & Thurs. 1:30-3

Unique #: 34996

Flags: Writing

Computer Instruction: Yes

Course Site: edetweiler.pbworks.com

Prerequisites

E 603A, RHE 306, 306Q, or T C 603A

Description

Books get banned, censored, and challenged based on a huge variety of factors: maybe they contain “dirty” words, or sexual content, or witches and wizards, or explicit or implicit political messages. But, with broader bans on books becoming increasingly rare, the goals of those currently supporting book censorship often come down to this: keeping the books out of schools and thus out of the hands and minds of children. Consider Arizona’s recent decision to ban “ethnic studies” courses, which has blocked teachers from assigning a variety of texts (e.g. certain American history textbooks, Mexican-American literature) in their classrooms, or arguments over science textbooks with certain approaches to evolution. Public education is one of the United States’ most extensive political and social undertakings, so it’s perhaps not surprising the books making up that education should become sites of controversy.

By reading and writing about a range of controversial texts that depict and critique characters' encounters with books, language, and education, students in this course will examine the contentious connections between literature and education. We will pay particular attention to the social and cultural values forwarded and challenged by the course texts: In short, what exactly is being “kept” from children and/or adults when particular texts are challenged or banned within school districts? Readings will come from a variety of genres and cultures; writing will also be a key part of students’ work.

Course Goals

In this course, you should (1) learn to engage closely and thoughtfully with both literary and non-literary texts; (2) learn to contextualize those texts via research, discussion, and writing; (3) gain facility with academic writing conventions, particularly those of English studies; (4) learn to argue with/about texts in a respectful, fair, and empathetic manner, bearing in mind that listening is a key part of ethical argument; and (5) get more comfortable being confused, disoriented, and uncomfortable with texts.

Writing Flag Statement

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive

feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise many assignments, and to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.

Texts

You will need to purchase copies of the following texts:

- *Fun Home* – Alison Bechdel
- *Invisible Man* – Ralph Ellison
- *They Say/I Say* (2nd edition) – Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein
- *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* – J. K. Rowling

The following required texts will be provided by the instructor:

- *Borderlands/La Frontera* – Gloria Anzaldua (selections)
- *The Clouds* – Aristophanes
- *Cultural Literacy* – E. D. Hirsch (selection)
- "Theme for English B" – Langston Hughes
- *The Republic* – Plato (selection)
- *Why School? & Lives on the Boundary* – Mike Rose (selections)
- selected scholarly articles/readings

Requirements & Grading

6 Mini-Papers	18%
Paper 1.1 – Situated Analysis	5%
Paper 1.2 – Revision of 1.1 (4-5 pages)	15%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Revised/Synthesized Bibliography	15%
Paper 2.1 – Argument Paper	10%
Paper 2.2 – Revision of 2.1 (6-8 pages)	20%
Reading Notes	7%
In-Class Presentations	5%

Your overall grade for the course will be assessed using the following plus/minus scale:

93 and above: A	80-81: B-	68-69: D+
90-91: A-	78-79: C+	62-67: D
88-89: B+	72-77: C	60-61: D-
82-87: B	70-71: C-	59 and below: F

Policies

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic

accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Academic Integrity

Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. For additional information on Academic Integrity, see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint.php>. We will discuss plagiarism in class; please let me know if you have any questions or concerns in this area. In the long run, it's better to talk to me and not turn in an assignment at all than to turn in a plagiarized version.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class, to arrive on time, to have completed assigned reading and writing assignments, and to participate during in-class reading, writing, revising, and discussion sessions. **Should you miss the equivalent of five class meetings, excused or not, you will fail the course.** If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, you should contact me as soon as possible, preferably ahead of time, to let me know. Note that, besides religious holy days (see below), the university specifies very few other excused absences. Tardiness counts as half an absence. On any day you arrive after I have finished calling roll, you will be considered tardy. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you are absent—not tardy. You are responsible for making sure I mark you on the roll when you are late. Leaving early also counts as half an absence.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Late Work

Because they generally contribute to what we will be doing in class the day they are due, I will not accept any late homework or other minor assignments. As for the major papers: Deadlines are an important part of the writing process, so “.1” papers (1.1, the annotated bibliography, and 2.1) should be turned in by the beginning of class the day they are due. I will give you a single two-day extension—no questions asked—on one of

the “.2” papers (1.2, the synthesized bibliography, 2.2). The other two must be turned in the day they are due. If you anticipate any problem meeting a deadline, let me know at least 48 hours in advance. No guarantees, but I am much more likely to be flexible if I can see you are planning ahead.

Technology

In terms of technology, we are in one of the most well-equipped rooms on campus. You will thus not need your cell phone. If I see you on your cell phone, I will mark you absent. If your cell phone use disrupts your fellow students, you will receive one warning before being dismissed from class. Do not take notes on your cell phone, as it is very difficult to tell note-taking from texting—plus cell phones aren’t designed as an ideal note-taking interface. If you have a special reason for needing access to your cell phone, notify me at the beginning of that class day.

We will make regular use of the computers in this classroom this semester. They are good machines, but if you wish to use a personal laptop or tablet during times designated for computer usage, you may do so. If you wish to use your laptop or tablet at other times for other purposes, such as taking notes, you will need to write me an argumentative essay roughly one single-spaced page in length justifying that use.

University Writing Center

If you are interested in additional help with your writing skills, the Department of Rhetoric & Writing's Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) is a fantastic resource. Tutors in the UWC are specifically trained to help students develop writing skills and assignments. The UWC is conveniently located in FAC (this building). For more information, see the center's website: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>.

SPURS Statement

This course will be taught in conjunction with SPURS (Students Partnering for Undergraduate Rhetoric Success). The SPURS program pairs UT rhetoric and English instructors with underrepresented high schools in Texas. Our partner school this semester is Highlands High in San Antonio. The students at this school will be working towards a dual credit for RHE 306 from UT. Once during the semester, students from Highlands may visit our class, and if so we will be holding class in a different room (which I will announce closer to the visitation day). In the case of a visit, I will be looking for volunteers to interact with the students outside of class. By taking this course you are agreeing to participation in SPURS. For more information visit the SPURS website: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/spurs/index.php>.

Email Accounts

Email is an official means of communication at UT-Austin, and your instructor will use this medium to communicate class information. You are therefore required to obtain a UT email account and to check it daily. All students may claim an email address at no cost by going to <http://www.utexas.edu/computer/email/>.

Classroom Interaction Guidelines

This class (you, me, other students, this community of learners) will always strive to form a safe space for learning and development; that is, a space where we can pursue the goals of this course. Though learning requires stretching beyond comfort zones, feeling safe also is a prerequisite for a good learning environment.

Especially since we will be reading and discussing controversial texts that might elicit powerful emotional responses, everyone will be expected to observe the following:

Responsible Language and Argument

Be respectful of your colleagues. Avoid using slurs and other derogatory language. UT's Code of Conduct offers basic guidelines; in general, don't discriminate based on race, ethnicity, gender presentation, marital status, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Also keep in mind that you and your classmates may identify with various characters in the books we read, so insults or dismissive comments directed at characters or events in those books should be avoided. It is fine if you have a negative reaction to texts or characters we encounter; in fact, I expect those reactions will be part of our class discussions. Formulate them thoughtfully and carefully, however, bearing in mind that the people in this classroom represent a variety of experiences and backgrounds that, though not necessarily apparent, may resonate with the characters/texts that are making you uncomfortable. Be prepared to answer for what you say in class and what you write. In short, speak and write responsibly.

It is never okay to laugh at, belittle, or harass a colleague because of their opinion or point of view. Always think about how your comments will support our learning as a group. This doesn't mean operating in an environment where beliefs and ideas go unchallenged, but that challenging colleagues to explain their arguments in a *thoughtful* manner is key to creating an engaging learning community.

Trigger Warnings

Triggers are words or phrases that can cause extreme reactions. These reactions may range from anger or embarrassment to full panic attacks. Giving trigger warnings is standard practice in many online communities, and is becoming more common in offline public spaces. Common triggers can include but are not limited to addiction, self-harm, child harm, sexual assault, and racism. Some of the books we'll read this semester describe or depict such things, and I will strive to provide advance notice and facilitate a thoughtful and sensitive discussion environment around such passages. Strive to do the same, whether you're quoting or making a point about a difficult passage. If you are ever uncomfortable with something said in a course text or in class, whether by me or by a fellow student, please do not hesitate to email or meet with me to discuss it.

Schedule

The schedule below is both carefully structured and pretty full. This will be a demanding semester, and I intend for us to stick to this schedule fairly closely. Unforeseen circumstances and delays do arise, however, so I reserve the right to revise our schedule as necessary—though I will not do so without advance discussion and notice. If at any point during the semester you have concerns about the schedule (not just that it's "difficult," which is to be expected), feel free to bring them to my attention—I intend this course to be at least as much yours as mine.

We'll be doing something important every day. Do not assume any day is unimportant. Assigned readings are in bold, while writing assignments are italicized. Both kinds of assignments are due the day they are listed below. Readings that are located in the "Course Readings" folder of the course wiki (which we'll discuss next week) are followed with a "(W)." Always bring hard, printed-out copies of readings from the wiki. Reading and writing ahead is rarely a bad idea.

Week 1	Aug 29	Introductions, Syllabus
Week 2	Sep 03	History of Banned/Challenged Books Introduction to Course Wiki Graff & Birkenstein 1-51
	Sep 05	Introduction to Close Reading Overview of Formal/Historical/Cultural Criticism Hughes (W) <i>Mini-Paper 1 Due</i>
Week 3	Sep 10	Introduction to Historical Criticism Paper 1 Prompt Plato (W)
	Sep 12	Aristophanes (W) <i>Mini-Paper 2 Due (In-class assignment)</i>
Week 4	Sep 17	Introduction to Research Aristophanes (W)
	Sep 19	Introduction to Cultural Criticism Hirsch, <i>Cultural Literacy</i> (W) Rose, <i>Why School? & Lives on the Boundary</i> (W)
Week 5	Sep 24	Rowling
	Sep 26	Class Cancelled due to Family Illness
Week 6	Oct 01	Rowling Graff & Birkenstein 53-92
	Oct 03	Engaging With Scholarly Conversations/Articles <i>Mini-Paper 3 Due</i>

Week 7	Oct 08	<i>Paper 1.1 Due</i> Peer Review 1
	Oct 10	Annotated Bibliography Prompt Introduction to Formal Criticism Anzaldua (W)
Week 8	Oct 15	Paper 2 Prompt Bechdel Background <i>Paper 1.2 Due</i>
	Oct 17	Bechdel
Week 9	Oct 22	Bechdel <i>Mini-Paper 4 Due</i>
	Oct 24	Bechdel
Week 10	Oct 29	Bechdel Articles (TBD)
	Oct 31	Ellison Background Ellison Articles (TBD)
Week 11	Nov 05	Critical Approaches Review
	Nov 07	Ellison <i>Mini-Paper 5 Due</i> (In-class assignment)
Week 12	Nov 12	Peer Review 2 <i>Annotated Bibliography Draft Due</i>
	Nov 14	Ellison Graff & Birkenstein 103-138
Week 13	Nov 19	<i>Synthesized Annotated Bibliography Due</i> Ellison Articles (In-class reading)
	Nov 21	Ellison
Week 14	Nov 26	Individual Conferences in FAC 16 instead of full-class meeting
	Nov 28	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 15	Dec 03	Peer Review 3 <i>Paper 2.1 Due</i>
	Dec 05	Course Evals, Wrap-Up <i>Mini-Paper 6 Due</i>
Finals	Dec 11	<i>Paper 2.2 Due</i> by 11:59pm