

Carleton University
Winter 2017
Department of English
ENGL 3603: Contemporary Fiction
Tu/Th 11:35-12:55
Location: 501 Southam Hall
Instructor: Franny Nudelman
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Office: 1814 Dunton Tower, Phone: x1773
Office Hours: Thursday 1-3, and by appointment

PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR CLASSROOM WILL BE DEVICE FREE: NO LAPTOPS, E-READERS, OR CELL PHONES ALLOWED. IF YOU THINK THIS WILL BOTHER YOU DO NOT ENROLL FOR THIS COURSE.

WRITING AND CRISIS: CONTEMPORARY FICTION

Course Description: In this course we will consider writers who respond to the urgent crises of contemporary life, among them climate change, global poverty, forced migration, and war. These writers narrate massive changes in technology, climate, and political organization from the vantage point of individuals who are affected by such transformations. In particular, all the novels we will read narrate the dislocations, voluntary and involuntary, that result from rapid change. Throughout, we will consider the role of literature in grappling with social crises, shaping our knowledge of, and responses to, the world around us.

Reading:

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and on reserve at the library. Because ours is a device free classroom, you will need to buy the books or plan to read them at the library. Readings marked with a * will be available on CU Learn.

Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012)
Teju Cole, *Open City* (2011)
Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (2007)
Dave Eggers, *What is the What* (2006)
Ben Lerner, *10:04* (2014)
Kim Thúy, *Ru* (2012)
Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2000)

Evaluation and Assignments:

Your final grade will be based on class participation, four in-class writing assignments, a journal, one essay (5-6 pages), and a final project. Each will count for one-fifth (20%) of your grade.

Class Participation

Class participation will make up 20% of your grade. This grade will reflect not only your contribution to our conversations, but also your ability to listen and respond to the ideas of others in the class, and your attendance record.

Journal

You will keep a journal in which you make at least two entries each week—one in response to the week's reading, and one in response to class discussion. This assignment is meant to give you a chance to work through your ideas, and to keep a record of our class discussions. These entries should be substantial (between 1 and 2 typed pages) but they do not need to be formal. In your journal, feel free to write spontaneously, and to explore and test ideas that are not yet fully formed. Please bring your journal with you to our class meetings, and plan to hand it in at the end of the term.

In-Class Writing

Over the course of the semester, there will be four unannounced in-class writing assignments. These may take the form of brief responses to the reading, or of reading quizzes. They are designed to insure that you attend class, keep up with the reading, and give the reading some thought in advance of our class meetings. For this reason, you will not be allowed to make up these assignments.

Essay

You will write one essay this semester. The assignment will be posted on CU Learn. Half of you will hand the essay in on Friday, March 3, and half of you will hand it in on Friday, March 24. When reading these essays, we will look for clear, communicative writing, as well as original and convincing analysis of the text/s in question.

Final Project

The assignment for this project will be developed collaboratively during the course of the semester. You will be able to choose between writing a traditional essay, or working in another form—creative writing, video, PowerPoint, music, drawing, etc.

Policies:

Device Free Classroom

Please note that our classroom will be device-free: no laptops; no cell phones; no e-readers. Each week two students will volunteer to take notes (on laptops) for the entire group. (They will receive extra credit for taking careful and accurate notes.) These notes will be posted on CU Learn. Otherwise, the only students allowed to use laptops in the classroom will be those with special permission from the Paul Menton Centre. Likewise, students will not be allowed to use cell phones or other devices for any purpose during class.

Request for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Religious obligation

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the [PMC website](#) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Plagiarism

Academic honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the “Instructional Offences” section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as “using and passing off as one’s own ideas the work of someone else” without giving proper credit and documentation or submitting the same assignment in more than one class. This means using someone else’s ideas in any format, printed or online (whether from a scholarly essay, a student essay, a website, or even just a blog commentary). If you find yourself tempted to use someone else’s ideas or words because of stress, illness, anxiety about your own ability, personal crisis, time crisis, or any other issues, I urge you to let me know about these circumstances, so that we can work together to make sure you do work of the highest integrity. The penalties for plagiarism are severe, ranging from a disciplinary meeting with the Associate Dean of the faculty, failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and/or suspension from the university. If I suspect that an essay or portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty with documentation.

Class Schedule

JANUARY

5 Introduction

10 Don DeLillo, *Falling Man*

12 *Falling Man*

17 *Falling Man*

*Tom Junod, “The Falling Man” (2003)

19 Rebecca Solnit, **Wanderlust**, Chs. 1-2

24 Teju Cole, *Open City*

26 *Open City*

31 *Open City*

*Teju Cole, “Far Away from Here” (2015)

FEBRUARY

2 Solnit, Chs. 3-5

7 Kim Thúy, *Ru*

9 *Ru*

14 Solnit, Chs. 6, 9, 10

16 Dave Eggers, *What is the What*

Winter Break

28 *What is the What*

MARCH

2 *What is the What*

*Dave Eggers, “It Was Just Boys Walking” (2007)

Friday, March 3: Essays Due

7 Solnit, Chs. 11, 13, 15

9 Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

14 *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

16 *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

21 *Elizabeth Kolbert, "Letter from Greenland" (2016)

23 Ben Lerner, *10:04*

Friday, March 24: Essays Due

28 *10:04*

30 *10:04*

*Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (1855)

APRIL

4 Solnit, Chs. 16, 17

6 Last Class

Final Projects Due: Friday, April 7