

**Fall 2018**

**ENGL 4003A STUDIES IN THE NOVEL**

**The Comic Novel**

**Prerequisite: fourth-year standing in Honours English, and permission of the department**

**Tuesday 8:35 a.m.- 11:25 a.m.**

**Location: 404 Southam Hall (Check Carleton Central to confirm)**

**Instructor: Patricia Whiting**

**Office: 1810 Dunton Tower**

**Phone: 520-2600 ext. 6702**

**email: [Patricia\\_Whiting@carleton.ca](mailto:Patricia_Whiting@carleton.ca)**

**Office Hours: Monday 2:30-3:30 or by appointment**

**DESCRIPTION:** Before there were comics and before there were graphic novels, there were comic novels. In fact, if we take *Don Quixote* as the first novel, the *first* novel was a comic novel, and, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the landscape of the English novel has been dotted with them: *Tom Jones*, *A Sentimental Journey*, *Tristram Shandy*, at least half of Jane Austen's novels, *Vanity Fair*, *Orlando*, to name some of the most famous. This course will focus on British and American comic novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As far back as Ancient Greece, Plato refused humour a place in his Republic, but Aristotle found it compatible with the virtuous life. Since then, a great many philosophers and then psychologists have meditated on the subject, and we will be looking briefly at a few of the major theories of humour and reviewing the terminology associated with the use of humour in literature before we turn our attention to the novels on the course, addressing such questions as: How universal is humour in fiction? How is humour in novels inflected by history, and what does this imply when humour involves gender, race, and class? What does humour contribute to the social or political aims of the novelist? What is the relationship of humour to the standard elements of fiction?

**REQUIRED TEXTS (These are the texts that I have ordered. There will be changes to the syllabus if any of them turn out to be unavailable.)**

Amis, Kingsley. *Lucky Jim*  
Fielding, Helen. *Bridget Jones's Diary*  
Gibbons, Stella. *Cold Comfort Farm*  
Hooker, Richard. *MASH*  
Mitford, Nancy. *Love in a Cold Climate*  
Ross, Fran. *Oreo*  
Toole, John Kennedy. *A Confederacy of Dunces*  
Vonnegut, Kurt. *Cat's Cradle*  
Waugh, Evelyn. *The Loved One*

**These books are available at Octopus Books, 118 Third Avenue.**

## **EVALUATION**

Attendance/ Participation	10%
Terminology presentation	5%
Individual seminar and question period	25%
Roundtable discussion questions (x 2)	20%
Essay (one of two options; see below)	40%

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

## **PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:**

**1. Attendance:** Class attendance is mandatory. Excused absences must be medically documented. Absences for work reasons will not be excused. Students who attend only part of a class will be counted as absent for that class. Students with more than one unexcused absence will lose ten attendance points.

All students are expected to contribute productively to every class and on every novel. Students will receive a penalty of two points from their attendance/participation mark for each class in which they do not substantively participate. The participation mark will be based on demonstration of knowledge of the texts being discussed and the relevance and contribution value of comments.

**PLEASE NOTE: Unless a student has a documented accommodation, the use of laptops or other electronic devices is not permitted in this seminar.**

**2. Presentations:** Each student will make two presentations: A) a 7-10- minute background presentation on terminology relevant to the study of comic novels, and B) a 25-30-minute individual seminar that makes a focused argument regarding an aspect of the novel assigned for that day.

**Because the structure of seminar classes is so dependent on class enrollment, there might be slight modifications to these instructions, which are based on a class of 15, if the final enrollment is different.**

**A) Terminology presentation:** To avoid confusion and to ensure that we all mean the same thing by the same terms, each student will present a 7-10-minute presentation on a term or pair of terms relevant to our study. All of these presentations will take place on September 18. At the end of the seminar, students will turn in their speaking notes or a copy of them, which may be informal and even hand-written.

**B) Individual seminar:** Each student will present a 25-30 minute individual seminar that makes a focused argument regarding an aspect of the novel assigned for that day. At the end of the seminar, the presenter will lead a 20-minute discussion. Some questions may be generated by the class, but the presenter should also be prepared to ask questions relevant to his/her seminar argument.

On the night before the presentation, the presenter will e-mail an abstract of her/his presentation to each member of the class and to me. On the day of the presentation, the presenter will hand in a legible hard copy of seminar notes (may be informal) and a proper Works Cited page containing a minimum of three relevant secondary sources.

**A note about seminar presentations:**

1. Don't take on too much. Your argument should be informed, straightforward, and intelligible.
2. Practice aloud for clarity, coherence, and timing.
3. Complex theoretical ideas that work well in an essay are difficult to follow in an oral presentation. Make sure that your ideas are clearly understood by the class.
4. Make eye contact and speak clearly and audibly. Be conscious of pacing yourself; people unused to giving presentations often intuitively speak much faster than they normally do.
5. Use up but do not exceed your allotted time.
6. You may read your presentation or speak more informally from notes, whichever is more comfortable for you.

**A note about PowerPoint presentations:**

1. In general, use keywords and phrases rather than complete sentences on slides.
2. Do not read from your slides.
3. Show quotations only if you are going to discuss or explicate them.
4. Vary your slides by using images when appropriate.
5. Don't substituted visual cleverness for intellectual substance.

**Remember that PowerPoint can add to or detract from a seminar presentation.**

**3. Roundtable discussions:** In the last hour or so of each class, a roundtable discussion will

be led by groups of students. Each student will participate in two roundtable discussion groups. Three days or so before the class, each group should request the general topic from the seminar presenter(s) to avoid duplication. The roundtable discussion questions should also deal in part with the themes and aims of the course. The mark of each roundtable discussion will be determined half by the other participants in the group and half by me. **YOU MAY NOT PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR THE NOVEL ON WHICH YOU DO YOUR INDIVIDUAL SEMINAR.**

**Students will sign up for a terminology presentation, an individual seminar, and two roundtable discussions on the first day of class.**

**4. Written Work:** On September 19, students will be required to choose one of the following methods of evaluation:

**Option 1. Eight** double-spaced insight reports of 450-500 words to be submitted *before* the beginning of class on the day each novel will be discussed. The insight reports are intended to stimulate sustained and thoughtful reflection on the novels themselves. Each report is worth 5% of the final grade. Rather than being formal, academic papers, these reports should reflect Honours-level engagement with the texts and will be marked on thoughtfulness, originality, quality of analysis, and quality of written expression. A sample insight report will be provided. **No insight report is required on the novel on which you do your individual seminar.**

**Option 2.** A formal research essay of 16-18 pages to be submitted at the end of the term. These papers should give evidence of substantial research (minimum of three secondary sources), should present a compelling and convincing argument, and should be beautifully written. The research paper is due on December 4.

**Late assignments will not be accepted without a valid doctor's certificate.**

**5. Collaboration:** Although you are encouraged to talk with each other about assignments and to review each other's work, all assignments written for evaluation are to be the original work of individual students.

**6. Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a serious matter and can be grounds for expulsion from the University. Plagiarism often occurs because a student is not sure where to draw the line between common knowledge, paraphrase, and direct quotation -- and indeed, the distinctions are sometimes hard to make. The rule of thumb is this: All direct quotations have to be contained by quotation marks and their sources cited (see note on bibliographical form below); all paraphrases have to be clearly indicated as such, and their sources also cited. When in doubt about whether a point that you are making is common, shared knowledge in the public domain or the "intellectual property" of another author, either contact me for clarification or err in the direction of documentation.

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- ☐ reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- ☐ submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- ☐ using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- ☐ using another's data or research findings;
- ☐ failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- ☐ handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

The policy can be found at: <http://carleton.ca/fass/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Sept-2017.pdf>

**Please note that I hand over ALL cases of suspected plagiarism to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences for investigation.**

## **7. 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**

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website:

[carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](http://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Religious obligation**

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website:  
[carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. [carleton.ca/pmc](https://carleton.ca/pmc)

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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.

<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

## SYLLABUS

- Sept. 11 – Introduction
- Sept. 18 – Terminology presentations
- Sept. 25 – *Cold Comfort Farm*
- Oct. 2 – *The Loved One*
- Oct. 9 – *Love in a Cold Climate*
- Oct. 16 – *Lucky Jim*
- Oct. 23-26 – READING WEEK, NO CLASS
- Oct. 30 – *A Confederacy of Dunces*
- Nov. 6 – *Player Piano*
- Nov. 13 - *MASH*
- Nov. 20 – *Oreo*
- Nov. 27 – *Bridget Jones's Diary*
- Dec. 4 – Make-up class; Research paper due