

Carleton University
Late Summer 2020
Department of English

ENGL 4115B/ENGL 5900X: Culture and the Text
Topic: Strangers in a Strange Land

Monday, 10:05 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.
Location: Online

Instructor: Dr. Patricia Whiting
email: Patricia_Whiting@carleton.ca
Office Hours will be conducted on MS Teams, by appointment

NB: This blended online course requires that you have a webcam, a microphone, and a stable internet connection (with the acknowledgement that even stable internet connections...yours and mine...can have problems sometimes).

It is strongly recommended that students have some experience of university-level English studies.

DESCRIPTION: Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this course will be delivered online, using a combination of Zoom and MS Teams meetings and electronic submission of written work. Please read the course outline carefully for details.

The ambiguities of the figure of the insider-outsider have been extensively considered in terms of social science researchers. This course considers the insider-outsider in terms of the authors and narrators of literary texts. Drawing on texts written by authors with first-hand experience of dramatic historical developments of the 20th century, we will formulate and address questions of history, narrative, and authority. All of the texts involve the occupation of one country by another, sometimes in specifically imperial settings, others in time of war. All were written by observers and employ narrative perspectives belonging to outsiders in the occupied country but who also consider themselves to be insiders by virtue of their presence and their sympathies. How reliable are these seemingly ambivalent creatures in terms of the historical claims their works advance? Given the predominance of reading such texts from a post-colonial viewpoint, from what other perspectives might we also productively consider them? What is the relationship between narrative and history, and how effective and trustworthy is the literary imagination in conveying social and political thought? We will consider these questions and more.

In the absence of seminar and background presentations, all students are expected to conduct cursory research into the historical contexts of the texts. This research may simply involve reading Wikipedia entries on the history of the Belgian Congo, Czechoslovakia, Burma, and Viet Nam, but students should be familiar with the condition of the countries during the time periods covered in the texts, for example, Czechoslovakia in 1938 and Viet Nam in the years just prior to the Viet Nam War.

Required texts:

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*

Gellhorn, Martha. *A Stricken Field*

Greene, Graham. *The Quiet American*

Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Poisonwood Bible*

Orwell, George. "Shooting an Elephant" <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/shooting-an-elephant/>

Hard copies of all of the texts are available through Octopus Books, who will arrange for pick-up or mailing. The full texts of *Heart of Darkness* and *The Quiet American* are available online. All of the books are also available as e-books through Kindle, Kobo, and Apple.

MacOdrum Library has been able to secure a one-user copy of *A Stricken Field*, which is available on Ares. As it is quite a long novel, it's likely that this option will be available to only one student in the class. The library doesn't have an agreement with the publisher of *The Poisonwood Bible* and was therefore not able to secure the e-book.

Grade distribution:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Insight reports | 50% |
| Abstracts | 10% |
| Discussion questions | 10% |
| Discussion participation | 30% |

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 FULLY and CAREFULLY

1. **Attendance:** The syllabus at the end of the course outline indicates which class meetings will be live. These meetings will take place via Zoom. Invitations for Zoom meetings will be sent by e-mail the day before the scheduled discussion.

Our online meetings will not be recorded or posted; still, it's best to avoid sharing highly personal information. Please be sure join each meeting a few minutes early in case you have any log-in problems.

2. **Insight reports:** Each student will submit five double-spaced insight reports, one on each text, on the days and times indicated on the syllabus at the end of the course outline (please note that the submission requirements for July 8 are different from those that follow). The length of the insight reports is **700 words for graduate students and 600 words for undergraduates**. Deviations of more than 20 words will be penalized. The insight reports must be submitted on CULearn by **10:00 a.m. on July 8 and by 1:00 p.m. on subsequent due dates**; late papers may be penalized and papers submitted later than 5:00 on the due date will not be accepted. Please include the word count on your insight report.

The insight reports are intended to stimulate sustained and thoughtful reflection on the texts themselves. Each report is worth 10% of the final grade. Rather than being formal, academic papers, these reports should reflect genuine critical engagement with the texts and will be marked on thoughtfulness, originality, quality of analysis, and quality of written expression. **Note that insight reports are not reader response papers; the best way to avoid this is never to refer to the reader at all. Do not discuss your personal opinion on the topic or your emotional response to the text.**

Sample insight reports from a similar class will be posted on CULearn.

3. **Abstracts:** Students will post a one-paragraph abstract of their insight reports on the CULearn discussion board on the days set out on the syllabus, although they will be accepted without penalty until 5:00 p.m. The abstracts should be no fewer than three and no more than five sentences long and should articulate the main point set out in the insight report. Please read everyone's abstract before the discussion on that text and be prepared to speak to the points made in them. Obviously, there will not be time for you to read the abstracts of others before the discussion on July 8, but submitting them will allow me to provide feedback.

A sample abstract will be posted on CULearn.

3. Discussion questions: On the days and times indicated on the syllabus, each student will submit one thoughtful discussion question relevant to the text being discussed. Discussion questions may be derived from your insight reports; the important things are that they deal in some way with the themes and aims of the course and that they are productive of discussion.

3. Discussions: On the days and times indicated on the syllabus, there will be a live online discussion via Zoom on the text for that week. I will moderate the discussions, drawing on your discussion questions and on my own, but the discussions themselves will be carried out by students. **You will receive a Zoom meeting invitation by e-mail the evening before the discussion.**

All students are expected to contribute productively to every discussion. **Students will receive a penalty of two points 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.

Students who have a connectivity problem that prevents them from joining a discussion class must notify me immediately by e-mail and must submit a six- to eight-sentence response to two discussion questions posted on CULearn by 1:30 p.m. on that day. These responses must show the same level of substantive engagement, knowledge, and thoughtfulness expected in a discussion.

Plagiarism: 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 form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct 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 failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

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: <https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>

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: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>

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 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. For more details, visit the Paul Menton Centre Website: 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 its 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: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-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

July 6 – Introduction (10:00 a.m. Zoom meeting)

July 8 – “Shooting an Elephant” (10:00 a.m. Zoom meeting: Submit insight report, abstract, discussion question by 10:00 a.m.)

July 13 – Heart of Darkness (Submit insight report, abstract, discussion question by 1:00 p.m.)

July 15 – Heart of Darkness (10:00 a.m. Zoom meeting)

July 20 – A Stricken Field (Submit insight report, abstract, discussion question by 1:00 p.m.)

July 22 – A Stricken Field (10:00 a.m. Zoom meeting)

July 27 – The Quiet American (Submit insight report, abstract, discussion question by 1:00 p.m.)

July 29 – The Quiet American (10:00 a.m. Zoom meeting)

August 10 – The Poisonwood Bible (Submit insight report, abstract, discussion question by 1:00 p.m.)

August 12 – The Poisonwood Bible (10:00 a.m. Zoom meeting)