

**Late Summer 2021
Department of English**

**ENGL 4115B/ENGL 5900X: Culture and the Text
Topic: Poverty in Literature: The Novel as Unintentional Social Document**

**Monday and Wednesday 11:35 a.m. – 2:25 p.m.
Format: Blended online course**

ENGL 4115 Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing or permission of the department.

**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 experience of university-level English studies.

Although the texts and assignments in this course outline are fixed, changes to dates may occur if required.

DESCRIPTION:

The novel's function as an instrument of social change has been a subject of debate pretty much since the advent of the novel, and this issue is central to our course that focuses on what novels can tell us about poverty as a social problem that sociology and economics do not. We will be reading five novels from the mid-twentieth century, which deal with poverty in India, Brazil, Spain, Canada, and the US. Working as literary field agents in the mold of Matthew Desmond in *Evicted* and Barbara Ehrenreich in *Nickle and Dimed* and using all the tools that an English education has provided, students will keep a critical journal on a single specific aspect of poverty (see list of topics at the end of the course outline) in each of the novels, finishing with a summary statement on that aspect that can be accurately and insightfully applied to poverty in the real world.

Required texts:

Amado, Jorge. *Captains of the Sands* (Penguin)
Laforet, Carmen. *Nada* (Vintage)
Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve* (Signet)
Petry, Ann. *The Street* (Mariner)
Richards, David Adams. *Nights Below Station Street* (Emblem)

Hard copies of all of the texts are available through Octopus Books, who will arrange for pick-up or mailing. You may e-mail Octopus at <https://shop.octopusbooks.ca/ENGL4115> to reserve your copy and arrange for delivery or pick-up.

Evaluation:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Journal entries | 50% |
| Discussion questions | 10% |
| Discussion participation | 25% |
| Summary statement | 15% |

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

NOTE: All written assignments are to be submitted on Brightspace. Late submissions will be penalized.

1.Attendance: Synchronous classes will be conducted via Zoom. Because discussion is central to the course, all students are expected to attend and contribute actively and productively to every discussion class and on every text. See point 5 for evaluation criteria.

Unless required, none of our online meetings will be recorded or posted; still, it's best to avoid sharing highly personal information during a Zoom meeting. Please be sure join each meeting early enough to deal with any technical problems.

2. Journal entries: Each student will submit five double-spaced journal entries, one on each text, on the days and times indicated on the syllabus and in Brightspace. The length of the journal entries is **750 words for graduate students and 650 words for undergraduates**. Deviations of more than 20 words will be penalized.

The journal entries are intended to simulate the kind of record a field worker might keep following immersion in a specific context and should indicate sustained and thoughtful reflection on the experience of poverty in the texts. In order to be an effective field worker, you must identify and avoid your own preconceived notions about poverty. Treat the situation in each novel objectively and individually within its own context.

Each entry is worth 10% of the final grade. Rather than being formal, academic papers, these entries 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 the journal entries 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. Note as well that the journal entries are neither character analyses nor plot summaries and that the entries must be based on the entire text; that is, you must show evidence of having finished the book.**

A sample journal entry and the submission schedule for assignments will be posted on Brightspace.

NB: All five of your journal entries must concern the same aspect of poverty. This will allow you to make the generalizations that you will discuss in the summary statement. The list of journal

topics appears at the end of the course outline. You may not switch topics, so be sure to choose wisely.

3. Summary statement: Your experience as a field agent and your reflections in your journal will allow you to make generalizations about your topic that are perhaps surprising to you and relevant to poverty in the real world in ways that sociology and economic miss. The target audience of your summary statement is a roomful of sociologists and economists who study poverty.

The length of the summary statement for graduate students is 1200-1250 words and for undergraduates, 900-1000 words.

4. Discussion questions: By 5:00 p.m. on the evening before each synchronous class, each student will submit one thoughtful discussion question relevant to the text being discussed. Discussion questions may be derived from your journal entries, but they need not be; 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.

5. Discussions: There will be a synchronous discussion on each text on the dates indicated on the syllabus. 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 a day or two before each discussion.**

All students are expected to contribute substantively to every discussion; the participation mark will be based on each student's level of engagement, demonstration of knowledge of the texts, and the relevance and contribution value of comments. Keep in mind that good discussion depends as much on listening and responding to others as on speaking.

Students who have a connectivity problem that prevents them from joining a discussion class must notify me immediately by e-mail, and I will provide an alternative assignment to be completed on the same day.

Journal topics

You must choose one topic and stick to it throughout the course; in other words, the topic that you choose to write on for your first journal entry will be the topic of all subsequent entries.

Health and health care
Children
Housing
Food
Clothing
Education

Syllabus

Synchronous discussion classes are in red

July 5 – Introduction to the course

July 7 – *Captains of the Sands*

July 12 – *Captains of the Sands*

July 14 – *Nada*

July 19 – *Nada*

July 21 – *The Street*

July 26 – *The Street*

July 28 – *Nectar in a Sieve*

August 2 – Civic Holiday No class

August 4 – *Nectar in a Sieve*

August 9 – *Nectar in a Sieve*

August 11 – *Nights Below Station Street*

August 16 – *Nights Below Station Street*

August 18 – Summary statements due on Brightspace

Statement on 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/>

The university’s Academic Integrity Policy can be found at:

<https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf>

Requests 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 click [here](#).

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 click [here](#).

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).

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 where 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/sexual-assault-support-services>

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