

ENGL 200 D: Literature in the Marketplace
Summer 2011
MTWR 11:30-12:20
ART 317

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Office Hours: MW 12:30-1:20 in Parnassus Café, and by appointment

Course Overview: Cash, dough, dead presidents, banknotes, moolah, clams, smackers, greenbacks, Benjamins, c-notes, dosh, lolly, lucre, filthy lucre, the where-withal, bread, brass, loot... these are only a few of the words for money. The books we read have almost as many names as money has: literature, serious literature, genre fiction, trash, fantasy, romance, novel, story, light fiction, beach reading, great works, the canon.

But what is money, actually? Is it precious metal? Fancy paper, printed with very fancy printers at the U.S. Mint? Is it the plastic of your credit card, or the credit card receipt (which is made from cheap paper, cheap ink, and your signature)? Or is money the click of your mouse in iTunes or on Amazon? And likewise, what is literature? On a regular basis, institutions like the *New York Times* and the BBC release lists of the 100 books that everyone should read, or should have read. You have a credit score – but do you also have a literature score, as well? Should you?

Economics can be simply defined as “the branch of knowledge concerned with the production, consumption, and transfer of wealth” (Merriam-Webster). A better definition might substitute “resources” for “wealth,” because economics applies not just to money, but to a huge variety of abstract and concrete objects, including food, energy, love, and even happiness itself.

Economics is an unusual subject, because for centuries, authorities have assumed that it is at least partly instinctive – a type of knowledge that you possess naturally – and indeed, you are making economic choices all the time. You are also being constantly confronted with economic information, whether in the form of advertisements, price tags, contracts, promissory notes, or even just the people who you encounter in your daily life. Though there are certainly people who are officially economic authorities, like Nobel Prize in Economics winner and NY Times columnist Paul Krugman, very few individuals make a point of consulting these authorities before they make decisions. Instead, economic knowledge, and economic authority, are communicated in diverse ways – so diverse that we are not always aware them.

The texts that I’ve chosen range from the 18th to the 21st century. Some are nonfictional, and their authors intend the texts to communicate economic policy: the guidelines defining property, labor, the economy, and happiness. Many of them are texts that are associated with the discovery of economics as a specific discipline. Others are fictional, and are devoted to portraying the problems and opportunities that communities and individuals face on a daily basis.

Course Method: This course is a discussion and writing seminar, oriented towards reading and interpreting a variety of texts. Our class meetings will include lectures, but the majority of our class time will be spent discussing what we’ve read: asking questions, and learning to answer them. You do not need to be an English major, or an Economics major, to succeed – but you must be willing to contribute – to think of the classroom as an academic community, which depends upon your participation.

This course fulfills the “W” credit requirement, meaning that it involves an intense writing component. It uses a workshop model emphasizing both independent work, such as developing critical reading practices and written analysis of literary and critical texts, and close collaboration with instructors and peers at every stage in the processes of reading and writing. You will work in peer groups throughout the quarter, providing thoughtful and specific feedback on each others’ works-in-progress.

For this course, you will produce two 4-5 page major papers, which you will develop through independent work and peer conferencing. Your peer groups and I will hold a conference for each major writing assignment. This means that we will meet for an hour to discuss your drafts and possible rewriting tactics, and to generate plans for revision. This collaborative work with me and with your peer reviewers is crucial to this course, to your capacity to reflect on and improve your writing. **I will not accept any major paper that has not been peer reviewed and conferenced.** Not only will you benefit from the many sets of critical eyes under which your work will pass, but you’ll have the chance to develop critical capacities through thinking about your classmates’ writing – a practice that likely will significantly improve your ability to evaluate and edit your own essays.

This class will emphasize both writing and conversation as a means of learning. You will write to think through interpretive and critical issues and problems. You will write in response to specific prompts, and develop your own starting points for reflection. You will produce both interpretive writing that is intended to argue for a specific reading of a text or situation, and informative writing, which is intended to educate and help others. We will also spend time revising our ideas – this course emphasizes the importance of revision. Revision is what allows you to try out new ideas, take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them.

Grading

Course Participation: includes attendance, taking part in in-class activities, working with Diigo on annotation assignments, and participating in conferences: 25%

Blogging: includes weekly blogging (8 posts), and revising 2 blog posts at the end of quarter: 25%

Major Paper #1: (4-5 pages): 25%

Major Paper #2: (4-5 pages): 25%

Course materials

UW email account: you’ll need this to access some readings on Catalyst Sharespace, turn in assignments, and to post to the course email list. It’s also where I’ll send the information for your class blog login, and your Diigo Group invitation.

Class blog login: Our blog is hosted by Wordpress, but even if you already have a blog, you’ll need a separate login to access the site. I’ll create this login, and send it to you. Your password will be the last 4 digits of your UW Student ID, plus your UW NetID. (I recommend that you change your password as soon as you’ve logged in.)

Diigo account: Diigo (<http://www.diigo.com>) is a free toolbar installation that allows you to annotate and highlight webpages online (it works with both PCs and Macs, and with most internet browsers). We’ll be using it throughout the quarter to read materials online, and annotate them as a group.

Access to a good dictionary (not a pocket volume) – I recommend the OED:

<http://www.oed.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/>

Readings:

Class website: The class website and blog are among the most important resources you’ll use this quarter, both for working on writing and discussion. In addition to the assigned

readings, I expect you to read through all your classmates' posts on the blog (if posts are in preparation for an in-class discussion, then you need to read them beforehand). You'll also want to watch the class website for announcements, policies, etc. – use the tags in the righthand column to sort posts.

Course reader: (available later this week at The Ave Copy Shop)

Other readings online: (available through the course website and Catalyst Sharespace)

Assignments:

Blogging: Each week, I'll ask you to make a post of 250-300 words on the class blog. While academic essay writing is often oriented towards advancing an argument, blog writing is often oriented towards being informative, or process-oriented – it's an opportunity for you to work through an idea in draft form.

Sometimes, these posts will be in response to a specific question or set of instructions, other times, it will be your job to decide what to write about. Either way, your goals in writing posts should be to:

- Remain focused on a specific topic or question
- Present a balance of evidence and commentary, using quotations and citations
- Explain why your subject matter is important – why it matters to this class, and why it needs to be written about, and discussed.

Posting is not the end of the assignment. After posting you need to foster the discussion you are initiating. When people comment you need to give substantive responses. Try to engage everyone who comments in some fashion and try to use the comments to sustain a conversation you began at the end of your post.

Blog posts will always be due by Tuesday at 8 p.m., so that there is time to read them before Thursday's class session. This includes your introductory blog for the first week.

In order to get credit for blog posts, you must tag them, using the following formula: Week 1: week1blog; Week 2: week2blog, etc. See the blog for an example.

Commenting: Each week, I'll ask you to make at least one substantive comment (25 words minimum) on one of your classmates' posts, **by Wednesday at 8 p.m.** Substantive means that you need to respond to the specific idea that the original poster introduced, and extend the discussion further. (While I encourage you to support your classmates, brief comments that say nothing more than "Great post!" will not be given credit.)

Blogging Portfolio: The first of our three group conferences will be oriented towards peer reviewing your blog posts, and developing goals for the posts you'll write during the rest of the quarter. At the end of the quarter, you'll choose two of your posts, revise them, and submit them as a portfolio.

Late work: If you know in advance that an outside issue is going to cause you to miss a deadline, please let me know as soon as possible. You *may* be able to get an extension. Otherwise, my policy on late work is as follows:

- Blog posts: 1 day late = 50% credit
- Blog comments: not accepted late
- Short assignments: 50% credit given; no feedback
- Major essays: for each day late, .3 deducted from final grade

A few words about class participation: Though participation is only 25% of your grade, it is also the foundation of your success in the rest of the course. Only by interacting with other people can you develop your ideas and writing, and only then will this course be genuinely valuable to you. Speaking up in class is

important – but so is listening – and it’s the quality of your remarks, rather than the quantity, that earns you credit. Not everyone likes to be a classroom chatterbox, which is one reason that this class has a blogging component, so that you can develop rapport with people in an online context. You can augment your participation grade by interacting with people on the blog, making more substantive comments than the required one-per-week, and working to improve the blog as a class resource. You can also augment your participation grade by coming to office hours. **Overall, it is vital that you feel comfortable enough with me and your classmates in order to contribute.** If you are uncomfortable for any reason, I encourage you to make an appointment with me so that we can try to work through the problem together, so that you can fully participate.

Classroom Environment and Etiquette: Studying literature involves developing interpretations about specific texts – what they mean, and why they are helpful or important. Interpreting literature involves, and even requires that people have different ideas – and so you are not expected to agree with me or with your classmates all of the time. I encourage you to ask questions, or suggest alternate ways of looking at texts. However, it is vital that you respect the opinions and ideas raised by others, and treat them with the same courtesy that you expect to be treated.

Be present for the entire class period. Take care of personal needs before class, arrive on time, and do not leave early for other commitments. Turn off your cell phones. If I notice you texting or surfing the internet during class time, you will not receive credit for attendance or participation that day. Likewise, if I observe you working on something for another class during our time together, you will not receive credit for attendance or participation. It is OK to bring beverages to class, but avoid bringing food unless absolutely necessary: if you must bring food, it should be something that you can eat discretely, without distracting others – and of course, please don’t talk with your mouth full.

Office Hours and Communication: I have two office hours each week, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:30- 1:20 p.m., which I will hold at Parnassus Coffee in the basement of the Art building (or at the tables just outside). Don’t hesitate to stop by if you have a question about class or want to get feedback on an idea for an assignment, or simply want to chat. I enjoy teaching, and I’ll be delighted to get to know you over the course of the quarter. If neither of the scheduled office hours are convenient, you can email me to make an appointment for a different time.

I check my email regularly, and you can usually expect to hear back from me within 24 hours during the week – but on weekends and holidays, my response time may be longer.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else’s words or ideas and representing them as if they were your own, without acknowledging the source.

Many students do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. It includes:

- A student failing to cite the source of an idea,
- A student failing to cite sources of paraphrased material,
- A student failing to cite courses of specific language and/or passages, and
- A student submitting someone else’s work as her or his own.

If you have doubts about whether to cite or acknowledge another person’s writing, then you should just let me know. Better safe than sorry. And think about it—Google, websites galore, and the fact that I was an undergraduate, too, make it really, really easy for me to spot plagiarized work. For more information on the UW’s policies regarding academic honesty, see

<http://www.washington.edu/uaa/advising/help/academichonesty.php>

Disability Accommodations

If you need academic accommodations of any sort due to a disability, you have several options. You can come directly to me, or I can work with Disabled Student Services (DSS) to provide what you require, or you may contact DSS yourself: 448 Schmitz Hall, 543-8924. More information on support at UW may be found at <<http://www.washington.edu/admin/dso/>>. I am open to suggestions as to how your needs may be better met in regards to this class throughout the quarter. This syllabus is available in large print and electronic format.