Introduction to Literary Studies:  
Modern Literature and the Problem of Evil

English 1A (Fall 2016)  
MWTTh, 1:00-1:50, Olin-Sang 112  
Professor Tharaud  
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Office: Rabb 138; Phone: 781-736-2140  
Office hours: Tu 2:00-4:00 and by appointment  
Teaching Fellow: Diana Filar  
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Office hours: Thu 2:00-4:30

Course description: This course provides an overview of the modern study of English literature. Exploring some 500 years of literary history, we will delve into works spanning several literary modes (drama, poetry, prose fiction, and nonfiction prose), old and new media (manuscript and print to graphic novels and film), and American, British, and global Anglophone traditions. For a thematic thread to help tie such diverse works together, we’ll consider how literature has served to represent and make sense of violence and suffering in the modern world, a world in which traditional religious explanations of suffering (often known as “theodicy”) have ceased to satisfy many people. Starting with the Book of Job, we’ll read a series of works that each stages an argument with God (or the universe) over the justice of human existence and the meaning of earthly suffering. To help focus our thinking, we will sample some influential works of literary criticism in order to understand the field’s evolving sense of what counts as literature and how it should be read. We’ll also practice asking the sorts of questions literary scholars ask about their objects of study and consider some key problems that have propelled literary studies over the past century. Class will consist of discussions punctuated with occasional lectures. Course requirements include regular attendance and in-class participation, weekly discussion board posts to Latte, and three essays.

Required books: The following texts are available for purchase at the Brandeis University Bookstore. If you buy them from another vendor, please get these editions. Other course readings will be available on the course page on Latte. They are marked “[L]” on the reading schedule.

Shakespeare, King Lear (Pelican Shakespeare, 2016)  
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Oxford, 2009).  
Reading Schedule

Aug. 25 (Th): Welcome and introduction: Literature as Equipment for Living
   Recommended: Kenneth Burke, “Literature as Equipment for Living” (1937) [L]

Aug. 29 (M): The Book of Job (New Revised Standard Version), online at

Aug. 31 (W): William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (1605), Act I


Sept. 5 (M): No Class (Labor Day)


Sept. 8 (Th): (Brandeis Monday)
   Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act V (finish)
   Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author” (1967) [L]


Sept. 15 (Th) Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX

Sept. 19 (M) Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), pp. 5-56

Sept. 21 (W) Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 57-106

Sept. 22 (Th) Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 106-130

Sept. 26 (M) Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 130-81


Sept. 29 (Th) Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 219-241 (finish)
Saturday, Oct. 1: Paper #1 (5-6 pp.) due uploaded to Latte by 5 p.m.

Oct. 3 (M) No Class (Rosh Hashanah)

Oct. 5 (W) William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) [L]
Wordsworth, “Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey” (1802) [L]
Emily Dickinson, Selected poems I [L]

Oct. 6 (Th) Emily Dickinson, Selected poems II [L]
Recommended: Cleanth Brooks, “Irony as a Principle of Structure” (1951) [L]

Oct. 10 (M) Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Experience” (1844) [L]

Oct. 12 (W) No Class (Yom Kippur)


Oct. 17 (M) No Class (Sukkot)

Oct. 19 (W) Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), pp. 3-57

Oct. 20 (Th) Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, pp. 58-100 (finish)
Recommended: New Historicism essay TBA

Oct. 24 (M) No Class (Shmini Atzeret)

Oct. 25 (T) (Brandeis Monday)
James Joyce, “The Dead” (1907) [L]

Recommended: Mary Louise Pratt, “The Short Story: The Long and Short of It” (1981) [L]

Oct. 27 (Th) Franco Moretti, “The Slaughterhouse of Literature” (2000) [L]
Recommended: Franco Moretti, “Style, Inc. Reflections on Seven Thousand Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850)” (2009) [L]


Nov. 3 (Th) Willa Cather, “Neighbor Rosicky” (1930) [L]

Saturday, Nov. 5: Paper #2 (5-6 pp.) due uploaded to Latte by 5 p.m.
Nov. 7 (M)  Art Spiegelman, *Maus Vol. I: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (1991), chaps. 1-3 (pp. 5-69)

Nov. 9 (W)  Spiegelman, *Maus*, chap. 4-5 (pp. 71-127)

Nov. 10 (Th)  Spiegelman, *Maus*, chap. 6 (pp. 129-59)
  Recommended: Hillary Chute, “*Maus*’s Archival Images and the Postwar Comics Field” (2016) [L]

Nov. 14 (M)  Joel and Ethan Coen, *A Serious Man* (2009) [L]

Nov. 16 (W)  Joel and Ethan Coen, *A Serious Man* [L]

Nov. 17 (Th)  Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) [L]

Nov. 21 (M)  Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (1997), chaps. 1-2 (pp. 3-83)

Nov. 23 (W)  No Class (Thanksgiving break)

Nov. 24 (Th)  No Class (Thanksgiving)

Nov. 28 (M)  Roy, *The God of Small Things*, chap. 3-5 (pp. 84-129)

Nov. 30 (W)  Roy, *The God of Small Things*, chaps. 6-9 (pp. 130-183)

Dec. 1 (Th)  Roy, *The God of Small Things*, chaps. 10-12 (pp. 184-225)


Dec. 7 (W)  Roy, *The God of Small Things*, chaps. 15-21 (finish)
  Course conclusion

**Wednesday, Dec. 14: Final essay (7-8 pp.) due uploaded to Latte by 5 p.m.**
Course Policies and Requirements

Prerequisites: None

Four-Credit Course (three hours of class-time per week): Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Learning goals:

- Improve your ability to close-read and analyze literary and visual texts.
- Develop an understanding of key literary modes, genres, and media.
- Increase your knowledge of several major literary authors and works.
- Gain a better understanding of literary studies, its methods, and key debates in the field.
- Improve your academic writing skills.
- Gain greater appreciation of and enjoyment from works of literature— including works on this syllabus and beyond it.

Grading breakdown:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response posts</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay #1 (5-6 pp.)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Essay #2 (5-6 pp.)</td>
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<td>Essay #3 (7-8 pp.)</td>
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Course requirements:

1. **Attendance**: Regular and prompt class attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss class because of sickness, religious observance, or an emergency, please contact me in advance if possible. You will be responsible for posting a response to the readings for the session you missed on the discussion board on Latte within a week. Students who come to class without bringing that day’s assigned readings will be marked absent. Each unexcused absence will lower your attendance and participation grade (20% of the total) by a letter grade. Missing more than four classes will result in failing the class.

2. **In-class participation**: Participating fully in this class requires completing the assigned readings and participating in class discussion. Reading assigned material carefully and in its entirety before class on the day it is assigned is essential for your success in this class. You can expect to read between 50 and 100 pages per class period. Please be sure to buy the exact editions listed on the syllabus so we can all refer to the same page numbers, and bring all texts to class in hard copy (bring the book). The majority of our class time will be spent in detailed discussion of these texts, so your participation grade includes contributing to class discussion. Every student is expected to speak at least once per class. I may call on you even if you haven’t raised your hand.
3. **Response posts**: These brief weekly written responses will be posted to the course discussion board on Latte (http://latte.brandeis.edu) and account for 20% of your final grade. They are intended to ensure you are keeping up with the reading, to jump-start your own thinking about a text, and to improve the quality of our in-class discussions. Responses do not need to be as formal or as polished as formal essays, but they should reflect a careful reading of a text and a thoughtful engagement with it, and they should make a claim about it. Some weeks I will provide a topic to write about; other weeks you will choose your own. Either way, these posts should engage substantively with some feature of the text that interests you. This might mean unpacking a particular character, symbol, word, or idea that seems crucial to understanding the text, or identifying a key problem or tension that plays out there. They can also be a place to express personal reactions to a text and to explore aspects of it that excite, frustrate, or confuse you. There is no word-count requirement, but each post should be at least a solid paragraph. Students with last names starting with A-L will be assigned to respond to Monday’s readings, and those beginning with M through Z will respond to Wednesday’s readings. Please post your response by 10 p.m. the night before the reading is to be discussed in class. On days when you are not scheduled to post, please read the posted responses before class and respond briefly to at least one of them—two or three sentences is fine. (If no class is held on your day that week, post a response for the next regularly scheduled class unless the canceled class is replaced by a “Brandeis Monday” that week.) You are allowed to skip two posts over the course of the semester, so you should have a total of 13 posts by the end of the term. These responses are not evaluated for a letter grade: you get full credit as long as you turn it in on time, write a full paragraph, and engage substantively with the text.

4. **Essays**: These longer (5-8 pp.) papers account for more than half of your grade. The first essay (5-6 pp.) will ask you to analyze a text’s argument about the nature of suffering or evil. The second (5-6 pp.) will ask you to perform a close reading of a poem, essay, or short story. The final essay (7-8 pp.) will ask you to analyze a film, graphic novel, or contemporary novel with the help of secondary sources. Each essay should make a clear claim (expressed in a thesis statement) and support it with specific evidence from the text. The argument should unfold in a logical, well-organized fashion and be framed by a compelling introduction and conclusion. Formatting guidelines are below. I will accept revisions for the first two essays.

**Formatting guidelines**: All papers should be in 11- or 12-point type, double-spaced, using Times New Roman or another standard, readable font, and not in italics. Margins should be 1 inch all around. Any citations should use Chicago style (for a helpful overview see the “Quick Guide” at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html).

**Late policy**: Papers will be docked a half-grade for each day they are late (e.g., from A to A-).

**Academic Integrity**: Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s ideas or words in your writing without acknowledging the source. It is a serious offense, and may result in failing the class and suspension from the university. When in doubt, see me or consult the student resources listed by
Brandeis Library & Technology Services (https://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html), including this handout on “How to avoid plagiarism” (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html).

**Writing Center**: Students who want additional help with their writing are encouraged to visit the campus Writing Center (http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/; Goldfarb Main Library, Room 107; 781-736-2130; writingcenter@brandeis.edu).

**Electronic devices**: Computers and tablets are allowed during class for taking and reviewing notes only. Browsing the Internet, checking email or Facebook, etc. is not allowed during class; if I find you doing those things I will bar you from bringing your device to future classes. Cell phone and smartphone use during class is prohibited.

**Communications**: Any changes to the syllabus or class schedule, including accommodations for snow days, will be communicated via the class email list and posted on Latte. Please plan to check your university email account and Latte daily to keep informed.

**Disabilities**: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.