

# English 290 – Themes in Literature: Postmodernism

Fall 2010 Section 003/800 Online

**Instructor:** Ms. Ashley Bissette  
**Office:** MO 103B  
**Office Hours:** MW 2:00 – 3:00 and by appt.

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## COURSE OVERVIEW

### **Required Texts and Materials:**

You should be able to order textbooks online through the UNCW bookstore. You will want to obtain your books as soon as possible, as your first reading assignment will be due during the second week of classes. The web address for the UNCW bookstore is <http://www.uncw.edu/ba/bookstore/>

- Nichol, Bran. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*
- Auster, Paul. *City of Glass*
- DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*
- Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*
- Film: *Pulp Fiction* (may be purchased, rented, or checked out at the library)
- Microsoft Word and PowerPoint (If you do not have access, you can use “Tealware” )
- Technical Requirements as listed at <http://uncw.edu/ONLINE/techreq.html>
- A saving device such as a flash drive

### **Course Description:**

What, exactly, is Postmodernism? In this course, we will discuss this question at length as we analyze the texts of Paul Auster, Kurt Vonnegut, Don DeLillo, and many others. In addition, we’ll consider postmodern art and film, and the relevance of Postmodernism in our daily lives.

### **Course Objectives:**

Students should develop skills in analyzing, presenting, and defending interpretations and in writing thoughtfully about literary texts. Furthermore, students should develop an appreciation and an understanding of literature achieved through practice in asserting and supporting their interpretations of a literary work.

### **Course Requirements:**

Discussion Board Participation – 10 points  
Learning Module Activities – 10 points  
4 Response Papers – 20 points (5 points each)  
Analysis Essay – 20 points  
Midterm Exam – 20 points  
Research Project – 20 points

### **Final Grading Scale:**

93-100 points – A	73-76 points – C
90-92 points – A-	70-72 points – C-
87-89 points – B+	67-69 points – D+
83-86 points – B	63-66 points – D
80-82 points – B-	60-62 points – D-
77-79 points – C+	Below 60 points – F

### **Getting Started:**

We will be using *Blackboard 9.1* as the platform for this course. Please note that **You will NOT be able to access this course from MySeaport.** You should go to <http://learn.uncw.edu> to access the course. Your username will be your email username (without @uncw.edu) and your password will be your email password. Once you log in, you will be able to click on English 290.

### **Online Support:**

If at any point during the semester you have problems with Blackboard, you can receive assistance from the Technology Assistance Center. The email address is [tac@uncw.edu](mailto:tac@uncw.edu) and the phone number is 910-962-HELP (4357). If you do email the TAC, be sure to put “Blackboard 9.1” in the subject line. There is also a very useful online support center at <http://uncw.edu/bbsupport>.

## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

Because this is an online course, it is important that you keep yourself accountable for weekly assignments and deadlines. Deadlines can be found on the *Course Calendar and at the end of this syllabus*. You will find it extremely important to stay organized and to check Blackboard frequently. It is also a good idea to maintain contact with me throughout the semester. If I notice that you have not been logging in to Blackboard and completing weekly assignments, I will assume you have decided to drop the course.

## **WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Readings and Learning Modules:**

Each week you will be asked to complete readings and will be responsible for their content. In addition, you will find learning modules which will contain corresponding lectures, PowerPoint presentations, activities and/or worksheets. Students are always responsible for this information, are expected to keep up with assignments, and should complete all readings and activities by the end of the school week (Thursday). Learning Module Activities are worth 10 points toward your final grade, and can be found by clicking on “Learning Modules” on the left hand tool bar on our Blackboard Homepage.

### **Discussion Board Participation:**

- A large part of your grade for this class will be participating in a dialogue with classmates via discussion boards. Find the discussion board for each week by clicking on “Discussions” on the left hand tool bar on our Blackboard Homepage. Discussions for each week should begin on Monday’s (or earlier) and should wrap up on Thursdays. While I will usually post at least one discussion question each week, students should also occasionally post his or her own questions for discussion. I don’t expect every student to post their own discussion question for each topic. Instead, I ask that students post *at least two of their own throughout the course of the semester*. Of course, this is only a minimum. I want students to post their own discussion questions when they have something particularly interesting to say or ask.
- *Students should post 2-4 good quality discussion responses per week.* These responses may be to my questions or to classmate’s questions. Responses to discussion questions should be thoughtful and well written. Refer to “Netiquette” at the end of this syllabus for a list of guidelines. When replying to classmates, you should be sure to be polite and open-minded. The discussion board is a place where all students should feel comfortable expressing ideas. This does not mean that you cannot disagree with your classmates; it means that you should be conscious of your language and tone.
- I will judge participation in discussion boards based on how often a student responds to instructor and student discussion questions, how often a student posts his or her own discussion questions, and the insightfulness and usefulness of all of the above. However, discussion posts should be concise, and should not exceed 200 words.

### **Response Papers:**

Another portion of your grade will be based on 4 response papers. Prompts for these responses can be found by clicking on “Response Papers” on the left hand tool bar in Blackboard. Each response should be 1-2 pages in length, and should follow MLA format. The best responses will be those that try out new ideas and incorporate specific details and quotes from the text. Responses should be emailed to my campus email address as a .doc or .docx attachment. *Responses that are not turned in as a .doc or .docx attachment will be considered late until they are turned in correctly.* All deadlines in this class are firm. Be sure to plan wisely and save all work in at least two places. For each day that a response is late, the grade for that response will be reduced by **1 point**.

## **FORMAL ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Midterm Exam:**

This course requires a midterm exam, which will take place on **Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup>**. You must take the exam on the date scheduled. The exam will become available at 6:00am and must be completed by 11:59pm. It will be made up of short answer and essay questions, and will be located in the “Midterm Exam” folder in the “Formal Assignments” button on the left of the Blackboard Homepage.

### **Analysis Essay:**

You will be writing one formal essay for this class. Essays should be emailed to my campus email address as a .doc or .docx attachment. *Essays that are not turned in as a .doc or .docx attachment will be considered late until they are turned in correctly.* All deadlines in this class are firm. Be sure to plan wisely and save all work in at least two places. For each day that an essay is late, the grade for that assignment will be reduced by **3 points**. Your essay prompt and other helpful materials will be available in the “Analysis Essay” folder in the “Formal Assignments” button on the left of the Blackboard Homepage.

### **The Writing Center:**

I encourage all students to obtain online help from the Writing Center for their essays.

[http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/writing\\_newconsultation.htm](http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/writing_newconsultation.htm)

### **Research Project:**

Early in the semester, each student will be assigned to a group for their research project. All students are expected to participate equally in their groups. The research project assignment will be available in the “Research Project” folder in the “Formal Assignments” button on the left of the Blackboard Homepage.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **Email / Phone:**

I will often send information and updates via campus email, so you should check your campus email daily. All students will be responsible for knowing this information. “I forgot to check my email” is not an excuse. Email is also the best way to contact me if you have questions throughout the course. While I do check my email often, students should be aware that **I usually only check email Sunday – Thursday before 6:00pm, and Friday before 3:00pm**. Therefore, it is a good idea to work on assignments ahead of time in case you have questions. My cell phone number is listed at the top of this syllabus. Students are welcome to call or text this number *in cases when email is insufficient*. **However, I do ask that students only call or text Sunday – Thursday between 10:00am and 6:00pm.**

\*When using text messaging or voicemail, include your full name, course title, and section number.

\*For email, include course title, section number, and a few words about your question in the subject line. Your email should use correct grammar and complete sentences. Also, be sure to use proper etiquette, including a greeting such as “Dear Ms. Bissette” and concluding with a salutation such as “Sincerely, John Doe.”

### **Office Hours:**

I will have office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. If you’d like to discuss something with me during office hours, you have a few options.

1. See me in person: Morton Hall 103B
2. Office Phone: 910-962-2690.
3. *Ms. Bissette’s Virtual Office* on the Blackboard Course Homepage

*\*If you are not available to contact me during office hours, you can set up an appointment with me.*

## **NETIQUETTE**

*For this course, you will be expressing your thoughts in various types of writing. There are a few things to consider when writing online.*

- **Avoid internet speak.** This means spelling out words instead of using abbreviations often seen in chat rooms and text messaging. For example, the following questions would be unacceptable: What did u think of the second paragraph? When r we supposed to turn this in?
- **Proofread.** Even in a reply to a discussion post, you should be sure to proofread what you have written. You should also try to use correct grammar in all situations.
- **Use proper capitalization.** The beginning of a sentence should always be capitalized, even in online writing. You should also take care to avoid speaking in all caps. For instance, you should not write: THE STYLE OF THIS ESSAY WAS EFFECTIVE. This is the equivalent of shouting.
- **Use names:** When responding to a discussion item, blog post, or email, use the name of the person you are responding to. Ultimately, we want to foster a positive community through this course.
- **Be polite.** This is an environment where students should feel comfortable communicating ideas. Therefore, when responding to classmates you should always be polite, even if you want to express disagreement. Excessive profanity, of course, is unacceptable.
- **Advance Discussion in useful ways.** Do not make off-topic posts in the midst of a thread. Also, contribute, don't reiterate. A post that says "I agree" is useless. It's okay to agree with a poster, but rather than simply agreeing, extend what they have to say by locating other examples or elaborating on the point.
- **Keep your discussion posts concise.** Think quality, not quantity. Discussion posts should not exceed 200 words.

## **OTHER POLICIES**

### **Disabilities:**

If you have a disability and need special accommodations, you should let me know *within the first week of classes*. You will also need to register with Disability Services for proper documentation. The phone number for Disability Services is 910-962-7555.

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

Academic Dishonesty is unacceptable and is grounds for failure for this course. All students are responsible for knowing the guidelines listed in this UNCW Academic Honor Code:

[http://www.uncw.edu/policies/documents/03\\_100FINALHONORCODE\\_Aug2009.pdf](http://www.uncw.edu/policies/documents/03_100FINALHONORCODE_Aug2009.pdf)

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

\**Learning Module Activities should be completed by Thursday of each week.*

\**Discussions should be ongoing, beginning on Mondays and continuing through Thursdays each week.*

- 8/18-8/19 First Week of Classes – Read syllabus, Review Course Orientation (on the left hand tool bar), become familiar with Blackboard 9.1, and obtain necessary materials for the course.
- 8/23-8/26 “Preface: reading postmodern fiction” xiii-xvii (CIPF)  
“Introduction: Postmodernism and postmodernity” 1-16 (CIPF)  
*City of Glass* chapter 1  
**\*Last day for Drop/Add is 8/25**
- 8/30-9/2 *City of Glass* chapters 2-8
- 9/6-9/9 *City of Glass* chapters 9-13  
“Detective Fiction” 171-172 (CIPF)  
“Paul Auster, *City of Glass*” 178-183 (CIPF)  
**Response #1 due 9/9**
- 9/13-9/16 *Pulp Fiction*
- 9/20-9/23 ["The Trash Men"](#) (online)  
["Vegas"](#) (online)  
["Time is Filled with Beginners..."](#) (online)  
["Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"](#) (online)  
**Response #2 due 9/23**
- 9/27-9/30 **Midterm Exam 9/30**
- 10/6 - 10/7 Warhol, Magritte, and Duchamp – Find biographies and artwork in this week’s Learning Module.  
**\* Last Day to Withdraw with grade of W is 10/7**
- 10/11-10/14 “Fiction of the ‘postmodern condition’” 184-185  
*White Noise* chapters 1-20
- 10/18-10/22 *White Noise* chapters 21-27
- 10/25-10/28 *White Noise* chapters 28-40  
“Don DeLillo, *White Noise* and *Libra*” 191-194 (CIPF)  
**Response #3 due 10/28**
- 11/1-11/4 *Slaughterhouse-Five* chapter 1  
**Essay due 11/4**
- 11/8-11/11 US Metafiction 72-75 (CIPF)  
*Slaughterhouse-Five* chapters 2-5
- 11/15-11/18 *Slaughterhouse-Five* chapters 6-10
- 11/22-11/23 “Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*” 86-89 (CIPF)  
**Response #4 due 11/23**
- 11/29-12/3 **Research Project due 12/3**