

ENG 261 / AMS 301 Literature of the Americas
Section C, MWF 10:10-11:00 am, Memorial 117

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Office hours: W 11:00am-12:00n; F 11:00am-1:00pm

Description

McNULTY: I gotta ask you: if every time Snot Boogie would grab the money and run away, why'd you even let him in the game?

SNOT BOOGIE'S FRIEND: What?

McNULTY: If Snot Boogie stole the money, why'd you let him play?

SNOT BOOGIE'S FRIEND: Got to. It's America, man.

— *The Wire*, season 1, episode 1 (2002)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYgKmOJT_gM

What is this “America”? Is it a utopian place where there's room for everyone to play together? Is it a dystopian place of corruption and violence? In this class we will investigate these questions by reading poems, novels, short stories, and non-fiction and by watching films and TV shows that span hundreds of years (though mostly from the 20th and 21st centuries) and many regions of the Americas (mostly the United States, but also the Caribbean, Mexico, and elsewhere). Many of our materials will imagine these lands as either utopia or dystopia—sometimes both.

Texts: All available in the UM bookstore (*look under AMS 301 first*)

Edwidge Danticat, *Brother, I'm Dying*. Vintage. 978-1400034307

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Del Rey. 978-0345404473.

Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*. And Other Stories Press. 978-1908276421.

Ursula Le Guin, *The Word for World Is Forest*. Tor. 978-0-7653-2464-1

Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*. Vintage. 978-0307276766.

Colson Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*. Anchor. 978-0385493000.

Requirements/Policies/Grading:

- Three formal papers, about 1500 words each. Due dates TBD. For each paper you will submit a draft, receive feedback, then submit a final, revised version. (Note: there are no exams in this class.) **25% of final grade for each paper.**
- Class participation: some collaborative selection of reading/viewing materials; at least one in-class presentation; regular attendance and contributions during class discussion: asking generative questions, responding specifically to your classmates and the instructor; regular in-class short writing assignments. **25% of final grade.**
- Academic integrity. For your essays, I will ask you to add the following words and your signature at the end: “I upheld the Honor Code.” The Undergraduate Honor Code can be

accessed here: http://www.miami.edu/sa/index.php/policies_and_procedures/honor_code/. If you plagiarize, you may fail the class. The Honor Code defines plagiarism as follows: “Representing the words or ideas of someone else as your own. Examples include, but are not limited to, failing to properly cite direct quotes and failing to give credit for someone else’s ideas” (Title III, “Violations,” B.2, “Plagiarism,” p. 2).

Schedule:

W 1/18 Introductions
F 1/20 Le Guin, *Word for World Is Forest*

M 1/23 Le Guin, *Word for World Is Forest*
W 1/25 Le Guin, *Word for World Is Forest*
F 1/27 excerpt from the *Relation of Cabeza de Vaca* (BB)

M 1/30 Morrison, *A Mercy*
W 2/1 Morrison, *A Mercy*
F 2/3 Morrison, *A Mercy*

M 2/6 Morrison, *A Mercy*
W 2/8 no class: attend screening of *Daughters of the Dust*, dir. Julie Dash, time/day TBD
F 2/10 discussion of *Daughters of the Dust*

M 2/13 “Equality: A Political Romance” (BB)
W 2/15 “Equality: A Political Romance” (BB)
F 2/17 Songs from *Hamilton* plus excerpts from *Federalist Papers*

M 2/20 Danticat, *Brother, I’m Dying*
W 2/22 Danticat, *Brother, I’m Dying*
F 2/24 Danticat, *Brother, I’m Dying*

M 2/27 Danticat, *Brother, I’m Dying*
W 3/1 Olive Senior, from *Gardening in the Tropics* (BB)
F 3/3 Derek Walcott, selected poems (BB)

M 3/6 Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*
W 3/8 Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*
F 3/10 TBD

———— SPRING BREAK ————

M 3/20 Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
W 3/22 Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
F 3/24 Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

M 3/27 Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

W 3/29 no class: attend screening of *Blade Runner*, dir. Ridley Scott, time/day TBD
F 3/31 discussion of *Blade Runner*

M 4/3 Greg Grandin, from *Fordlandia* (BB)
W 4/5 *The Wire*, “Hamsterdam” (season 3, episode 4)
F 4/7 *The Wire*

M 4/10 **planning day**: select readings/materials for 4/12 and 4/14
W 4/12 topics/readings selected by the class
F 4/14 topics/readings selected by the class

M 4/17 Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*
W 4/19 Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*
F 4/21 Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*

M 4/24 Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*
W 4/26 TBD
F 4/29 Conclusions