

Hacettepe University
 Faculty of Letters
 Department of English Language and Literature

SYLLABUS

IED 693/793 CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH NOVEL

Title of the Course: IED 6/793 Contemporary English Novel
Instructor: Prof. Dr. SERPIL OPPERMANN
Year and Term: Spring 2015
Classroom and Hours: Seminar Room, Tuesday 13:00-16:50
Office Hours:

Aim and Content:

The aim of this course is to study in depth the main developments in the English novel from the 1950s on to the present. Different literary trends, changing social and cultural climate of the times and the technical and thematic concerns will be discussed during the class. The focus will be mainly on the postmodern fictions, and thus concepts relating to postmodern novels, such as self-reflexivity, self-consciousness, intertextuality, parody and pastiche, irony, play, process, indeterminacy, textuality and fictionality, etc., will be discussed in our interpretation of the novels. The course aims to introduce postmodern approaches to representation and history, the problematic relationship of life and fiction, the paradoxes of fictive and the real, the uses of ex-centric characters and narrators, the decentered view of the contemporary life, subversion of traditional modes of writing, and the challenging of the metanarratives. It also aims to introduce the emerging genre of cli-fi (a new genre of novel) or climate fictions and discuss the problematic issue of representing the anthropogenic climate change and environmental transformations in the age of the Anthropocene. We will analyze climate fictions that depict the impact of climate change in human and nonhuman lives and the environment. The discussions will center around the question of "how can fiction help raise environmental awareness and change our anthropocentric conceptions of the earth?"

Course Outline:

Week I-II: Introduction: social, cultural and literary developments between 1950s and 1990s, new developments in the 21st century

Week III-VIII: Postmodernism as a multifaceted literary movement: Metafiction, historiographic metafiction, self-reflexivity, self-consciousness, postmodern pastiche and parody, intertextuality, ex-centricity, ecological postmodernism

Novels to be discussed

Steven Hall- *The Raw Shark Texts*
 John Fowles- *A Maggot*
 Penelope Fitzgerald- *The Blue Flower*
 Jim Crace- *The Gift of Stones*
 Graham Swift- *Waterland*
 Peter Ackroyd- *Hawksmoor; Plato Papers*
 Penelope Fitzgerald- *The Blue Flower*

John Banville- *Doctor Copernicus*
Morgan Llywelyn- *The Elementals*

Critical Texts:

- Linda Hutcheon: *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (Chapter 4, "Decentering the postmodern: the ex-centric" pp.57-73; and Chapter 7: "Historiographic Metafiction: The Pastime of Past Time." pp.105-123)
- Linda Hutcheon: *The Politics of Postmodernism* (Chapter 2: "Postmodernist representation." pp.31-61)
- Patricia Waugh: *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (Chapter 2: "Literary Self-consciousness: developments." pp.21-61)
- Linda Hutcheon- "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History."
http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_3553.pdf
- Raymond Federman, ed.: *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow* (Raymond Federman: "Surfiction-Four Propositions in Form of an Introduction." pp. 5-15)
- Raymond Federman: *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays*
- Aleid Fokkema- *Postmodern Characters: A Study of Characterization in British and American Postmodern Fiction*
- Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens, eds.: *British Postmodern Fiction* (Amy J. Elias: "Meta-Mimesis? The Problem of British Postmodern Realism" pp.9-31; and Susana Onega: "British Historiographic Metafiction in the 1980s" pp.47-61)
- Douwe Fokkema and Hans Bertens, eds. *Approaching Postmodernism* (Richard Todd: "The Presence of Postmodernism in British Fiction: Aspects of Style and Selfhood" pp.99-117)
- Thomas Docherty, ed.: *Postmodernism: A Reader* (chp. 5- Jürgen Habermas: "Modernity-AN Incomplete Project." pp.98-109; and Chp. 9- Ihab Hassan: "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism." Pp.146-156)
- Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds.: *A Postmodern Reader* (Linda Hutcheon: "Beginning to Theorize Postmodernism." Pp.243-272)
- Allison Lee: *Realism and Power: Postmodern British Fiction.*
- Linda Hutcheon- "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History."
http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_3553.pdf
- Hayden White- "The Historical Text as a Literary Artifact" (In *The Witing of History* ed. Canary and Kozicki)
- Maciej Czerniakowski. "The Image of Man in Metafictional Novels by John Banville: Celebrating the Power of the Imagination." Central and Eastern European Online Library. *Annals of Arts* (Roczniki Humanistyczne), 61. 5 (2013): 209-223. www.cceol.com

Week IX-XII: Cli-fi as a new genre. Cultures of climate change, the Anthropocene discourse, new materialist reading, posthumanism

Novels to be discussed

Jeanette Winterson- *Stone Gods*
Liz Jensen- *The Rapture*
Marcel Theroux- *Far North*
Gemma Malley- *The Declaration*
John Burnside- *Glister*
Maggie Gee- *The Ice People*
Ian MacEvan- *Solar*

Critical Texts:

Rebecca Tuhus-Dubrow: "Cli-Fi: Birth of a Genre." *Dissent* (Summer 2013): 58-61

- Adeline Johns-Putra: "Ecocriticism, Genre, and Climate Change: Reading the Utopian Vision of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital Trilogy*." *English Studies* 91.7 (November 2010): 744-760.
- Terry Gifford: "Biosemiology and Globalism in *The Rapture* by Liz Jensen." *English Studies* 91.7 (November 2010): 713-727.
- Rachel Tillman: "Toward a New Materialism: Matter as Dynamic." *Minding Nature* 8.1 (January 2015): 30-35. http://www.humansandnature.org/january-2015---vol-8--num-1-minding_nature-25.php
- Teresa Shewry: "Geologic Fictions: Science, Imperialism, and Transnational Literatures of Deep Time." *ISLE* 21.2 (Spring 2014): 253-270.
- Greta Gaard. "What's the Story? Competing Narratives of Climate Change and Climate Justice." *Forum for World Literature Studies "Activist Ecocriticism Studies"* Spec. issue, ed. Simon Estok. 6.2 (June 2014): 272-291.
- Greg Garrard, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, (Chapter 23, Astrid Bracke. "The Contemporary English Novel and its Challenges to Ecocriticism." pp.423-439; Helena Feder: "Ecocriticism, Posthumanism, and the Biological Idea of Culture." pp. 225-240; and Ursula Kluwicz. "Talking about Climate Change: The Ecological Crisis and Narrative Form." Pp.502-516
- Patricia Yaeger. "The Death of Nature and the Apotheosis of Trash." *PMLA* 123.2 (March 2008): 321-39.
 ---. "Literature in the Ages of Wood, Tallow, Coal, Whale Oil, Gasoline, Atomic Power, and Other Energy Sources." *PMLA* 126.2 (March 2011): 305-326.
 ---. "Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of Commons." *PMLA* 125.3 (May 2010): 523-45.

Online Sources:

<https://sites.temple.edu/clifi/>

Ian Sample: "Anthropocene: Is this the new Epoch of Humans?"

<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2014/oct/16/-sp-scientists-gather-talks-rename-human-age-anthropocene-holocene>

Robert Macfarlane: "The Burning Question."

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/sep/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview29>

Rodge Glass: "Global Warning: The Rise of Cli-Fi"

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/may/31/global-warning-rise-cli-fi>

Climate Change Fiction: <http://blogs.uoregon.edu/eng104/>

Week –XIII: Review of the course

Week XIV: Exam

Method of Instruction : lectures and student presentations

Requirements: Attendance is compulsory. More than 12 hours of absence will result in F1

Each student is obligent to read every text listed in this course. The focus in the first section will be mainly on the concepts relating to metafictional features of the novels, such as the use of self-reflexivity and self-consciousness, intertextuality, postmodern parody and pastiche, irony, play, process, indeterminacy, textuality and fictionality. The students are responsible for preparing critical papers on the novels with special emphasis on the ideas of representation and history, the problematic relationship of life and fiction, the paradoxes of fictive and the real, the uses of ex-centric characters and narrators, the decentered view of the contemporary life, subversion of traditional modes of writing, and the challenging of the metanarratives. When we move on to the discussion of cli-fi narratives, the students will present

critical interpretations of climate novels in light of the recent ecocritical theories and approaches, such as the Anthropocene debate, the new materialist and posthuman visions, and climate change discussions.

Method of Assessment: Students are to write ONE major argumentative essay of about 10 pages (Term Paper) with a comparative critical approach of 2 novels of their choice which aims to test their abilities to respond critically to the novels. Students are also to produce class presentations on the novels of their choice, as well as a presentation on the critical concepts relating to the stylistic characteristics of postmodern and climate change fiction neral as listed. They are expected to attend lectures and participate in class discussions. The aim here is to encourage close attention to the texts and open up lively discussions.

Method of Assessment: In grading oral and written work 20% will be cut for language mistakes. The aim here is to encourage students to have close attention to their style.

The final assesment will be made on the following basis:

Exam	50%
Major Term Papers	40%
Class presentations on critical concepts and/or articles	10%

Supplementary Material.(Recommended)

Brian McHale: *Postmodernist Fiction*

Mark Currie, ed.: *Metafiction*

Jean-Francois Lyotard: *The Postmodern Condition*

Steven Best and Douglas Kellner: *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*

Ihab Hassan: *The Postmodern Turn*

Peter Hutchinson: *Games Authors Play*

Sarah Mills: *Discourse*

Daniel R. White: *Postmodern Ecology*

Madan Sarup: *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*

Patricia Waugh: *Practising Postmodernism. Reading Modernism*

Roland Barthes: *The Pleasure of the Text*

Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, eds.: *The Contemporary English Novel*

John Parham. *The Environmental Tradition in English Literature.*

Ursula Heise. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*

Requirements: M.A Students will submit One MAJOR TERM PAPER. Ph.D. Students will submit Two MAJOR TERM PAPERS. During the Semester every student will prepare a short, 10 minute, presentation on the related topics and issues. Each paper will be graded and will count in the overall assessment. There will be one Final Exam (50%) in addition. Attendance is compulsory. 11 hours of absence results in F1.

Essay questions on postmodern fictions:

1. Postmodern fiction decenters history and puts the emphasis on ex-centric subjects excluded from history.

2. Postmodern fiction challenges the notion of origins. It opens all originals for further revision. Discuss
3. Find examples of conflicts between an individual sense of self or the idea of constructing a new one in any one of the novels of your choice.
4. Postmodern fiction asserts that reality is “constructed” rather than perceived. Who constructs reality in (choose the novel) and how is this construction related to the playfulness of the text which constructs the characters?
5. All narratives are language games. No narrative can claim to legitimate any claim to some universal truth or absolutes. Discuss
6. Postmodern novels openly state that there are only truths in the plural and never one truth. Consider one of the novels we read in the light of this judgement.
7. Metafictional devices in postmodern novels are concerned with laying bare conventional devices such as omniscient narrator, plot, character. Comment
8. Which fiction best explores the boundaries between real and invented, fact and fiction, history and story.
9. Which novel confront the paradoxes of fictive/ historical representation, as well as of past/present?
10. *Waterland* questions the role of history as an accurate record of human existence. It questions problems implicit in the narrative form of history as a means of representation. It also problematizes history by associating its narratives with myths and fairy tales. Discuss with reference to Hayden White`s idea of history.
11. Postmodern fiction concerns itself with how we represent, how we construct, our view of reality and ourselves. Which novel according to you overtly underlines this statement? Discuss.
12. Take a novel of your choice and discuss the use of postmodern parody and pastiche by giving specific examples from that novel.
13. Which novel among the four is most visibly self-reflexive? Discuss why.
14. Characters in postmodern novels are made aware of their status as fictional entities. Take the major characters of 3 novels into consideration in elaborating this statement in the light of postmodern underlining of fictionality.