

Syllabus

English H597.04 Interdisciplinary Approaches to Narrative in the Contemporary World: “Cognition and Consciousness in 20th- and 21st-Century British Fiction”

David Herman

Denney 409

Office hours: TBA

Office phone: 614-292-6123

GEC Statement

English H597.04 meets GEC Category 5: Capstone: Issues of the Contemporary World.

The goals and outcomes for this GEC category include the following:

Goals

By drawing upon multiple disciplines—philosophy, psychology, neurobiology, and cognitive science—coursework for H597.04 “Cognition and Consciousness in 20th- and 21st-Century British Fiction” provides a capstone experience that helps Honors students enrich their experiences of narrative in the increasingly global nature of the contemporary world.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students synthesize and apply knowledge from a range of disciplines vis-à-vis narrative.
2. Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between information derived from different disciplines by interacting majors across the university campus.
3. Students write about or conduct research on narrative using the tools of the different disciplines that include philosophy, psychology, neurobiology, and cognitive science.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students synthesize and apply knowledge from a range of disciplines vis-à-vis narrative.

By drawing upon cutting edge research in multiple disciplines (cognitive science, neurobiology, and philosophy, for instance), H597.04 “Cognition and Consciousness in 20th- and 21st-Century British Fiction” coursework provides an intensive capstone experience whereby students are introduced to the benefits of integrating research on the narrative strategies used for representing cognition and consciousness in key works of 20th- and 21st-century British fiction, while also demonstrating how frameworks for narrative inquiry can contribute to cross-disciplinary conversations about the nature of mind. In this way, the course aims to equip students with the tools needed to engage in debates about the nature of contemporary art in general and contemporary fiction in particular, while also allowing them to participate in the study of issues that cut across a range of arts, humanities, and sciences disciplines that deepen our understanding of our global contemporary world.

2. Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between information derived from different disciplines by interacting majors across the university campus.

The course provides tools to evaluate 20th century and 21st-century British fiction considered significant contemporary works of the imagination from the aesthetic and social points of view. The tools selected are being developed within disciplines across the university campus that includes: cognitive science, neurobiology, linguistics, philosophy, and psychology.

3. Students write about or conduct research on contemporary narrative using the tools of the different disciplines that include psychology, philosophy, neurobiology, and cognitive science, among others.

The theoretical and scientific readings provide a fresh perspective from which to understand how narrative fiction engages us cognitively in our contemporary world. The intellectually demanding readings require a sustained focus, not a previous knowledge in the relevant sciences, and will provide the tools for students to be able to write and conduct research on the narrative strategies used for representing cognition and consciousness in key works of 20th- and 21st-century British fiction. (All previous knowledge necessary will be supplied in user-friendly manner, especially during discussions.) The readings perhaps imply an added effort for readers not acquainted with scientific texts, but they provide also an important opportunity to develop information literacy and to sharpen reading and critical skills, together with clear-writing abilities.

Assessment Plan

The effectiveness of this course to achieve the learning objectives above will be assessed in an ongoing manner over time. Measures include:

1. Macro level assessments such as a midterm course evaluation that asks students a series of questions such as “are readings clear and relevant to the topics? Are the different disciplinary approaches clear thus far?” It will also include an assessment of a random sampling of writing assignments collected during a 5-year period and will be used to evaluate if the class is meeting the three Expected Learning Outcomes. (Please see grid provided in the enclosed GEC Rationale and Assessment Plan.).
2. Micro level assessments such as assignments analytical essay assignments (direct measures) as well as SEIs and discursive evaluations (indirect measures).

(For more information on goals and assessment, please see additional document “GEC Rationale and Assessment Plan.)

Course Description: Theorists developing cognitive approaches to narrative focus on mind-relevant dimensions of storytelling practices across genres and media; they work to enrich earlier, structuralist concepts of narrative with ideas about human intelligence that were inaccessible to earlier scholars in the field. This version of H597.04 aims to introduce advanced undergraduate honors students to the benefits of integrating research on cognition and consciousness into the study of narrative, while also demonstrating how frameworks for narrative inquiry can contribute to cross-disciplinary conversations about the nature of mind.

The course focuses on narrative strategies for representing cognition and consciousness in key works of 20th- and 21st-century British fiction. Readings, discussions, and assignments draw on recent scholarship in a variety of fields—including narrative theory, the philosophy of mind, cognitive psychology, discursive psychology, and other research—to contextualize fictional techniques designed to capture what Virginia Woolf described as “the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain.” Guiding questions include: How can we work toward building an interdisciplinary framework for studying fictional minds? How might that framework help illuminate the specific techniques used by 20th- and 21st-century British writers to represent cognition and consciousness? In what ways have those techniques in turn helped constitute our own sense of what a mind is? What is the relation between the mental/individual and material/social realms, as figured by the texts under discussion?

Fictional Works:

James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*

Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net*

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*

A.S. Byatt, *Morpho Eugenia* (in *Angels and Insects*)

Ian McEwan, *Atonement*

Sources on Cognition and Consciousness:

The following sources are available on electronic reserve via Carmen, where you will also find bibliographical citations for each. These sources are listed at the appropriate places in the course schedule below.

Lynne Rudder Baker, "Folk Psychology"

George Butte, ch. 1 of *I Know that You Know that I Know*

Andy Clark, "Embodied, Situated, and Distributed Cognition"

Dorrit Cohn, ch. 4 of *Transparent Minds*

Martin Davies, "Consciousness"

Derek Edwards, ch. 7 of *Discourse and Cognition*

Owen Flanagan, "Consciousness"

Anthony Freeman, sections 1, 7, and 12 of [Consciousness: A Guide to the Debates](#) (online)

resource--requires login via OhioLINK)

Alison Gopnik, "Theory of Mind"

Rom Harré and Grant Gillett, ch. 9 of *The Discursive Mind*

Rom Harré, "The Discursive Turn in Social Psychology"

David Herman, "Regrounding Narratology"

Patrick Colm Hogan, introduction and chapter 3 of *The Mind and Its Stories*

Daniel D. Hutto, *Folk-Psychological Narratives*

Manfred Jahn, "Narrative Situations"

Alan Palmer, excerpts from *Fictional Minds*

Alan Palmer, "Thought and Consciousness Representation"

David M. Rosenthal, "Introspection"

Lisa Zunshine, "Theory of Mind and Experimental Representations of Fictional Consciousness"

Course Requirements and Grading:

1. Active class participation and weekly journal entries. Students who make frequent contributions to class discussions will receive the benefit of the doubt when it comes to assigning the final grade. Also, you will be required to submit via Carmen weekly one-page journal entries in which you reflect on the readings, raise questions that have occurred to you, etc.

Journal entries: 10%

Participation: 5%

2. Three short papers (2 @ 1,000 words, 1 @ 1,500 words), due in weeks 2, 6, and 9. These papers should focus on the possibilities as well as the limits of the theoretical framework you are using as your investigative lens for the fictional text. What aspects of the tutor-text does the work on cognition and consciousness help illuminate? Conversely, how did analyzing the text impact your understanding of the theoretical model you used?

Papers 1&2 (1,000 words each): 25%

Paper 3 (1,500 words): 15%

3. Midterm examination (mixture of short answer and essay questions) in week 5.

Exam: 20%

4. Research-based take-home final exam in week 10. For this exam, you will be required to build on our in-class work by using the library to find additional work on cognition and consciousness and bring it into dialogue with one of the fictional works on the syllabus.

Final exam: 25%

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Students with Disabilities.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Course Schedule and Reading Requirements (in pages) per Week:

(While the reading reflects what is expected of an upper division honors course, the reading requirement may be adjusted so that, for instance, the reading of a novel such as Joyce's *Portrait* extends over two weeks. This will be modified according to class needs.)

Week 1: Introduction; Joyce, *Portrait*; Davies, Herman. 250 pages.

Week 2: Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*; Cohn, Edwards, Zunshine. 275 pages.

Week 3: Beckett, *Murphy*; Flanagan, Palmer. 300 pages.

Week 4: Murdoch, *Under the Net*; Murdoch (*Sartre*), Rosenthal, Hutto. 250 pages.

Week 5: Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Hogan, Gopnik. 275 pages.

Week 6: *Time's Arrow*; Harré, Harré and Gillett. 250 pages.

Week 7: Byatt, *Morpho Eugenia*; Clark, Jahn. 275 pages.

Week 8: *Atonement*; Baker, Butte

Week 9: *Atonement* (film version); Freeman. 375 pages over weeks 8-9.

Week 10: Final synthesis; review for take-home final