

Hybrid Forms

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 Office Hours: Thursdays 5:15-6pm & by appointment
 Course website: hybridforms.wordpress.com

Spring 2015
 Tues/Thurs 6-7:50pm
 Humanities A56

English 4W is an introduction to literary analysis designed to help you develop your critical reading and writing skills. We will focus on the conventions of a wide range of genres, including poetry, short fiction, the novel, drama, and film. As we read these diverse works, we will hone specific strategies of close reading and devote serious attention to the writing process. Through informed conversation and constructive questioning, we will explore the assigned texts in their historical and formal contexts, as well as consider the larger, thematic issues raised by any study of what it means to be human.

The particular theme of this class—hybridity—is a broad one. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter referred to as the *OED*) defines “hybrid” as (1) “the offspring of two animals or plants of different species”; (2) “anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements”; (3) “having a mixed character; composed of two diverse elements.” The online version adds “a road vehicle: using two distinct sources of power” to the list. We will especially consider creative amalgamations in literary genre, formal aesthetics, and categories of identity like race, gender, sexuality, and nationality, but it’s fair to expect concepts of combination and recombination to show up in all sorts of unexpected places this quarter. Among the questions we will ask: how do we tend to aesthetically evaluate and assign social values to these hybrid forms? What frameworks encourage or discourage mixture? How do we define “different” and “distinct” in order to call something “hybrid” in the first place?

Assignments and Grading

Paper One: Poetry (4-5 pages) 15%
 Paper Two: Fiction (4-5 pages) 20%
 Paper Three: Two texts (5-7 pages) 30%
 Classwork (includes oral presentation) 20%
 Participation 15%

Classwork

The required assignments for this course include weekly writing exercises and one oral presentation. The writing assignments will focus on specific aspects of analytical writing (thesis statements, close reading, etc.) and will function as building blocks for each of the course papers. We will work with these assignments in class on their due date, so they must exist, in hard copy, at the start of each class period. In keeping with UCLA policy, late homework will not receive credit, but you must complete all class requirements to pass the course.

You will also be responsible for a short (5-7 minute) oral presentation on a single text. These presentations will initiate class discussion and thus should focus on raising questions rather than providing answers about the given work. I will deliver an example presentation at our second meeting.

In the event that I suspect that the course reading is being neglected, I reserve the right to give pop quizzes. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class; if you miss a quiz, you must notify me of your expected absence 24 hours beforehand and your grade will be calculated without it. There will be no make-up quizzes.

Papers

The details of each paper will be discussed as the dates approach. Topics are always open. Papers should include a well-formulated, argumentative, focused thesis (aka debatable claim) and ample, pertinent textual support (aka close reading). Papers must also be typed, double-spaced, MLA-formatted with a proper heading, margins, and Works Cited. We'll review citation guidelines in our first meeting; if you have questions or concerns about this protocol (or about anything else), I'm happy to talk in office hours.

A few other guidelines: I will not answer content-related emails in the 24 hours preceding the paper deadline (trust me, this policy benefits everyone involved). Your paper is due in hard copy at the beginning of class and must be uploaded to Turnitin.com *before* you arrive that day. Papers cannot be submitted via email. Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade for every day past the deadline, including weekend days.

Participation

The success of our seminar depends on the active participation of every student. Accordingly, participation constitutes a large portion (15%) of the final grade for the course. I will calculate your participation as follows: I will not keep track of the number of times you raise your hand; I will attend to the evidence that you actively engage with the material, share your insights and questions with the class, and incorporate these thoughts as well as my feedback into the course assignments. (Although there is not a separate grade for attendance, if you are late or absent, you cannot participate.)

Weekly schedule

With the exception of March 31, texts should be read prior to the indicated class. To keep costs down, all available poems and prose are posted on the course website, under "course documents"; please print these out and bring the hard copies with you to class.

Week 1: Some Points of Origin

March 31: entries on "hybridity" and "identity" from *Wikipedia* and *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2015); Robert Rauschenberg, "Combines" (1950s)

Weeks 1-3: Poetry

*Read all poems THREE times. Once for basic comprehension, once to confirm comprehension and identify various literary techniques, and once to analyze the more subtle connections between the content and the form.

April 2: William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116 (1609)

Walt Whitman, excerpt from "Song of Myself" (1855/1891)

Emily Dickinson, "(1129/1263) Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—" (c. 1879)

April 7: T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915)

Gertrude Stein, excerpt from "Idem the Same: A Valentine for Sherwood

Anderson" ["Why Do You Feel Differently"] (1922)
Jean Toomer, excerpt from *Cane* ["Georgia Dusk," "Fern"] (1923)
April 9: no class
April 14: Adrienne Rich, "Diving Into the Wreck" (1971)
Amiri Baraka, "A New Reality Is Better Than a New Movie!" (1976)
Li-Young Lee, "Persimmons" (1986)

Weeks 3-5: Short Stories & Essays

April 16: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" (1843)
April 21: Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1928)
**Poetry paper due Tuesday April 21
April 23: Jorge Luis Borges, "A Survey of the Works of Herbert Quain" (1941)
April 28: Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987)

Weeks 5-7: Fiction

April 30, May 5, 7: James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912)
May 12, 14: Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007)

Week 8: Graphic Memoir

May 19, 21: Allison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2006)

Week 9: Drama

May 26, 28: Suzan-Lori Parks, *Venus* (1996)
**Fiction essay due Tuesday May 26

Week 10: Film

June 2: Spike Jonze, *Her* (2013)
June 4: Course summary

**Final paper due to my box in Humanities 149 & uploaded to Turnitin.com by 3pm on Tuesday June 9

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