Modern Catholic Novelists
ML/MLA  6393-N
MW 5:30-8:15
Location:  Jones 202

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Office Hours:  by appointment

Texts

Any edition of the following texts may be used.

Quo Vadis by Henryk Sienkiewicz  978-1466245280
The Wreath by Sigrid Undset  978-0141180410
The Quiet Light by Louis de Wohl  978-0898705959
The Comforters by Muriel Spark  978-0811223003
Catholics by Brian Moore 978-0829423334
The Company of Women by Mary Gordon  978-0345483010
Odd Thomas by Dean Koontz  978-0345533425
Someone by Alice McDermott  978-1250055361

Course Description

Modern Catholic Authors will examine minor and/or contemporary novels with Roman Catholic influence. First and foremost the purpose is to learn the riches of Catholic literature beyond the great Catholic novelists who are frequently studied (O’Connor, Waugh, Greene, etc.). The class will discuss what makes an author “minor” as opposed to “major” and whether any of our contemporary writers will join the ranks of the latter. Moreover, we will address what was/is happening in the culture, both secular and Church, which gave rise to the work. As a corollary, we will touch upon the output of faith based literature from other traditions for comparison.

Course Schedule
See Blackboard Calendar
(may be modified as course progresses)
Course objectives

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. analyze the influence of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition on the wider culture and the influence of the wider culture on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition as represented in these novels
2. distinguish religiously themed fiction as evangelical, secularized and devoid of sacred meaning or manifesting a complex usage of religious themes
3. describe a number of Catholic novelists and their contributions to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition
4. conduct graduate level research and produce a work of graduate level writing
5. conduct a seminar discussion on a chosen topic

Course Policies

This class is a graduate seminar and will center on discussions. The professor will facilitate and guide discussions, but students are expected to lead the discussions on their assigned dates. In a seminar class participation by all students is expected. It’s how we learn from each other.

Absence/Lateness – Student attendance in class is expected. Frequent absence may adversely affect your grade. You can’t participate if you are not here. A large number of absences may result in the student being administratively dropped from the class. Since this is an evening class, traffic may be an issue for some of you trying to get here. If bad traffic is the norm, please adjust your schedule to allow you to arrive to class on time. Our time together is very short, and we will be moving quickly through the material. The rare occasion when traffic is a nightmare or work responsibilities arise unexpectedly will be understood.

Late Work – Seminar leadership and Presentation dates cannot be changed at the last minute. Papers will not be accepted late except for very serious reasons. In these situations acceptance of late work will be decided on a case by case basis with consultation between professor and student before the due date. Papers should be turned in at the class period but are ultimately due by midnight of the due date (via email).

Academic Dishonesty – Every offense against academic honesty seriously undermines the teaching—learning process for which the University exists, and such offenses will be dealt with expeditiously according to the following criteria.

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

1. Cheating on an examination or test; for example, by copying from another’s paper or using unauthorized materials before or during the test;
2. Plagiarism, which represents as one’s own the work of another, whether published or not, without acknowledging the precise source;

3. Knowing participation in the academic dishonesty of another student, even though one’s own work is not directly affected;

4. Any conduct which reasonable persons in similar circumstances would recognize as dishonest in an academic setting.

The penalty for an incident of academic dishonesty is, at the discretion of the faculty member, either a mark of zero for the work in question or the grade of “F” for the course.

Faculty who consider that they have a valid case of academic dishonesty against a student must inform the student of the charge and penalty in writing, using the Report of Academic Dishonesty form available from the Registrar. The faculty member will inform the student no later than the date when the course grades are due for the semester or other academic session. If necessary, the faculty member will send the student a copy of the report by certified mail. The student has a right to appeal the facts of the charge but not the penalty. (from the UST catalog 2010-2011).

Assignments and Grading

Blackboard Postings – 5%
Seminar leadership – 10%
Presentation – 20%
Annotated Bibliography – 15%
Paper – 30%
Final Exam – 20%

Blackboard postings – Blackboard forums will be used for specific questions and to continue discussions outside of class. Your postings will be assessed on how specifically you address the topic and how thoroughly your point(s) is developed. You must make at least one posting in each forum, and you must make all postings to a forum by the closing date.

Conducting a Seminar – as a graduate student you should become increasingly comfortable with joining the conversation of scholarship, both in speech and in print. In order to learn this skill, each student will lead a class discussion on a particular topic about the book of the evening. Your goal as a seminar leader is to elicit as much class participation as possible while keeping the conversation grounded in the text. This is to be a conversation so no lecturing, no reading off of paper or cards and no PowerPoints. You will be assessed on how well you use the text to make or prove points, how well you elicit discussion from the class members, and how well you keep the discussion on topic. Extra points will be added for questions that show insightful analysis of the text.

Annotated Bibliography -- a list of resources you plan to use as you research and write your paper in proper citation format (MLA 7th edition). Annotations are brief descriptions of the resources including
how valuable and in what ways the resource will be to your final paper. You do not have to have read all
of the resource in order to write an annotation, but you need to be familiar enough with the content to
know the resource will be useful to you. You do not have to use all of these resources in your final
paper (should they prove not to be as valuable as you thought), and you may use resources in your final
paper that are not included in this bibliography. In other words this is a preliminary bibliography.
However, since you want to be well into your research by this point, it should be fairly close to the final
product. The bibliography should include a variety of resources (primary and secondary) in a variety of
formats (books, journal articles, web sites (if appropriate), etc.) Assessment will be based on having a
sufficient number of resources to address your topic, having a sufficient sampling of resources available
(unless there are very few resources on your particular topic), having a sufficient variety of resources,
having sufficient length and content to annotations to show how the resource will be valuable to your
paper, and following proper citation format.

Presentation – is a mini-lecture to the class. Topics will be chosen from a list provided by the professor.
PowerPoints or other visuals may be used to enhance your lecture. If you do use PowerPoint, make sure
that slides are not all text and that you do not read the slides to the class. Even though the lecture is
oral, there should be some method of giving credit for the sources of your information. It does not need
to be in strict MLA 7th format however. Presentations will be assessed by the importance of the content,
the organization of the content, how engaging the presentation is to the class, how well visuals support
presentation (if used), and citing of resources used.

Paper – The paper should be 15-20 pages and in MLA format (7th edition). Topic should be a critical
analysis on one or more of the books read in class. Papers will be assessed on quality of analysis of the
text(s) and on mellifluous use of language.

Students may use this paper to fulfill the capstone requirement in the MLA program. Please inform
the instructor in writing if you wish to use this assignment to fulfill the capstone requirement. You are
responsible for picking up the graded paper and submitting it to the Director of the MLA Program.
Students can pick up the graded paper at the end of the semester (if you are graduating in December)
or in early Spring 2015 and submit it to the MLA Program Office.