

**Introduction to Humanities:
Empathy in Contemporary Storytelling**

TCORE104c Autumn 2017

M/W/F 9:30-10:50 JOY113

Professor: Dr. Alex Miller
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Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30
 T 10-12

Course Description:

This course will consider the role of empathy within post-postmodern art, literature, and film by analyzing the work of a variety of contemporary artists. Employing the lens of affective criticism, students will interrogate the role that contemporary art plays in mediating difference and establishing points of understanding across racial, sexual, and class-based divisions.

“Core” Description:

The Core program consists of a coordinated series of courses that represent the various disciplines in the university. This course, along with the others in your cohort, fulfills one of the university’s general education requirements in each of the areas of knowledge plus composition. The courses are designed to both support and challenge you to develop the critical thinking, writing, research, and analytical skills you’ll need at UWT while introducing you to relevant topics in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences.

Prerequisites:

There are no specific requirement for this course; however, in order to be successful, students must possess a willingness to approach texts and ideas openly, a desire to understand more about themselves and their worlds, and an appreciation of both diversity and ambiguity. Work hard, and you will succeed.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to...

- Articulate how affective criticism resists postmodern theory
- Understand how artists working across mediums facilitate empathetic exchange through their works
- Explain how meaning is constructed through the interaction of texts, contexts, and readers

- Understand how art functions as a medium through which contemporary problems are both posed and solved
- Communicate sophisticated ideas about art while employing the conventions of academic argumentation

Required Texts and Materials:

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Mariner Books, 2006.

Whitehead, Colson. *The Underground Railroad*. Doubleday, 2016.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Another Brooklyn*. Amistad, 2016.

Many of our early readings are available on Canvas (under “Files”), and should be printed out

Student Conduct:

You are responsible for participating in a supportive and stimulating communication dynamic with your classmates and professor. In addition to adhering to the college standards for student conduct and honor code, you are also expected to become aware of the ways in which your participation (or lack thereof) affects the classroom. Students are responsible for fostering a generous and supportive intellectual community where others are able to explore their ideas and engage with them in dialogue and debate.

Please avoid any behavior that distracts other students and/or interferes with the professor’s ability to teach. The Standards of Conduct [WAC 478-120-020] outlines that students “will conduct themselves as responsible members of the academic community. As a condition of enrollment, all students assume responsibility to observe standards of conduct that will contribute to the pursuit of academic goals and to the welfare of the academic community.” Of particular reference in our classroom, that responsibility includes (2a) “Practicing high standards of academic and professional honesty and integrity” and (2b) “Respecting the rights, privileges, and property of other members of the academic community” as well as refraining from (3a) “Conduct that intentionally and substantially obstructs or disrupts teaching.” Further, according to this code (5) at the University of Washington, an instructor has the authority to remove a student from any class session in which the student is disorderly or disruptive. If students engage in chronic or persistent disorderly or disruptive conduct, your violation of the student conduct code will be reported to the dean or to the dean or director of the program in which you are enrolled at University of Washington Tacoma campus for disciplinary action.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is assumed and so it is not specifically included in the final grade. You must be in class in order to participate. However, it obviously impacts the engagement component of the grade because, if you are not present in any given class, then your participation on that day obviously cannot be more than zero.

If you need to miss class for an extenuating reason, please notify me in advance, if possible, or soon thereafter as to the nature of your absence from class participation. You should be prepared to present corroborating evidence from a verifiable official source (i.e. medical professional, court, etc.) to substantiate that the conditions for your absence were extenuating. Also, consistent (6 or more) tardiness/early departures will also impact your engagement grade. More than two absences without a medical note and extenuating circumstances will negatively affect your engagement grade. A total of more than 6 missed class periods from can result in automatic failure in engagement for the term.

Religious Holidays:

If you need to miss class due to a religious holiday, please notify me at least one week in advance.

* *SPECIAL NOTE:* If you have a fever or are ill DO NOT come to campus. Instead, send a message and self-quarantine to avoid infecting others who may have medical conditions or contact with more vulnerable populations such as children or older adults for whom certain common illnesses may be serious or life threatening.

Email Policy:

UW policy requires you to use your UW email account for communications with professors. Students are responsible for maintaining their information updated in the UW/Canvas systems to ensure you receive regular communications and course announcements. Further, students in this course should send all message communications via canvas message system to ensure a timely response. Please be advised that you may not receive a response from your instructor for up to 72 hours on business days; you should bring questions to class and/or come to office hours for more time sensitive issues. For more information on setting up a UW NetID and email, see:

<http://www.washington.edu/computing/uwnetid>

Engagement:

Due to the nature of this course, participation is critical!! Your engagement grade will reflect your leadership in generating active, lively discussion of the materials that reflects a both generous and critical reflection of ideas.

Students are expected to offer ideas, questions, reflections on the course materials and respond to your colleagues' contributions to stimulate this intellectual exchange. Rather than pull from personal experience, reaction or opinion, you should base your contributions on an engagement of readings and scholarly sources. Come ready to ask questions about the material and bring hard copies of the readings.

While I do not expect any student to be able to memorize all the minor details of readings in class, you should be able to provide a summary of the text, recall an author's main thesis/argument, and give examples from the readings to support your discussion. This may mean that you need to read the materials a couple of times to fully grasp their contributions, use of evidence, and technical terms or vocabulary. You should look up any terms that you are not familiar with in the dictionary and try to formulate a question about the term if you do not understand its use in the context of the reading.

Films:

Films should be thought of as additional texts, to be contemplated, interpreted and critiqued. What are the main concepts that the film deals with, what is its central thesis, and how might it bring us a bit closer to understanding a given subject matter? Are there aspects of the film that you agree or disagree with, based on what we've read and learned in the course, and why?

Weekly Discussion:

The topics we will discuss this semester might invoke strong feelings and we must be mindful that there is never a right answer, but to look to the text to ground our discussions. Certainly, people will have different experiences that inform their positions, and everyone begins the course with a different skill set and knowledge base. One of the objectives of this course is to learn strategies for articulating one's perspective based on the evidence offered in the text and for responding to others' comments both articulately and respectfully.

A Note on Diversity and Intellectual Engagement:

I am aware that many students will be challenged analyze many of their preconceptions about how social positions, including their own, have shaped their core ideas. This is a normal and difficult process that may be new to many of the students in the classroom. I am hopeful that this course will provide a forum to explore these issues from a scholarly perspective and students should be aware of differences between how scholarly understandings of these topics differ from popular or mainstream media ideas that they might encounter. Although you may have an individual experience or opinion on some of the materials we explore, students are encouraged to work closely with the course readings as evidence in class discussion and papers. I encourage students to make an appointment to talk more about the course and their individual process in developing generous critique if they are struggling with this aspect of the coursework.

Disability Resources:

I wish to make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities or medical conditions that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation. In coordination with the Disability Support Services office, reasonable accommodation will be provided for students with disabilities. You are encouraged to communicate with me at the outset of the course about

any accommodations that will improve your experience of, or ability to access, the course. Disability Support Services (DSS) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through any interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DSS. If you have not yet established services through DSS, but have, or think you have, a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), I encourage you to contact DSS at 253-692-4522 V/ 253-692-4413 / DSSUWT@UW.EDU

Assignments and Grading:

You will be assessed in a number of different ways during the semester and will receive an individual, cumulative grade; therefore, I want to discourage you from worrying too much about specific assignment grade and encourage you to look at your overall average by making a consistent effort to complete ALL assignments.

The goals of class assignments are to (1) help you to think critically about what you are reading, and (2) to challenge you to develop a vocabulary for analytical expression. For many students new to this material, many see an improvement in their grades as they become familiar with the analytical skills of social, historical and cultural analysis, as well as our subject area.

Grading:

Your final grade will be calculated according to your performance in each of the following categories:

Engagement	10%
Spark Questions	5%
Reflections (8)	40%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm	10%
Lit Circle	5%
Final	10%
Digital Portfolio	5%

<http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/enrollment-services/grading-policies>

Description of Assignments:

Engagement:

In my opinion, engagement is an essential part of the learning experience. Students are responsible for cultivating a generous and supportive intellectual community where others are able to explore their ideas and engage with them in intellectual dialogue and debate. You will be held to the highest standards as responsible members of the academic community to foster respectful dialogue and debate throughout the semester. Consequently, I assess you on the *quality* as well as quantity of your engagement (that means actively participating in class activities and engaging each other generously). I hope that you will be a full participant in this

process. You should arrive ready to discuss *and listen* to each other's views about the material. Both active listening and speaking are equally valuable in this overall participation grade.

Spark Questions:

Once a quarter, each student will assume responsibility for authoring a series of “spark” questions designed to foster class conversation relating to the reading of the day. In addition to posing your spark questions, you are also required to respond to each question in a short (6-8 sentence paragraph).

Your list of 3 questions and their answers should be posted to Canvas and your digital portfolio no later than 24 hours prior to the class meeting that you will be sparking. In all likelihood, you will be sparking alongside at least one of your fellow students, so please collaborate(s) with your colleague to limit redundancy.

Reflections and the Digital Portfolio:

Throughout the quarter, you will be asked to respond to a total of 8 reflective prompts. These reflections, which may assume a number of forms depending on the particular prompt, will be published in a digital portfolio hosted by Google Sites. Despite its user-friendliness, Sites offers a dynamic platform for reflecting and sharing your growth as a consumer and interpreter of our course texts.

The following link will guide you through a short tutorial on setting up your own Google Site:
<https://gsuite.google.com/learning-center/products/sites/get-started/>

Naming/Sharing your Google Site:

The first time you “Publish” your Site, you will be asked to customize a unique url. In the interest of encouraging a collaborative (digital) classroom environment, please complete your url with the following information: **/last_name_tcore104a17**

My course Google Site:

<https://sites.google.com/uw.edu/millertcore114w17>

Quizzes:

Throughout the quarter, students will be given frequent quizzes to assess their completion of the required reading. In the event of an excused absence, students will be given the opportunity to make up missed quizzes on Canvas. The deadline to make up a missed quiz for credit is the beginning of the next scheduled class meeting.

Midterm and Final:

You will be expected to illustrate your familiarity with course concepts while completing your midterm and final exams. Our exams, which will be conducted online, are “open everything,” and will feature a number of short response questions.

Lit Circle:

Toward the end of the quarter, you will be asked to participate in a Lit Circle activity that will require you to read the works of a variety of authors and prepare and conduct a class discussion in a small group setting. During this “flipped classroom” meeting, I will assume the role of participant, circulating from group to group while assessing your performance within your lit circle.

Late Work:

All course work must be submitted **prior to the beginning of class** unless you are instructed otherwise. If you are unable to attend class on the day a particular assignment is due, you are still expected to submit the assignment prior to that day’s class meeting. Late submissions will NOT be accepted without a documented excuse. Extenuating circumstances will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Academic Dishonesty and Integrity:

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses and will result in a disciplinary expulsion and/ or an automatic F in this class. Plagiarism is a form of cheating; it occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgement, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student and then submits it as his or her own.

Students at the University of Washington are expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct as required by [state legislation](#). The integrity that will be required in your professional career should be practiced in your academic career. Academic misconduct is a [serious offense](#) that can have severe penalties including failing an assignment, failing the course, or dismissal from the university.

- Cheating includes turning in work that is not your own, using resources for exams or assignments when not permitted, or if you consult or collaborate with anyone on assignments that are meant to be completed individually.
- You are guilty of plagiarism if you fail to cite the source of any idea that is not your own. Plagiarism can be avoided by using reference citations correctly. You are responsible for learning how and when to document and attribute resources used in preparing a written or oral presentation. If you have any questions, please ask me, review library style guides or consult the Writing Center.

TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER (TLC)

The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) in SNO 260 offers free academic support for students at all levels. Writing support is available at our online writing center at: uwtwrite@u.washington.edu. For math, stats and quantitative needs, assistance is available on a [drop-in basis](#).

LIBRARY

The [UWT Library](#) has resources, services and facilities to support students at all levels of expertise. The library staff guide students through the research process, helping them learn how to develop effective research strategies and find and evaluate appropriate resources. For assistance or to schedule an appointment, visit us at the Reference Desk in the Library, email tacref@uw.edu or phone 253-692-4442.

ADVISING

For assistance in planning your course schedule and assessing progress toward degree completion, please contact the [Advising Center](#) in GWP 102. Faculty can assist you with general advice regarding majors and course selections.

STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS - SHAW

Confidential [health services](#) and [counselors](#) are available to help students cope with illness, health maintenance, stresses and personal issues.

CAREERS

Assistance is available in career planning and job hunting at [Career Development & Education](#).

FINANCIAL AID

Information on [tuition, financial aid and scholarships](#) can be found online. You must make satisfactory academic progress to receive most forms of financial aid.

CAMPUS SAFETY INFORMATION

Free safety escorts are available on campus Monday - Thursday from 6am to 11pm and Friday from 6am to 10pm. Dial 253-692-4416 to request a Safety Escort.

The university-wide [UW Alert system](#) sends text messages of campus closures and emergencies.