

literature and the home

e 314 j fall 2014 / unique no. 35020

meets TTH 12:30-2
in CAL 323
flags: Writing

instructor: Jenn Shapland
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office: PAR 403 / T 11 / TH 2

course description

Contemporary homes are anything but ordinary. As current ideas of family, adulthood, employment, and lifestyle shift and multiply, and as our environment undergoes drastic changes, radical depictions of homes in literature flourish. This course explores the concept and experience of home, homemaking, and dwelling in volatile places, especially as represented in literature. Our working definition(s) of home will consider how a person's gender, sexuality, race, and class find ways into her living space. Literature and the Home will call us to investigate a variety of present-day homes—such as apartments in sprawling metroplexes, unconventional family homes, and zones of homelessness and displacement.

The primary aim of this course is to help students develop and improve the critical reading, writing, and thinking skills needed for success in upper-division courses in English and other disciplines. They will also gain practice in using the Oxford English Dictionary and other online research tools and print resources that support studies in the humanities. Students will learn basic information literacy skills and models for approaching literature with various historical, generic, and cultural contexts in mind.

This course contains a writing flag. The writing assignments in this course are arranged procedurally with a focus on invention, development through instructor and peer feedback, and revision; they will comprise a major part of the final grade.

texts

Alison Bechdel *Fun Home* (Houghton Mifflin 2006)

Nami Mun *Miles from Nowhere* (Riverhead 2009)

Zadie Smith *NW* (Penguin 2012)

Claire Vaye Watkins *Battleborn* (Riverhead 2012)

Course packet available at Jenn's (!) Copies, including short stories, essays, & excerpts by: Marie Helene Bertino, Bonnie Jo Campbell, Lydia Davis, Junot Díaz, ZZ Packer, Justin Torres, Vanessa Veselka, Patricia Yaeger.

Films (screened in class): *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012); *The Cruise* (1998); *Dark Days* (2000); *Winter's Bone* (2010)

assignments

- Three short essays, the first of which must be revised and resubmitted. Subsequent essays may also be revised and resubmitted if you arrange it with me (70% of the final grade). All papers must be formatted according to the guidelines of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, available online and in print through UT Libraries. You will present your final paper to the class during our last week as 15% of the paper's grade.
- Guided weekly blog posts that engage the assigned reading, research the works' sociological and cultural contexts, or participate in ongoing conversations about the texts through contemporary literature blogs and publications (like *The Millions*, *The LA Review of Books*) (30% of the final grade). Blog posts are 300-500 words and should be tagged with keywords.
- Active reading and lively participation are required in each class meeting. If talking in class is not your thing, let me know and we can work out another way for you to contribute.

grading

Close Reading essay (5 pages)	20%
Information and Context essay (5 pages)	20%
Comprehensive essay (5-7 pages)	30%
Blog posts	30%

I use plus/minus grading. The grading scale can be found on the course Canvas site.

attendance

Prompt, regular, and engaged attendance is crucial.

In the event of an absence, you're responsible for finding out what was discussed in class as well as for getting any missed handouts or assignments from fellow classmates. Feel free to contact them through Canvas.

You are allowed **3** unexcused absences, after which your grade will be lowered one level (for example, from A to A-, from A- to B+, and so on) for each subsequent unexcused absence.

preparation

Bring the appropriate reading to class. If you have any difficulty obtaining the books, contact the instructor before the class period; if you are using library copies of course materials, you should take reading notes and bring those to class.

Read all the blog posts before Thursday's class each week and comment on two of them (unless it's your week to write, then no comments required).

official UT policies i am required to print

Documented Disability Statement: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Academic Integrity: Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. For additional information on Academic Integrity, see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint.php>.

Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

calendar

		reading [due beginning of class on date listed]	blog posts / essays [blog posts due Weds 12pm unless otherwise indicated!]
week one			
Th 8.28		In course packet: Rita Felski "The Invention of Everyday Life"; Lydia Davis "In a House Beseiged"	All students, due Mon 12pm: Respond to essay/course intro; give your 1-2 sentence definition of what "home" means to you.
week two			
T 9.2		Story in course packet: Bonnie Jo Campbell "The Yard Man"; Close reading exercise	Group 1: Pick one sentence from this week's stories and provide a one- paragraph close reading.
Th 9.4		Stories in course packet: Junot Díaz "Invierno"; Marie Helene Bertino "Carry Me Home Sisters of St. Joseph"	
week three			
T 9.9		Film: <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i>	Group 2: Choose a scene from the film and give a one-paragraph close viewing.

Th 9.11		supplementary: Anne Lamott "Shitty First Drafts"; Film: <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i>	Close Reading essay draft due; Blog open thread
week four			
T 9.16		bell hooks "No Love in the Wild"; Patricia Yaeger " <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> and Dirty Ecology"; Nami Mun <i>Miles from Nowhere</i> [chapters 1-4]	
Th 9.18		Nami Mun <i>Miles from Nowhere</i> [chapters 5-7] Databases, research strategies, and information literacy	Group 1 blog post due SUNDAY 8pm Research and present one current, credible article or study on homelessness in the US.
week five			Close Reading essay revision due MONDAY 9.22 8pm
T 9.23		Nami Mun <i>Miles from Nowhere</i> [chapters 8-10]	
Th 9.25		Nami Mun <i>Miles from Nowhere</i> [chapters 11-13]	Group 2 blog post due SUNDAY 8pm: Research and present one current, credible article or study on immigrant experience in the US that relates to <i>MFN</i> .
week six			
T 9.30		In-class: clips from <i>The Cruise; Dark Days</i> ;	
Th 10.2		Zadie Smith's <i>NW</i> "Visitation" [sections 1-12]	Group 1 due Sun 8pm: Find and present an article or video that provides insight into the text (<i>NW</i>), its author (Zadie Smith), or the novel's setting.
week seven			
T 10.7		Zadie Smith's <i>NW</i> "Visitation" [sections 13-24]	
Th 10.9		Story in course packet: Z.Z. Packer "Our Lady of Peace"	Group 2 due Sun 8pm: Discuss/explore the concept of neighboring. How does it

			illuminate our discussion of class relations in "Visitation"?
week eight			
T 10.14		Essay in course packet: Vanessa Vaselka "Green Screen: The Lack of Female Road Narrative and Why It Matters"; Establishing context (publication and content)	
Th 10.16		Claire Vaye Watkins <i>Battleborn</i> [stories 1-3]	Group 1 Sun 8pm: Using the resources we explored in class, unpack the context—place, time, demographics, or historical events—that you can find for a story of your choice from <i>Battleborn</i> ..
week nine			
T 10.21		Claire Vaye Watkins <i>Battleborn</i> [stories 4-6]	
Th 10.23		Claire Vaye Watkins <i>Battleborn</i> [stories 7-8]	Group 2: Locate one critical reception of <i>Battleborn</i> to present on the blog.
week ten			
T 10.28		Claire Vaye Watkins <i>Battleborn</i> [stories 9-10]	
Th 10.30		Selections from <i>Methland</i> ; In-class film: <i>Winter's Bone</i>	Reading in Context essay optional draft due; Group 1 due Sun 8pm: Drawing on our discussion of ethnography, explain how and to what ends <i>Battleborn</i> draws on ethnographic observation and representation. Can you find out what research the author did in the process of creating their version of the community?
week eleven			
T 11.4		Film: <i>Winter's Bone</i>	
Th 11.6		Wrap up <i>Winter's Bone</i> discussion; READINGS IN COURSE PACKET:	Reading in Context final version due;

	Essay: Audre Lorde “The Master’s Tools”; stories: Lori Ostlund “All Boy”; Justin Torres “Reverting to a Wild State”	Group 2 due Sun 8pm: Drawing on our discussion of ethnography, explain how and to what ends <i>Winter’s Bone</i> draws on ethnographic observation and representation. Can you find out what research the director or actors did in the process of creating their version of the community?
week twelve		
T 11.11	Scott McCloud excerpt from <i>Understanding Comics</i> ; Discussing genre; Intro to Alison Bechdel <i>Fun Home</i>	
Th 11.13	No class. Individual conferences.	Group 1 due Sun 8pm: Describe how any of these readings (Bechdel, Lorde, Ostlund, Torres) alter conventional understandings of home, housing, or family.
week thirteen		
T 11.18	Alison Bechdel <i>Fun Home</i>	
Th 11.20	Alison Bechdel <i>Fun Home</i>	Group 2 Sun 8pm: How do images alter or amplify your reading of this text? Use a specific example.
week fourteen		
T 11.25	Alison Bechdel <i>Fun Home</i> ; Final paper assignment	All students, due Sun 8pm: With a text of your choice, examine the relationship between the material conditions and the emotional conditions of home.
Th 11.27	THANKSGIVING	
week fifteen		
T 12.2	Paper presentations	Final paper outline due— optional conferences
Th 12.4	Paper presentations	Final paper due Dec 11th, 5pm.