Identity politics has been a hotly debated topic for a number of years throughout many different fields. This course attempts to provide a philosophical foundation by exploring the construction and transformation of identity. We will pay particular attention to how identities are formed through the interplay of such concepts as the same or “the normal” and difference or otherness. Through the examination of select theoretical texts in the fields of psychoanalysis, feminism, postcolonial, critical race theory, we will build a framework with which we will interpret literary works that primarily address immigration, race, and gender as they relate to identity formation.

**Course Objectives**

- Enjoy works of literature and critical theory.
- Improve the ability to examine texts critically by examining plot, character, setting, narrator, theme, and use of English.
- Develop methods in which you apply philosophical concepts to literary texts and vice versa.
- Practice methods of research as an intelligent approach to problems whose solutions require information outside our immediate knowledge.
- Master the ability to construct an essay that is structurally sound and clear in its intended purpose and supports your position.

**Texts**

**On Blackboard Course Materials Page**


*Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism* (access through Mason databases)

**Other Supplies**

- A notebook for taking notes in class.
- At least one folder or something similar to store class information. I strongly suggest using a cloud service such as dropbox.com or drive.google.com to save your class work. I also recommend using adobe digital editions to store class texts.
- A good dictionary, thesaurus, and grammar book/website
Course Requirements

I. **Formal Assignments:** Two Reflection Essays (50 points each) and a **Final Essay** (100 points) are required. More detailed instructions are available in the essay prompts and in class. All formal writing must follow all of the guidelines of MLA or APA documentation. Please submit the exams on Blackboard assignment page.

II. **Discussion Board Reflections (10 x 5 points each)** are required. The reflections should simply be your thoughtful reflections on the text/passage being discussed that day. Please be specific when referring to the text. Each entry should be about 150-200 words in length and at the end you should list 2 questions about the reading. The questions can be of a clarification nature; or, the questions can address more complex issues. Please reply to two of your colleagues’ posts.

III. **Two Group Presentations** are required. For certain readings I will assign one group to be prepared to help lead class discussion.

IV. **Class Participation and Attendance** are an important part of the learning process. If you are absent from class, you are unlikely to do well on the essays. As a result, it is essential to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned text. The material is sometimes extremely demanding, so it is important not to fall behind and to give due attention to the class readings.

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**Grading**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay Reflections</td>
<td>50 points each</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>100 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Board</td>
<td>11x5=50</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>2x10</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>275 points</td>
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Course Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
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<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Maximum Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100%</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>275</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-96.9%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>265</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>254</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>246</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>238</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-82.9% -</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>227</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79.9%</td>
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<td>219</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-76.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72.9%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69.9%</td>
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<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-60%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection and Final Essay Grading Criteria

A "C" level grade (70-79%) denotes average college-level writing and achievement. The essay is a competent response to the assignment: it meets, to some degree, all the assignment requirements, and shows a competent understanding of the course texts. It has a thesis, presents some support, and moves from point to point in an orderly fashion; sentence-level errors do not significantly prevent comprehension. Essays that do not meet these criteria will not earn a "C."

A "B" level grade (80-90%) is a good paper that highlights a strong example of college writing and thinking. In addition to meeting the "C" level requirements, such an essay goes further in some way(s): it demonstrates some insight into the "gray areas" of the course texts, provides original or thorough support that is tightly woven into the overall argument, reads smoothly at both the sentence and paragraph levels, and/or exhibits a personal "voice" or style. It has few sentence-level errors.
An "A" level grade (90-100%) marks an essay that is a delight for the reader. Even more than in a "B" essay, its author anticipates and responds to possible reader questions, uses a wide range of supporting evidence, engages the reader in a provocative conversation, provides unexpected insights, and/or uses language with care and flair. It possesses virtually no mechanical errors.

"D" and "F" level essays do not meet the basic expectations of the assignment.

From David Beach

**Discussion Board Reflection entries Grading Criteria**

1-2 points denotes a minimal response that pays little attention to detail in the text(s) and the response only uses generalities to address the topic. There is little to no evidence the student read the text carefully.

3 points is earned by offering a solid summary of the text(s) or theme with little in the way of analysis of the subject or text being addressed that particular week. It also may summarize or reiterate exactly what was discussed in class.

4 points is earned when a solid analysis is presented in which specific details/quotes are examined attempting to provide some insight into the material.

5 points is assigned when the student completes what is described in #4 above and the student sheds new light on a quote or passage that may be overlooked by most. Also, the student may incorporate information gained from another class or from another source, such as a scholarly source, that examines the text/s in a creative unique way.

*Grammar errors are also considered in assessing the reflections.*
Course Policies

Submitting Assignments
All formal assignments must be submitted on the due date on the Blackboard Assignment page. Late work will be penalized by the equivalent of one letter grade, and will be accepted up to 10 days after the due date. If you are having problems with an assignment, please contact me as soon as possible, not the day the work is due! NOTE: I will NOT accept assignments through email. If you become overwhelmed with the semester, please reach out to me as soon as possible. We can always get you back on track!

Reflection Responses to the readings must be completed by the end of the day.

Technology Requirements
I expect students to have access to a computer and the Internet outside of class. The students should also be familiar with Blackboard 9.1. Formal Assignments should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. If this is an issue, please contact me with your preferred program. If it is compatible with Blackboard, it will be allowed. Reflections will be completed at the beginning of class on paper.

Since many of the texts are e-texts or pdf files, I expect students to have some access to them during class. This means students can print out the texts or bring a tablet to class. When using a tablet in class, it should only be used for class activities.

Citing Sources
MLA and APA documentation are the preferred documentation styles.

The Composition Program’s Statement on Plagiarism
Plagiarism means using words, opinions, or factual information from another source without giving that source credit. Writers give credit through the use of accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books, articles, and websites is not sufficient.

This class will include direct instruction in strategies for handling sources as part of our curriculum. However, students in composition classes must also take responsibility for understanding and practicing the basic principles listed below.
To avoid plagiarism, meet the expectations of a US Academic Audience, give their readers a chance to investigate the issue further, and make credible arguments, writers must

- put quotation marks around, and give an in-text citation for, any sentences or distinctive phrases (even very short, 2- or 3-word phrases) that writers copy directly from any outside source: a book, textbook, article, website, newspaper, song, baseball card, interview, encyclopedia, CD, YouTube video, movie, etc.

- completely rewrite—not just switch out a few words—any information they find in a separate source and wish to summarize or paraphrase for their readers, and also give an in-text citation for that paraphrased information

- give an in-text citation for any facts, statistics, or opinions which the writers learned from outside sources (or which they just happen to know) and which are not considered “common knowledge” in the target audience (this may require new research to locate a credible outside source to cite)

- give a new in-text citation for each element of information—that is, do not rely on a single citation at the end of a paragraph, because that is not usually sufficient to inform a reader clearly of how much of the paragraph comes from an outside source.

Writers must also include a Works Cited or References list at the end of their essay, providing full bibliographic information for every source cited in their essay.

While different disciplines may have slightly different citation styles, and different instructors may emphasize different levels of citation for different assignments, writers should always begin with these conservative practices unless they are expressly told otherwise. If student writers ever have questions about a citation practice, they should ask their instructor!

Instructors in the Composition Program support the Mason Honor Code, which requires them to report any suspected instances of plagiarism to the Mason Honor Committee. All judgments about plagiarism are made after careful review by the Honor Committee, which may issue penalties ranging from grade-deductions to course failure to expulsion from GMU

***Plagiarism will result in an automatic zero for the assignment and possibly a trip to the Academic Integrity Council.***
**E-mail and e-mail etiquette** – I encourage you to e-mail me if you have any questions, but please check Blackboard first. I will ONLY respond to gmu e-mail accounts. While I encourage an open and friendly atmosphere in the classroom, I do expect a certain degree of respect in e-mail exchanges. Please be formal in e-mail correspondence.

**Accommodations** – If you need assistance in any way due to a disability of any kind, please let me know as soon as possible. You are required to present a document from disability services. I will do everything I can to accommodate those who need it.

**GMU Nondiscrimination Policy**

George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, pregnancy status or genetic information. George Mason University shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations.

The University is dedicated to ensuring access, fairness and equity for minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, and veterans (as covered by law) in its educational programs, related activities and employment. George Mason University shall thus maintain a continuing affirmative action program to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices in every phase of university operations.

Any employee who becomes aware of sexual harassment or other potentially discriminatory behavior must contact Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics.

Retaliation against an individual who has raised claims of illegal discrimination or has cooperated with an investigation of such claims is prohibited.

All of the details can be found here: http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/nondiscrimination-policy/

**Stress of the semester** – If you feel overwhelmed this semester in your efforts to balance work and home, please contact me know as soon as possible. The earlier we can recognize a potential difficult situation, the sooner we can resolve it.

**Cell Phones** – Please turn off or mute your cell phones at the beginning of class. If you have an emergency situation to monitor, please let me know before class begins. If you are using your phone to access readings, please let me know at the beginning of the semester.
Prompts

Reflection Essays (50 points x2)

Due 2/27, 4/10, 5/8 by the end of the day on Blackboard

Directions: Two ways to approach the reflection essays: 1. a deep philosophical reflection of the texts which uses specific textual reference for support; or 2. a response to a scholarly interpretation of one of the texts. In other words, find an interpretation of one of the texts discussed and engage the author with critical discussion/interaction.

Document length and design: The essay length should be 900 words (about 3 pages) and it should follow consistently all of the guidelines of either APA or MLA.

Style and Structure: Your essays should be written in a formal tone. The essay’s structure should contain a beginning (a clear introduction with a thesis), middle (a logical development of the thesis), and an end (a conclusion explains the importance of your interpretation) in other words, it should follow the guidelines of a standard essay. Use direct textual references to support your claims.

Please refer to the Standards of Good Writing in Philosophy:
http://philosophy.gmu.edu/undergraduate/writing-standards
Final Essay

Due either 2/27, 4/10, or 5/8 by the end of the day on Blackboard

**Content:** Please write an 1800-2100 word (6-7 pages) essay that explores the literary text using the critical theory we discussed in class. In other words, the critical theory should help analyze the literary text. Although you do not necessarily have to address all of the literary elements, please consider one or more of the following in your response: setting, character, plot, diction and language, style, point of view, structure, symbolism, tone. I expect the analysis to be supported by evidence from the texts and the theories discussed. I also require the use of 2 outside **scholarly** sources, i.e. those not posted in the course folders.

**Structure:** The final exam essay should be logically/ thematically developed. This means that you should group elements of the text into themes. You should then analyze the themes by using the philosophical theory. The essays should contain a beginning with a thesis, a middle providing argument and support (use quotes), and an end providing further questions about the text.

**Style:** The document should be in a formal voice and tone. The essay should be both explanatory and analytic.

**Quotations and Documentation:** Direct textual references to support your claims are expected. If you use outside sources, please document using either MLA or APA citation styles. The final essay(s) should have your name, date, final exam in the upper corner.

**Writing Guide:** Please read over the standards for good writing in philosophy: [http://philosophy.gmu.edu/undergraduate/writing-standards](http://philosophy.gmu.edu/undergraduate/writing-standards)
Spring 2018 – Course Calendar (subject to change)

Part 1: Gender

Week 1: Introduction and Structuralism
T (1/23): Introduction to the course.
   Required Reading: The Syllabus
Th (1/25): Structuralism: Ferdinand de Saussure
   Required Reading: Excerpts from Course on General Linguistics.
   Recommended video: Saussure, Structuralism, Semiotics

Week 2: Psychoanalysis and Psychosexual Development
T (1/30): Psychoanalysis Freud and Lacan
   Required Reading: “The Mirror Phase” by Lacan
   Recommended Video: Lacan’s notion of Sexuation
Th (2/1): Reaction to Freud and Lacan’s Conception of Gender
   Required Reading: “Laugh of the Medusa” by Cixious
   “Madwoman in the Attic” by Gilbert

Week 3: Feminine Writing and Performative Acts
T (2/6): Feminine Writing (DB1)
   Required Reading: “Tales of Two Old Gentlemen” and “The Blank Page” by Isaac Dinesen
Th (2/8): Performative and Gender Constitution
   Required Reading: “Performative Acts…” by Judith Butler
   Recommended Reading: Modules on Butler: On Gender and Sex

Week 4: Tradition and Gender Roles
T (2/13): Gender Roles in India (DB 2)
   Required Reading: “The Rooftop Dwellers” by Anita Desai
Th (2/15): Confronting authority (DB 3)
   Required reading: “In Camera” by El Saadawi

Week 5: Attack on Feminism
T (2/20): Depiction of Feminist (DB 4)
   Required Reading: Oleanna by Mamet
Th (2/22): Essay Review (essay due on 2/27)
Part 2: Race

Week 6: East and West: Depiction of the Other
T (2/27): Postcolonial Theory
   Required Reading: Excerpts from *Orientalism* by Edward Said
   Recommended Reading
Th (3/1): Colonization (DB 5)
   Required Reading: *Heart of Darkness* by Conrad

Week 7: Conception of Race by the Other
T (3/6): Native perspective of race in Heart of Darkness
   Required Reading: *Heart of Darkness* continued
      “An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness” by Achebe
Th (3/8): Critical Race Theory in America
   Required Reading: Excerpts (intro and chapter 1) from *Introduction to Critical Race Theory* by Delgado

Spring Break 3/12-3/18

Week 8: Race in America
T (3/20): Psychoanalysis and Race (DB 6)
   Required Reading: *Dutchman* by Baraka
Th (3/22): Race in film
   Required Viewing: *Do the Right Thing* by Spike Lee

Week 9: Race in America continued
T (3/27): Depictions of Race in Film (DB 7)
   Required Viewing: *Do the Right Thing* continued
   Recommended viewing: *I am not your Negro* by James Baldwin
Th (3/29): “Hip Hop Humanism” Guest Speaker

Week 10: Race and Heritage
T (4/3): Appropriation and Ancestry (DB 8)
   Required Reading: “Everyday use” by Alice Walker
Th (4/5): Essay Review (Essay due on 4/10)
Part 3: Immigration

Week 11: Migration and the Development of the Nation State
Th (4/12): Nation State
   Required Reading: “The Development of the Nation State” by Kristeva

Week 12: When People Flee
T (4/17): Conference at George Washington University: When People Flee
Th (4/19): Latino Critical Theory
   Required Reading: Introduction to Latino Critical Theory

Week 13: The Legal System
T (4/24): Coming to America (DB 9)
   Required Reading: “Liberty” by Alvarez and “Death of Josseline” by Margaret Regan
   Recommended Reading: TBA

Th (4/26): The undocumented immigrant experience (DB 10)
   Required Reading: “Yolanda in Limbo” by Margaret Regan and “Life as an Undocumented Worker” by Hugo Carrasco
   Recommended Reading: Immigrants and the Economy

Week 14: The Legal System cont.
T (5/1): Guest Speaker from CAIR coalition (DB 11)
   Required Viewing: The Immigration Battle
Th (5/3): Essay Review

Week 15: Final Essay
T (5/8) Essay Due