

Instructor

Name: Kendall Dinniene (“duh-NEEN”); please feel free to call me “Kendall,” “Instructor,” etc.

Despite my course poster, I prefer not to be called “Ms.”

Physical Office: Dallas Hall 241E

Zoom Office: <https://smu.zoom.us/my/kdinniene>

Email: kdinniene@smu.edu

ENGL 2312: Fatness in American Fiction

Course Description, Objectives, and Assignments

Course Description

We live in an era in which the meaning of bodily fatness is hotly contested. Is fatness a disease? A moral failing? Simply one of many bodily characteristics? These questions have been raised since at least the 17th century, and continue to be taken up today, by the media, the medical industrial complex, police, government, the fat liberation movement, and more. This class considers contemporary American fiction narratives to see how authors respond to debates about the meaning of the fat body. Students will use work from the interdisciplinary field of Fat Studies to analyze texts that affirm, complicate, and/or resist dominant notions of normative bodies that often take the meanings of fatness and thinness for granted. Some questions we will consider: Why and how do our authors use fatness to create meaning in their texts? How do they affirm or challenge popular notions of the fat body as a marker of race, gender, class, morality, (dis)ability, and national identity? What do our authors want us to do with what we read and learn?

University Course Objectives

This course satisfies Common Curriculum requirements for Literary Analysis and Interpretation (LAI) and Writing (W). Students will learn to analyze, interpret, and appreciate fiction, with attention to terms and issues relevant to the genre. Students will also learn to situate literary representations of fatness in their social and historical contexts and to think critically about constructed norms pertaining to bodies and behaviors and their meanings.

My Take on the University Course Objectives

The point of this class is to help you develop four important skills:

1. The ability to thoroughly read and understand written work.
2. The ability to generate ideas about what you read.
3. The ability to communicate your ideas clearly and compellingly, both verbally and in writing.
4. The ability to think critically about (that is to understand and interrogate) dominant (often seeming to be common-sense) historical and contemporary narratives and to think deeply about how these narratives come to be, how they inform one another, and what ends they serve.

Instructor Asks

1. Be present. Show up to class both physically and mentally.

2. Be prepared. The bulk of the work of this class is reading. Please do it, completely and on time.
3. Engage in good faith. Try to thoroughly understand our course texts and participate in discussions without feeling like you must pick a side or prove a point. We all come from different backgrounds, with different experiences and perspectives, and we should see that as an opportunity to collaborate and explore, not to play devil's advocate.
4. Be honest. Don't just tell me what you think I want to hear. I am interested in your actual thoughts.
5. Be curious. Allow yourself to wonder about things, to take intellectual risks, without needing to be sure or right.

Course Texts

The Deportation of Wopper Barraza by Maceo Montoya, ISBN 978-0826354365

My Year of Meats by Ruth Ozeki, ISBN 978-0140280463

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, ISBN 978-0307278449

There There by Tommy Orange, ISBN 978-0525436140

Martha Moody by Susan Stinson, ISBN 978-1618731807

I will make other readings available to you for free on Perusall and Canvas.

Text Descriptions

I know that you are very busy and may be tempted to skim or skip readings altogether. (I felt a similar impulse when I was taking six classes and working three jobs my final year of undergrad.) However, I hope that you will give these readings the attention they deserve, for the sake of your grade, yes, but also your experience in this class.

- In our second week, we will read three speculative short stories featuring fatness. From buying new bodies to being haunted and even evicted by fat, our protagonists tell tales ranging from the fantastical to the truly bizarre that should get us off to a fun start.
- *The Deportation of Wopper Barraza* is a novel about a young man who is deported from Woodland, California to his father's land in Michoacán, Mexico. There, he gets embroiled in local political and business dealings that end up endangering his life—will he escape from his troubles and be able to return to his son in the United States? We will have to read the book to find out.
- Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* was that legendary author's first book and is arguably one of the greatest novels in the English language. *The Bluest Eye* follows Claudia MacTeer, a young Black girl in Lorain, Ohio, as she grows up and gains insight into the world around her. This book asks readers to question many things, including what childhood means and why some people get to be beautiful while others do not.
- *My Year of Meats* is a novel that uses irony and wit to talk about globalization, American identity, and the beef industry at the turn of the twenty-first century. It's funny, surreal, and touching.
- *There There* is set in Oakland, California, and traces many people and events leading up to a big Powwow. The story is told from multiple perspectives with wit and tenderness and is a wonderful read.
- Our last novel, Susan Stinson's *Martha Moody*, is a fat gay pleasure to read. It follows Amanda, a lonely married woman who romances a fat shopkeeper named Martha using butter she makes from the cream of her beloved cow, Miss Alice. My hope is that finishing

the term with this novel will leave us all feeling replenished, delighted, and ready for an enjoyable and restful Winter Break.

Obtaining Course Texts

You will need to have our course texts in your possession in time to complete your first reading from *The Deportation of Wopper Barraza* due the Friday of week three. You can purchase these books from the SMU bookstore or from discount retailers like abebooks.com or Half Price Books. If you have any trouble obtaining the texts, please let me know *before* week three so that I can try to help you.

Canvas

You will need to be able to check Canvas modules frequently for the schedule of class assignments and activities, as well as to access course readings and resources. Make sure you have Canvas notifications turned on so you will be alerted when class announcements post.

Perusall

Named after the word *perusal*, which means reading closely and thoroughly. Throughout the term you will analyze and annotate short readings in Perusall (linked in Canvas). These assignments give you the opportunity to work on more challenging texts together and will help to direct our conversations in class. Robust engagement on Perusall is one way of earning participation credit in this course.

Major Assignments

Students in this class will complete four major assignments:

- 1) a podcast episode recorded, produced, and submitted in small groups along with an individually produced reflection;
- 2) one 3-4 page essay on a course text with reflection sheet;
- 3) a midterm exam including multiple choice, true or false, and short essay questions;
- 4) a 7-8 page research paper due at the end of term along with a reflection sheet.

We will discuss each of these assignments in detail *at least* two weeks before they are due, and you can find tentative assignment instructions following this syllabus.

Minor Assignments

Students will complete weekly pop quizzes and a variety of pre- and in-class activities including Perusall readings and writing workshops.

Note: In-class assignments such as quizzes, the midterm, workshop day, and other activities **cannot** be made up except in the case of a documented illness or university-sponsored event. Plan your schedule accordingly.

Weighted Grades

Daily Participation 15%

Weekly Pop Quizzes 20%

Due 9/18: Podcast with Reflection 15%

Due 10/16: Short Essay 15%

Due 10/23: Midterm 15%

Due 12/6: Research Essay 20%

Grading Scale

94-100	A	73-76	C
90-93	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	0-59	F

Daily Participation

This class is discussion based, which means that you should prepare to regularly speak up and participate by completing readings and drafts on time, looking up unfamiliar words and phrases, and trusting your peers and I to engage you in good faith. You will earn participation points by contributing to class discussion in-person and on Perusall and Canvas, and by participating in workshops, conferences, and other activities such as our author's visit.

Weekly Pop Quizzes

To reward regular attendance and encourage close reading, students will complete a weekly pop quiz on what they have read. Quizzes will consist of ten questions, each worth one point. Missed quizzes **cannot** be made up except in cases of documented illness or school-sanctioned activity. If you miss a quiz due to one of those two reasons, you will have one calendar week in which to make-up the quiz. I will automatically drop students' **two** lowest quiz scores from their overall course grade.

Short Paper Workshop

The class meeting before your first paper is due, we will hold a mandatory paper workshop in class. You will submit a draft of the paper prior to our class meeting and will participate in a series of exercises to improve your own work and that of your peers. Engagement with the workshop will count toward your participation grade. If you do not attend, you will not receive any feedback on your paper prior to submitting your final draft.

Midterm Review

The Friday before your midterm exam, we will hold a mandatory midterm review session in class. Come prepared to engage with your peers, develop study materials, and enjoy some snacks. Attendance and participation in the review count toward your participation grade. If you do not attend, you will not be able to receive any midterm preparatory materials or study guides from me or your peers.

Writing Conference

The week before your final papers are due, we will hold virtual individual conferences instead of class. You will submit a complete draft of your paper no less than 24 hours before we meet and we will use the conference appointment to work one-on-one, identifying consistent issues in the draft and discussing revision strategies to help you achieve the best grade you can. Your draft submission

and conference participation will count toward your participation grade. If you do not attend, you will not receive any feedback on your paper between your proposal and your final grade.

Author Visit

On Monday, November 20th, we will hold class on Zoom so that we can be joined by Susan Stinson, the author of *Martha Moody*. Susan is a wonderful writer and a generous and engaging person—I am certain you will all enjoy meeting and chatting with her. Prior to her visit, I will ask that each of you submit a couple of questions you would be interested in having Susan answer. Posing thoughtful questions for this assignment is another way you can earn participation credit in this course.

Please note: Attendance is mandatory for this day. I realize that many of you will already be traveling for the holiday, but I expect that **every student** will Zoom in to meet with and learn from Susan.

Course Policies and Expectations

Classroom Policies

- Please be sure to bring the relevant text(s) to each class meeting (hard copy or digital is fine by me).
- To avoid distracting yourself and others, please silence and put away your phone at the beginning of class.
- You may use a laptop or tablet to access our Canvas site, readings, or to do other work related to this course. Please do not distract others by using technology for non-class-related activities.
- Feel free to eat and drink as necessary and to excuse yourself for a moment if the need arises.

Attendance Policy

Outside of mandatory review, workshop, and conference days, and our visit with Susan Stinson, I do not grade attendance, though I will be aware of who is and isn't in class. In my experience, students who don't come to class regularly fall behind on readings, earn very little participation credit, misunderstand assignments, earn zeroes on missed quizzes, and generally produce poor work. What I'm saying is *you should come to class if you want to do well*. On those occasions where you must miss a class, use the resources posted on our daily modules and talk to your peers to catch up on what you've missed. I do not record or recreate lectures.

Late Work

Students may submit some assignments (excludes in-class assignments such as the midterm and weekly quizzes) up to 48 hours after the deadline without penalty. However, after that 48 hour period, the assignment will close, you will be unable to submit the work, and you will earn a zero for that assignment. There will be no exceptions to this policy under any circumstance, so please plan accordingly.

Please note that it is your responsibility to submit the correct work, in the correct format, before the assignment closes. You should therefore aim to submit work early, and always double check that what you've submitted is what you meant to submit. Technical issues (unless due to a campus-wide problem) will **not** warrant reopening of a closed assignment.

Missed Midterm

Make-up midterms require me to write you an entirely new exam and also to refrain from posting your peers' exam grades until the make-up has been completed. I am willing to do this under two circumstances: if you are unable to take the midterm as scheduled due to a documented illness or university-sanctioned event. In either of these cases, you will need to alert me before the midterm and set up a time to take the make-up exam in the same calendar week as the scheduled exam.

Under no other circumstances will a make-up exam be permissible.

Disability Support

I am happy to support you with or without documentation from the DASS office. You do **not** need to disclose your disability to me to receive additional support; simply email me to let me know what you require and we will work together to try to meet your needs. For more on DASS, please see the required university statements linked on our Canvas homepage and in Simple Syllabus.

Paper and Plagiarism Policies

- Formatting: Papers must be submitted as Word documents and should be formatted and styled according to MLA 9 guidelines, which we will review in class.
- Reflection sheet: Both papers must be submitted along with a reflection sheet, which will give you the opportunity to reflect on your writing process, what you learned, and identify opportunities for future improvement. Paper grades cannot be released until you have submitted your reflection sheet, so be sure to do so on time.
- Turnitin: All final drafts of essays must be turned in through Turnitin via Canvas (not emailed).
- Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when someone submits someone/something else's work as their own. This can take many forms, from failing to cite a source appropriately to submitting an entire paper written by someone/something else. In this class, submitting plagiarized work will result in the first instance in a failing grade on the assignment. Two or more instances of plagiarism will result in an F in the course and an Academic Integrity Report filed with the university, which can result in one of a host of disciplinary measures, up to and including expulsion. For more on academic integrity violations, please see the required university statements linked on our Canvas homepage and in Simple Syllabus. If you find yourself tempted to plagiarize due to being overwhelmed, confused, or feeling inadequate, *please come talk with me.*

Note about Turnitin: Turnitin checks papers for AI produced writing as well as similarity to all other work in its database. It's important that you know the *similarity* score Turnitin produces is not a *plagiarism* score. I never assume the similarity score is indicating that some particular percentage of a student's work is plagiarized, but a very high similarity score will prompt me to take a closer look at the paper in case some plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, has occurred. Similarly, Turnitin does *not* consistently detect AI produced writing accurately. This means that if Turnitin indicates a student's work has actually been done by AI, I will not assume it is correct, but will take the AI score as a suggestion that I should do some further digging to determine the source of a student's work.

Generative AI Policy

Different instructors will have different AI use policies for their courses. This is mine:

- If students use AI to draft assignments, they must **significantly** revise what the AI produces themselves. Revisions include checking for accuracy, improving argumentation, and correcting sentence level issues including passive voice and nominalization. We will discuss and practice these revisions in class prior to the short paper due date.
- Students who use AI must cite the AI in their works cited page AND in their paper reflection.
 - Citation: “Prompt used” prompt. Type of AI, Host of AI, Date Used, URL.
 ⇒ Example citation: “Describe the symbolism of the green light in the book *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald” prompt. ChatGPT, OpenAI, 8 Mar. 2023, chat.openai.com/chat.
 - Reflection: If you use AI on a paper, you need to tell me how you used it in the reflection you will submit along with the paper. Tell me what you used AI for, how you identified needed revisions and made those revisions, and the prompt(s) you gave the AI to get it to generate the work it did.
- You may **not** use generative AI to complete reflective assignments.

Please note: Failure to significantly revise any work begun by generative AI will result in a failing grade on the assignment. Failure to cite and honestly discuss AI use will constitute plagiarism and be penalized according to the plagiarism policy above. You are ultimately responsible for all of the work you turn in.

Communication Between You and I

Communication

I love teaching and genuinely care about the wellbeing of all my students, so I urge you to communicate with me if you get confused, overwhelmed, or stuck at any point in the term. The best ways to communicate with me are to email, meet in office hours, or to chat before and/or after class. You should never feel embarrassed or uneasy asking me for help— it’s why I’m here.

Office Hours

I hold office hours via Zoom on Fridays from 12:00pm-2:00pm and am happy to also meet with you outside of those hours by appointment. Office hours are time I have set aside specifically for you to use for questions, concerns, and to simply chat with me. If students do not use office hours, I sit at my desk staring into the ether and wondering what I have done with my life. Please, help me avoid an existential crisis by using office hours to work through problems, follow up on anything that sparks your interest in class, or to build rapport with me so that someday I can speak to your glowing character and sharp wit in a letter of recommendation. Sign up for office hours appointments by using the Google docs link on our Canvas homepage. If you need to meet outside of office hours, just shoot me an email and include a couple of dates/times that work for you.

Email Etiquette

Please remember that I am a human being with feelings and multiple obligations on my time, not a robot who lives in Dallas Hall (although that would be kind of cool). I ask that you use common sense and courtesy when emailing. Begin with a greeting, briefly state your question or concern, and do not expect an immediate response (though you will very often get one). If you email me after 5pm or over the weekend, you should expect a response the following business day. Having these boundaries and expectations helps me avoid burnout and continue bringing my all to this class and to each of you.

Feedback Box

I encourage you to use the feedback box in Canvas if you have questions or input about the class that you'd like to share anonymously. (Yes, I promise, it is 100% anonymous!)

Course Content Note

Through much of this semester, we will be reading texts that involve disturbing content – e.g. racial violence, white supremacy, sexual assault, etc. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the content of the texts to know if a particular session might generate a response that requires additional support. If you are a survivor of any of these forms of violence, I am sorry this happened to you. Given the statistical likelihood that there will be survivors in our midst, I ask all students to refrain from any victim-blaming language or language that reproduces the injury of this violence. This course cultivates a free and open exchange of dialogue and discussion, which demands that we respect the wellbeing and personal perspectives of all students.¹

Workload Estimate

I've calculated the average time each reading might take and communicated it on our syllabus. This is to help you manage your time, but do know that these estimates are just that, estimates, and everyone's reading and working pace varies a bit. Take the time you need.

Grading

I try to be as transparent about grading as possible, which means I use grading rubrics that are available to you under the "Resources for Students" tab in Canvas files. I will post assignment grades in Canvas no later than seven days after the due date.

¹ Thanks to our own Dr. Samantha Pergadia for this eloquent and empathetic policy!

Tentative Course Calendar

Readings on Perusall are indicated by **P**. Assignments are generally due by 9:00am on the days indicated. Any changes to the calendar will be communicated in advance via Canvas.

Week		Work Due Before Class	Discussion Topics & Activities
W1 8/21-25	M	Syllabus	Icebreaker & syllabus
	W	P: Morrison, “Preface” (est. 20 mins)	What is fiction and why do we read it?
	F	P: Wann, “Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution” (est. 30 mins)	What is Fat Studies?
W2 8/28-9/1	M	Hopkinson, “A Habit of Waste” (est. 30 mins)	Podcast & Reflection Assigned
	W	Machado, “Eight Bites” (est. 25 mins)	
	F	Jackson, “Fat” (est. 25 mins)	
W3 9/4-8	M		Labor Day—No Class
	W	P: Dame-Griff, “He’s Not Heavy, He’s an Anchor Baby” (est. 30 mins)	
	F	<i>The Deportation of Wopper Barraza</i> , through “Part I” (est. 90 mins)	

W4 9/11-15	M	Podcast Outline Due <i>The Deportation of Wopper Barraza</i> , through “Part II” (est. 120 mins)	
	W	<i>The Deportation of Wopper Barraza</i> , through “Part III” (est. 120 mins)	
	F	<i>The Deportation of Wopper Barraza</i> , through end (est. 45 mins)	
W5 9/18-22	M	Podcast & Reflection Due P: Creative Tension Podcast, “The ‘Mammification’ of the Nation” (37 mins) AND P: “Kara Walker: ‘A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby’” (9 mins)	
	W	<i>The Bluest Eye</i> , through “Autumn” (est. 90 mins)	
	F	<i>The Bluest Eye</i> , through “Winter” (est. 60 mins)	
W6 9/25-29	M	<i>The Bluest Eye</i> , through p. 163 (est. 120 mins)	Short Essay Assigned
	W	<i>The Bluest Eye</i> , through end (est. 80 mins)	ChatGPT Paper Workshop

	F	P: Lee & Vaught, “You Can Never Be Too Rich or Too Thin’: Popular and Consumer Culture and the Americanization of Asian American Girls and Young Women” (est. 30 mins)	
W7 10/2-6	M	<i>My Year of Meats</i> , through “The Ever-Growing Month” (est. 90 mins)	
	W	<i>My Year of Meats</i> , through “The Deutzia Month” (est. 60 mins)	
	F	<i>My Year of Meats</i> , through “The Water Month” (est. 100 mins)	
W8 10/9-13	M		Fall Break—No Class
	W	<i>My Year of Meats</i> , through “The Long Month” (est. 180 mins)	
	F	Draft of Short Essay Due	Short Essay Draft Workshop
W9 10/16-20	M	Short Essay Due <i>My Year of Meats</i> , through “The Frost Month” (est. 120 mins)	
	W	<i>My Year of Meats</i> , through end (est. 60 mins)	
	F		Midterm Review
W10	M		Midterm

10/23-27	W	P: Silko, selections from <i>Almanac of the Dead</i>	
	F	<i>There There</i> , through p. 44 (est. 90 mins)	
W11 10/30- 11/3	M	<i>There There</i> , through p. 87 (est. 90 mins)	
	W	<i>There There</i> , through p. 133 (est. 90 mins)	
	F	<i>There There</i> , through p. 186 (est. 110 mins)	
W12 11/6-10	M	<i>There There</i> , through 240 (est. 110 mins)	Final Paper Assigned
	W	<i>There There</i> , through end (est. 100 mins)	
	F	P: Stinson, "Fat Girls Need Fiction" (est. 20 mins)	
W13 11/13-17	M	Research Paper Proposal Due <i>Martha Moody</i> , through chapter 4 (est. 90 mins)	
	W	Questions for Susan's Visit Due <i>Martha Moody</i> , through chapter 8 (est. 90 mins)	
	F	<i>Martha Moody</i> , through chapter 11 (est. 90 mins)	
W14 11/20-24	M	<i>Martha Moody</i> , through end (est. 90 mins)	Mandatory Class Held via Zoom: Virtual Author's Visit

	T- F		Holiday—No Class
W15 11/27- 12/1	M- F	CONFERENCE WEEK	Individual Conferences via Zoom My Conference time: _____
W16 12/4-8	M		Optional Zoom Troubleshooting
	W	Final Paper Due	
	F		