

ENGL 2312.001: Being at Home in America

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Physical Office Location: Dallas Hall 241F

In-Person Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30pm-1:30pm

Zoom Office Hours: By appointment

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

Classroom: Caruth Hall 383

Class Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursdays from 11:00am-12:20pm

Course Description

When you think of home, do you think of a building, a person, a nation, or something else? Perhaps you have more than one answer. American fiction shows us that home can be many things, including a place of freedom or of confinement, a solid reality or a fragile, tormenting dream. This course introduces students to the study of fiction with an emphasis on texts that complicate notions of home from feminist and queer perspectives, including James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* and Emma Copley Eisenberg’s *Housemates*. We will work together to understand how authors formally attend to and complicate representations of home, and how these representations engage us, trouble us, and make us question what we think we know. Some questions we will consider: what does “home” truly mean? What *could* it mean? What can learning to recognize who gets to belong (and who doesn’t) teach us about ourselves and our world?

Course Texts

The Stepford Wives by Ira Levin, ISBN 978-1849015899

Giovanni’s Room by James Baldwin, ISBN 978-0345806567

Zami: A New Spelling of My Name by Audre Lorde, ISBN 978-0895941220

Housemates by Emma Copley Eisenberg, ISBN 978-0593242230

If you have trouble procuring any of the required course texts please email me ASAP so that I can help. Please note that you must have a hard copy of the required course texts (not digital), but I don’t care which edition you purchase. I will provide hard copies of all additional readings for free.

Student Learning Outcomes

Language and Literature (UC 2016):

Students will demonstrate how symbolic systems communicate meaningfully within their language communities. Students will analyze and create meaningful texts such as analytical essays, literary works, computer code, logical proofs, musical compositions, and films. Students must take one course from the Language and Literature division.

Literary Analysis and Interpretation (Common Curriculum):

Students will be able to analyze texts through close reading, and demonstrate an understanding of the text’s underlying historical, social, political, and cultural contexts, in pursuit of an individually-developed, well-argued analysis and interpretation.

What You'll Learn

- To analyze and interpret written and visual texts.
- To generate ideas about what you read/view.
- To communicate your ideas clearly and compellingly, both verbally and in writing.
- To think critically about dominant narratives of home and belonging in the US, including how those narratives intersect with race, gender, sexuality, body size, and more.

Assignments

- Twelve weekly pop quizzes and a variety of pre- and in-class activities including annotated readings, vocab exercises, and writing workshops.
- Two 4-5 page essays, each on a course text and submitted with a reflection.
- An 8-page zine about your vision of home due the date of our final exam review session.
- A final exam.

Weighted Grades

- Daily Participation 20%
- Weekly Pop Quizzes 15%
- Essay 1 15%
- Essay 2 15%
- Zine 15%
- Final Exam 20%

Teaching Methods

This course utilizes mini-lectures, instructor-led discussion, close reading and writing workshops, pop quizzes, activities including free writing and think-pair-share, and student-led discussion. I will not spend the majority of our time together lecturing at you; expect to participate generously in shaping this class and contributing to your own and others' learning each day.

Tech-Free Classroom Policy

In an effort to eliminate distractions that could hinder your success, our classroom will be tech-free. That means that we will not be using earbuds/headphones, phones, tablets, laptops, smart watches, or anything else with access to the internet during our class meetings. These items must be silenced and stowed away in your bag or backpack. Please bring a hard copy of the relevant reading(s) to class each day, as well as a pen or pencil and paper for taking notes and completing in-class assignments.

Communication

The best way to communicate with me is via email or by speaking with me during in-person or virtual office hours. You can expect a very prompt response when you email me within my working hours, which are 8:30am-4:30pm Monday-Friday. If you email me outside of those hours, expect a response on the next working day.

Workload

Per accreditation standards, this class requires up to 3 hours of work outside of the classroom per every 1 hour spent inside the classroom. Most of this time will be spent reading. Some days, you'll be responsible for a relatively short scholarly reading of 10 pages or so that should take less than an

hour to complete. Some days you will not have any reading due at all. More commonly, however, you will be responsible for as much as 70 or so pages of reading from our fictional texts, and the time it takes to complete these assignments will depend on your skills and experience as a reader. *If you are not used to reading long-form writing as a regular part of your everyday life, you should expect this course to be challenging.* The two most important things you can do to ensure that you meet this challenge are 1) begin your work early, not at the last minute and 2) proactively see me in office hours to discuss readings, assignments, and anything you might be struggling with. I welcome the opportunity to support you in growing your skills as a reader, writer, and critical thinker.

Grading

I use rubrics to grade major assignments, and those rubrics are available to you on our Canvas course site. As you will see when you review the rubrics, I grade based on the quality of the work you submit, and not on the effort that you have put into the assignment (which I can't know or assess anyway). If you would like in-depth feedback on an assignment in addition to your marked rubric, see me in office hours. Please note that grades are not negotiable, but I am happy to discuss your progress in the course and strategies for improvement as needed.

Daily Participation

I welcome and expect robust student participation throughout each class meeting. In addition to contributing generously during in-class discussion, you will also take part in activities such as collaboratively annotating readings and writing and textual analysis workshops. Please note that *in-class activities cannot be made up or submitted late*, but I will drop your **two** lowest scores in this category automatically, not to include in-class discussion participation.

Weekly Pop Quizzes

Once per week, you will complete a timed, five-question reading quiz. I will drop your **two** lowest quiz scores automatically.

Analytical Essays

In 4-5 double-spaced pages, you will make an original, specific argument based upon significant close readings of textual evidence drawn from two fictional course texts. You must submit a complete draft of both papers to be workshopped in class prior to the final paper due dates.

Zine

Zines are small booklets that combine original writing and imagery to take a stance on a topic and often to call for a specific political change. At the end of the term, you will create a zine reflecting upon our course and your own experiences to share your vision of home. We will talk more about zines, their rhetorical moves, and their social purpose in the coming weeks.

Final Exam

The last major assessment in this course is a cumulative, in-person final exam that will require you to closely read and analyze passages from course texts, demonstrating your knowledge of the texts, the major ideas, themes, and theories that we have examined over the term, and your own robust critical thinking skills.

Please note that *the final exam in this class cannot be rescheduled, made up, or submitted late*. To take the exam, you must be in class for the duration of our official final exam period, which is **Monday, May 11th, from 11:30am-2:30pm**.

Attendance Policy

If you want to do well in the course, *you should attend class pretty much all the time*. On those rare occasions when 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 and in-class activities cannot be made up.

Late/Missing Work

In-class assignments (including quizzes, activities, workshops, exams, etc.) **cannot** be made up or submitted late. If you need an extension on a major assignment completed outside of class, you must contact me to request one **at least 24 hours prior** to the due date.

Paper Policies

Your analytical essays must be typed, double-spaced, and use a clear and legible font (like Times New Roman, Calibri, etc.), no larger than 12pt. Use MLA style for formatting and citation.

Papers must be submitted as Word docs via the appropriate submission portal in Canvas. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have submitted the correct file. Last-minute tech or internet issues will not result in a change to a paper's due date.

Academic Integrity Policy

A student's first instance of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty (fabrication, for example) will result in a zero on the relevant assignment and a faculty disposition. Particularly egregious first-time violations may result in zero as well as an academic integrity violation filed against you with the university. Any additional instance will result in an F in the course and an automatic academic integrity violation filed against you with the university. See SMU's Student Handbook for a full list of academic integrity expectations as well as information about the student conduct review process.

Please come talk with me if you find yourself tempted to commit academic dishonesty due to feeling stressed, confused, inadequate, etc. I'm here to help.

Generative AI Policy

The use of LLMs of any kind, including Grammarly, is strictly prohibited in this class. The point of college writing is not to produce slick-sounding, empty prose. It is to develop your skills as a thinker and a writer. When you offload the writing process to, say, Sam Altman's cursed child, you are not developing those skills. To succeed in this class, you must do your own reading, writing, and critical thinking. Any violation of this policy will be handled according to the academic integrity policy outlined above.

Testing Policy

All exams and quizzes will be taken on paper using a pencil or pen and a highlighter. Laptops, phones, smart watches, and any other tools that have access to the internet must be stowed away in your bag or backpack during the duration of the exam/quiz. Violation of this policy, however brief, will result in an F on the assignment and a possible academic integrity violation filed against you with the university.

Please note that I return graded quizzes so that you can use them as study aids, but I do not return graded exams. If you would like to discuss your performance on an exam, please see me in office hours.

Classroom Conduct

I want you to feel respected and valued during our time together. This means that we must all refrain from behavior that alienates and disrespects others, including but not limited to: violating our tech-free classroom policy; raising our voices; making belittling comments; and being unwilling to engage ideas that unsettle our own beliefs. If your behavior distracts or disrespects others, you will have to leave the classroom and return when you are able to participate respectfully in our community of learning.

Warning! Adult Content

Some course materials may contain troubling, challenging, problematic, frightening, and even obscene ideas/concepts/histories/images, etc. You must be able to engage with these discussions and materials in a thoughtful and mature manner to be successful in this course.

University Policies

To access university policies regarding DASS accommodations, resources for pregnant and parenting students, and more, see the link on our Canvas homepage or consult Simple Syllabus.

Tentative Schedule of Assignments

Unit I: The White, Straight House

1/20: Syllabus; Canvas; in-class reading and discussion: JFK speech

1/22: Read and annotate your hard copy of Federici, “Wages Against Housework”

1/27: Read and annotate your hard copy of Chauncey, “Trade, Wolves, and the Boundaries of Normal Manhood”

1/29: *Giovanni's Room*, through pt. 1

2/3: *Giovanni's Room*, through pt. 2, ch. 3; **paper 1 assigned**

2/5: *Giovanni's Room*, through end

2/10: *The Stepford Wives*, through pt. 1

2/12: *The Stepford Wives*, through end

2/17: Watch *Don't Worry Darling* via Canvas

2/19: **Draft of paper 1 due; mandatory paper workshop**

Unit II: Creating Queer Homes

2/24: **Paper 1 due**; watch episode six of *A League of Their Own* on Amazon Prime: “Stealing Home”

2/26: Read and annotate your hard copy of Faderman, “Butches, Femmes, and Kikis: Creating Lesbian Subcultures in the 1950s and '60s”

3/3: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* through ch. 7

3/5: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* through ch. 14

3/10: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* through 22

3/12: *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* through end

3/16-3/22: ***Spring Break***

Unit III: Queer Home on the Road

3/24: *Housemates* through pt. 1, ch. 4; **paper 2 assigned**

3/26: *Housemates* through the end of pt. I

3/31: *Housemates* through pt. 2, ch. 4

4/2: *Housemates* through pt. 3, ch. 1

4/7: *Housemates* through end

4/9: **Draft of paper 2 due; mandatory paper workshop**

Unit IV: Queer Hijinks at Home

4/14: **Paper 2 due**; in-class zine archives workshop; **zine assigned**

4/16: Watch *The Birdcage* via Canvas

4/21: Watch *Watermelon Woman* via Canvas

4/23: Watch *How Not to Date While Trans* on YouTube; **zine proposal due**

4/28: In-class zine workshop

4/30: Final exam review; **zine due in class**

Final exam: Monday, May 11th, from 11:30am-2:30pm