

ACL 1001

Reading Contemporary Fiction
Summer School 2010-11
Footscray Park

Unit Co-ordinator/Lecturer

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We acknowledge the Elders, families and forebears of the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung tribes of the Kulin Nation who were the custodians of University land for many centuries. We acknowledge that the land on which we meet was the place of age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal and that the Kulin Nation people's living culture had and has a unique role in the life of this region.

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UNIT CALENDAR

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| Day 1 22 Nov | Unit Outline (9.00-12.00) Reading Contemporary Fiction (1.00-3.00) | Matthew Ryan | |
| Day 2 26 Nov | The Short Story (9.00-12.00) Grunge Writing: Before and After (1.00-3.00) | Matthew Ryan | |
| Day 3 6 Dec | Identity and Place in Literature: Kalinda Ashton's <i>The Danger Game</i> (9.00-12.00) New Zealand Writing (1.00-3.00) | Matthew Ryan | |
| Day 4 10 Dec | Witi Ihimaera's <i>The Uncle's Story</i> (9.00-12.00) Feminism and The Novel (1.00-3.00) | Matthew Ryan | |
| Day 5 17 Jan | Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman (9.00-12.00) Toni Morrison and Black Writing (1.00-3.00) | Matthew Ryan | |
| Day 6 21 Jan | Reading Race, Class and Gender in Toni Morrison's <i>Tar Baby</i> (9.00-12.00) Unit Summary (1.00-3.00) | Matthew Ryan | |

GENERAL INFORMATION

Website

The Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development hosts a website which contains a number of documents which you will find useful. It is located [here](#).

On this site you will find:

How to select your units and work out your timetable – this offers an overview of degree structures.

The timetable – here you will find the times of classes and the rooms where they are held. It is worth checking these details close to the start of semester in case anything has changed.

Useful web addresses – this shows you how to access your VU email address. You will find that the faculty, your lecturers and tutors will send you important emails during the semester and it is crucial that you are able to access this information.

Assignment cover sheets – you can download these sheets here.

Students rights and responsibilities – this is a list of what you can expect from studying at university, and what the university expects from you.

Plagiarism – there is a student's guide to plagiarism, how to avoid it and the penalties involved in engaging in plagiarism or academic dishonesty available here.

Essay guide online – here you will find a guide to the writing and presenting of essays. It contains an overview of structuring essays, of providing comprehensive references (Oxford, Harvard and APA) and of compiling a reference list.

Enrolling as a non-award student – this is an overview of enrolling in single units rather than in a whole degree.

Other useful information:

Teaching and Learning Support (<http://tls.vu.edu.au/students.htm>) – there are a number of academic support services offered to students.

Visit [this link for academic writing support](#).

Handing in assignments: Assignments are to be submitted in the tutor's pigeon hole. (Matthew Ryan, No.183, Level 2, Building E)

Penalties for late assignments: Late assignments (without an extension) will be graded at a reduction of 20 per cent per week late.

Special consideration: If you feel that illness or personal difficulties have impaired your performance you may ask for Special Consideration which can facilitate late submission, and alternative arrangements for assignments. This can cover both emotional and physical difficulties. You need to contact a student counsellor to arrange this.

Arrangements for disabled students: Students with disabilities need to register with Equity and Social Justice.

INTRODUCTION

In the past thirty years, the way we read and write literature – and definitions of the 'literary' itself – have increasingly been the focus of intensive debates. These debates have altered the ways we think about literary texts. Terms like 'literature' and 'fiction' have become difficult to use without careful thought and qualification. Another result has been the challenging of the notions of 'national literatures' and the 'literary canon' that have dominated the institutionalised study of literature in the West since the 18th century. This Unit examines a number of contemporary fictional texts in order to introduce students to a number of the recent developments and debates in literary studies. The Unit pays particular attention to issues like class, gender, place, race, and ethnicity.

Format: The Unit is designed so that each student attends two three-hour sessions each day. The unit is structured around six days. Within the sessions the lectures aim to be broad, covering themes and debates, while the tutorials are for closer discussion and argument about literary texts and issues. Each tutorial will focus on key texts, which **all students** are expected to have read; and key terms, which **all students** are expected to have researched. Each tutorial will revolve around one or more student presentations. The presentations will be based on the tutorial topic.

Venue and Times: All lectures and tutorials will be held in room D747. The morning session time is 9.00am-12.00pm and the afternoon session time is 1.00pm-3.00pm.

Attendance at all lectures and tutorials is compulsory.

Class Materials:

Set Texts Fiction

- Kalinda Ashton, *The Danger Game*
- *Witi Ihimaera, The Uncle's Story*
- Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye*
- Toni Morrison, *Tar Baby*

Critical Reading and short stories

- Required critical reading materials and some short stories will be available in a Book of Readings.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will learn to present literary arguments in a variety of verbal and textual settings and formats. (CGA 3 and 4)
2. Students will be introduced to the practice of tutorial discussion and debate in which problem solving is an important aspect. (CGA 1 and 4).

3. The literary texts studied will ensure students negotiate literary representations of diverse cultures. (CGAs 5)

Core Graduate Attributes:

1. is an effective problem solver in a range of settings, including professional practice
 2. can locate, evaluate, manage and use information effectively (including "critical thinking", ICT and statistical skills)
 3. communicates effectively as a professional and as a citizen
 4. can work both autonomously and collaboratively as a professional
 5. can work effectively in settings of social and cultural diversity
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UNIT OUTLINE

Day 1 (November 22, 9.00-12.00)

Topic: Outline of the Unit

Lecture: Students will be introduced to the topics and novels covered in ACL1001 Reading Contemporary Fiction as well as the assessment requirements for the Unit.

Tutorial: Introduction of students to each other and to the tutor; discussion of student and lecturer/tutor expectations for the Unit; review of reading and assessment requirements .

Essential Reading: No Readings

Day 1 (November 22, 1.00-3.00)

Topic: [Reading Contemporary Fiction](#)

Lecture: This lecture will trace the rise of the study of Literature in Britain and beyond, paying particular attention to the work of F.R. Leavis. It will also focus on ways of defining and reading contemporary fiction.

Tutorial Question: What is Literature, and why?

Essential Reading:

Terry Eagleton, 'Introduction: What is Literature?', *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Second Edition, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003 (1983).

Suzanne Scafe, *Teaching Black Literature*, London, Virago, 1989. Chapter 6: 'Beyond Theories of Exclusion'

Day 2 (26 November, 9.00-12.00)

Topic: [The Short Story](#)

Lecture: This lecture will look at the form of the short story, comparing it to that of the novel. It will discuss the techniques of short story writing using examples from the short stories in the Unit reader.

Tutorial Question: What are the main differences between the short story and the novel? Discuss with reference to at least two of the short stories in the Unit Reader.

Essential Reading:

Michael Wilding, 'Introduction' to *The Oxford Book of Australian Short Stories*. Oxford, 1994.

Peter Carey, 'War Crimes', in Dean Baldwin & Patrick J. Quinn (eds) *An Anthology of Colonial and Postcolonial Short Fiction*, Boston & New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2007

Ama Ata Aidoo, 'Two Sisters' in Dean Baldwin & Patrick J. Quinn (eds) *An Anthology of Colonial and Postcolonial Short Fiction*, Boston & New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2007

Margaret Atwood, 'The Age of Leads' in Dean Baldwin & Patrick J. Quinn (eds) *An Anthology of Colonial and Postcolonial Short Fiction*, Boston & New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

[Donald Barthelme, 'The Balloon'](#)

Peter Childs, 'Chapter 12: Short Story: Barthelme's Balloon and the Rhizome' in *Contemporary Cultural Texts and Critical Approaches*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006.

Day 2 (26 November, 1.00-3.00)

Topic: [Grunge Writing: Before and After](#)

Lecture: This lecture will focus on the rise and fall of 'grunge' literature and the debates surrounding its reception and marketability.

Tutorial: Is grunge fiction 'anti-literary'? Discuss with reference to Kalinda Ashton's *The Danger Game*.

Essential Reading:

Paul Dawson, 'Grunge Lit: Marketing Generation x', *Meanjin*, 56, 1 (1997): 119-125.

Ian Syson, 'Smells Like Market Spirit: Grunge, Literature, Australia ' *Overland* 142, 1996.

Kirsty Leishman, 'Australian grunge literature and the conflict between literary generations' *JAS, Australia 's Public Intellectual Forum*, 63, (1999): (94)-102,193-195.

Day 3 (6 December, 9.00-12.00)

Topic: [Identity and Place in Literature: Kalinda Ashton's *The Danger Game*](#)

Lecture: Constructions of the self and the importance of place in Kalinda Ashton's *The Danger Game* will be discussed. Close attention will be paid to the ways in which Ashton's novel relates to the Grunge genre.

Tutorial: Is Kalinda Ashton's *The Danger Game* an example of post-Grunge?

Essential Reading:

Georgia Arnott, review of *The Danger Game*, *ABR*, Dec 2009, p.65.

[Melbarts \(blog\) review of *The Danger Game*.](#)

[Hear Ashton interviewed by Ramona Koval on ABC Radio National](#)

[Crikey Blog](#)

Karen Brooks, 'Shit Creek: Suburbia, Abjection and Subjectivity in Australian 'Grunge' Fiction', *Australian Literary Studies*, 18. 4 (October 1998): 87-96.

Vivienne Muller, 'Waiting for Gordon – Grunge Realism and Andrew McGahan's *Praise*', in Lynette Finch & Chris McConville (eds), *Images of the Urban: Conference Proceedings*, Sunshine Coast University, 17-19 July, 1997. Pp. 152-156.

Day 3 (6 December, 1.00-3.00)

Topic: [New Zealand Writing](#)

Lecture: This lecture will trace the changes in New Zealand's literary culture since the beginning of the 20th century. It will pay particular attention to postcolonial literature, particular that which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.

Tutorial: What is the importance of a postcolonial approach to writing about New Zealand? Reference must be made to Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*.

Essential Reading:

Chris Prentice, 'Critical Transformations: New Zealand Literary and Cultural Studies', *AUMLA*, 100 (November 2003).

Sandra Tawake, 'Transforming the Insider-Outsider Perspective: Postcolonial Fiction from the Pacific', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 12, 1 (Spring 2000): 155-175.

Day 4 (10 December, 9.00-12.00)

Topic: [Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*](#)

Lecture: This lecture will discuss the twin narratives in Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*: the coming-out narrative and the narrative of Maori cultural identity. It will provide a postcolonial reading of Witi Ihimaera's novel.

Tutorial: Does Witi Ihimaera articulate 'multiple views of cultural and sexual identity' (Tawake, p. 376) in *The Uncle's Story*?

Essential Reading:

Margaret Meklin and Andrew Meklin, 'This Magnificent Accident: An Interview with Witi Ihimaera', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 16, 2 (Fall 2004): 358-366.

Sandra Tawake, 'Cultural rhetoric in coming-out narratives: Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*', *World Englishes* 25, 3/4 (2006): 373-380.

Day 4 (10 December, 1.00-3.00)

Topic: [Feminism and the Novel](#)

Lecture: This lecture will look at feminist approaches to reading and writing literature. It will focus on the incursions feminist critics have made in challenging the biases of the literary canon.

Tutorial: Have feminist literary critics and writers effectively challenged the authority of the canon of 'great' literary texts?

Essential Reading:

Pam Morris, 'Challenging the Canon and the Literary Establishment', in *Literature and Feminism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993.

Patricia Waugh, 'Chapter 9: The Woman Writer and the Continuities of Feminism' in James English (ed), *Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2007.

Day 5 (17 January, 9.00-12.00)

Topic: [Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman](#)

Lecture: This lecture will pay close attention to Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*. It will analyse the construction of gender in *Cat's Eye*, with particular attention to the role of the female artist as the novel's protagonist.

Tutorial: Does trauma play a central role in shaping the artistic development of Margaret Atwood's protagonist, Elaine Risley, in *Cat's Eye*?

Essential Reading:

Laurie Vickroy, Seeking Symbolic Immortality: Visualizing Trauma in *Cat's Eye* ' *Mosaic*, 38.2, 2005.

Amy Mullins, 'Feminist Art and the Political Imagination', *Hypatia*, 18, 4 (Fall/Winter 2003), 189-213

Day 5 (17 January, 1.00-3.00)

Topic: [Toni Morrison and Black Writing](#)

Lecture: This lecture will look at the concerns of African-American literature, particularly the novels of Toni Morrison. It will contextualise Black writing in terms of the United States ' history of slavery, emancipation and the civil rights movement.

Tutorial: Why do many African-American writers use the novel form to re-write the official history of the United States ? Discuss with reference to Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* .

Essential Reading:

Jago Morrison, 'Chapter 8: Toni Morrison: blackness and the historical imagination', *Contemporary Fiction*, London, Routledge, 2003.

Day 6 (21 January, 9.00-12.00)

Topic: [Reading Race, Class and Gender in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*](#)

Lecture: This lecture will focus on issues of gender, race, and class in Toni Morrison's *Tar baby*.

Tutorial: Who is the hunter; who is the hunted in *Tar Baby*? Discuss with reference to gender, race, and class.

Essential Reading:

Emma Parker, "Apple Pie" Ideology and the Politics of Appetite in the Novels of Toni Morrison', *Contemporary Literature*, 39, 4 (Winter 1998).

Linda Krumholz, 'Blackness and Art in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*', *Contemporary Literature* 49, 2 (2008): 263-92.

John N. Duval, 'Descent in the "House of Chloe": Race, Rape and Identity in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*', *Contemporary Literature* 38, 2 (1997): 225-49.

Day 6 (21 January, 1.00-3.00)

Topic: Unit Summary

Lecture: This lecture will highlight the key terms and concepts covered in the Unit.

Tutorial: Students will be given an opportunity to ask questions about any of the topics covered in the Unit.

Essential Reading: No Readings

ASSESSMENT

The assessment for this unit is as follows:

1. Tutorial Presentation 20%
2. Short Essay 30%
3. Long Essay 50 %

100%

Tutorial Presentation

You are required to give a tutorial presentation on one of the session's topics. Which session you are to focus on will be decided in your first tutorial with your tutor.

In this presentation, **you MUST NOT only summarise the day's tutorial readings**, you should also present new material, raise issues which enhance your tutorial group's understanding of the week's topic, and have at least three questions to ask the tutorial group at the end of your presentation. You should ensure you fully cover the tutorial topic, answering the question for that week in this outline.

The tutorial presentation should be 10-15 minutes in length. Students are encouraged to use visual aids (i.e overhead transparencies, powerpoint slides etc) when it is practical and appropriate to do so. Students who fail to attend class on the day of their presentation will be given a mark of 0 unless they have medical certification.

Assessment Criteria:

A **satisfactory** completion of assignment requires:

CONTENT

- The set readings have been clearly and succinctly explained and analysed
- The material has been related to the major themes of the subject and developed the week's specific topic

- The presentation provides a clear response to the tutorial question.
- All secondary sources have been properly referenced.

PRESENTATION

- The presenter spoke clearly and referred to rather than read from notes
- The presenter involved other students through questions, discussion prompts etc
- The presenter utilised presentation aids (where appropriate)
- The presenter promoted class discussion and managed that discussion

Due Date: The tutorial that corresponds with the chosen topic.

Weighting: 20%

Short Essay

The short essay is a written response to the tutorial question you presented on in class. It must be written in essay format and be properly referenced using the Harvard System. The theoretical material provided in the Unit reader must be referred to in your response.

The short essay must be handed to your tutor in hard copy during class time. It must also be submitted electronically as an attachment to your tutor's email account. A hard copy and an electronic copy **MUST** be submitted.

Assessment Criteria:

A **satisfactory** completion of assignment requires:

- Providing an accurate and complete bibliography
- Giving references in the essay for all quotations and ideas taken from other sources
- Using the Harvard Referencing System
- Drawing upon theories introduced in lectures and readings
- Answering the whole question
- Keeping to the word limit
- Editing for coherence and repetition
- Proof reading for spelling, expression and syntax
- Submitting both a hard and electronic copy

Due Date: One week after the presentation

Word Length: 1000 words

Weighting: 30%

Long Essay

Choose one of the following topics:

1. Discuss the representation of race and racial difference in at least two of the novels covered in the unit.
You might like to discuss the questions of whether race is a fundamentally important consideration in interpreting these texts and whether whiteness is represented in them as an identity.
2. Each of the set novels on the course presents different versions of history. Choose at least two of these novels and compare their representations of history as well as the sorts of history they represent (race, family, class, place, etc). Do the texts make arguments about the need to rethink and rewrite particular kinds of history?
3. Questions of family are important in each of the novels covered in the Unit. Choose at least two novels and discuss their representations of family. Is family a repressive force; is it an empowering one? How do questions of family relate to issues like class, race and gender?

It is essential that you **draw upon the theoretical material provided in the Unit reader** when responding to the essay question and also demonstrate that you have done further research. The long essay **MUST include at least three references from academic texts** found in and through the library (not internet sites). All texts consulted **must be properly referenced** using the Harvard System.

The long essay must be submitted in your tutor's pigeonhole (Matthew Ryan, No.183, Level 2, Building E) on the due date (31 Jan, 2011). It must also be submitted electronically as an attachment to your tutor's email account (matthew.ryan@vu.edu.au). A **hard copy and an electronic copy MUST** be submitted.

Assessment Criteria:

A **satisfactory** completion of assignment requires:

- Using at least three references from academic texts (not internet sites)
- Providing an accurate and complete bibliography
- Giving references in the essay for all quotations and ideas taken from other sources
- Using the Harvard Referencing System
- Drawing upon theories introduced in lectures and readings
- Answering the whole question
- Keeping to the word limit
- Editing for coherence and repetition
- Proof reading for spelling, expression and syntax
- Submitting both a hard and electronic copy
- Providing your tutor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of the essay

Due Date: 31 January 2011

Word Length: 2000 words

Weighting: 50%

Guidelines for Assessment Criteria:

Pass (50-59) Basic understanding of the topic, reference to theory, fulfilment of criteria, presentation of supporting evidence for argument, may have some problems with expression

Credit (60-69) Draws confidently upon a number of sources, contains a clear argument supported by evidence, goes well beyond basic understanding of the topic, clear expression

Distinction (70-79) Sophisticated and coherent structure, well developed argument, use of a theoretical framework for discussion

High Distinction (80-100) Shows originality and an ability to assess and consistently apply a theoretical framework. Sophisticated expression and structure.

Supplementary Assessment:

Students who achieve a final result between 45 and 49% will be given the opportunity to complete a supplementary assessment.

[Guidelines for Assessment Criteria](#)

[STUDENTS' RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

[A NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM FOR ALL ARTS STUDENTS](#)