

# EMOTION, EMPATHY AND THE NOVEL

UGS 302      Spring 2013  
64005 TTH 11:00-12:30  
MAI 220B

Dr. Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski  
Office: Parlin 230      471-8768  
[gemelli@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:gemelli@austin.utexas.edu)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Can novels help us to become more empathetic people? What can they teach us about the nature of human emotions, whether our own or those of others? What is the difference between a literary character and a person in terms of our emotional responses to each? These questions are now generating vigorous debate among literary scholars, philosophers and psychologists and neuroscientists, among others. In this course we will explore some of the latest research on empathy and emotion in several fields, bringing it to bear on our reading of five classic and contemporary novels. Our goals will be twofold: first, to understand what empathy is and how it works; and second, to study our responses to literature in order to gain insight into the nature of empathy, emotion and embodied cognition.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY CONTENT

This course draws on literary studies and literary criticism and theory. It also draws on psychoanalysis, psychology, cognitive and social neuroscience, and philosophy.

## CONTEMPORARY CONTENT

The neuroscience of empathy and emotion is a very exciting field, and it is having a major impact on many other areas of inquiry. Discoveries made in the past twenty years, especially of the Mirror Neuron System of humans and other primates, has revolutionized our understanding of intersubjectivity--i.e., how we understand and relate to other people--and its evolutionary relation to language development. This research has been making its way into literary studies for some time, but especially in the past five years, and it is revolutionizing the ways that we teach and think about narratives of many kinds. At the same time, it is revitalizing philosophical discussions that have taken place over the past 2500 years, in some cases providing new evidence for ancient theories, and in other cases, completely revising what we thought we knew. The goal of this course will be to introduce students to some of the long-standing debates on literature, emotion, and intersubjectivity (our relations to other living beings), and also to learn about some of the recent developments in the study of emotion and empathy. This course will prepare students for literature and language studies at UT, while also offering a provocative array of interdisciplinary readings that will encourage students to make connections between the humanities, social sciences, and sciences.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Class members will be expected to do the readings conscientiously, to master the content of the syllabus, and to participate in group discussions and exercises. Students will also develop their research skills, their critical thinking and their oral and written expression.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*  
Albert Camus, *The Stranger*  
Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*  
Vikas Swarup, *Q & A*

**All novels available at the University Co-op.**

In addition to these books, there will be a packet of secondary readings. Additionally, some readings will be posted on the class website on Blackboard.

## OTHER SUPPLIES

Please buy a spiral-bound notebook, which you will use for periodic journaling and other in-class writing assignments.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

Jan. 15                    INTRODUCTION: OUR THIRST FOR STORIES

Jan. 17                    Martha Nussbaum, "The Narrative Imagination," in *Cultivating Humanity* (**Blackboard**)  
Suzanne Keen, "Perspectives on Empathy," in *Empathy and the Novel* (**Blackboard**)

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Jan. 22                    Suzanne Keen, "Perspectives on Empathy," in *Empathy and the Novel*, cont. (**Blackboard**)  
C. Daniel Batson, "These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena, in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*

Jan. 24                    Clarice Lispector, "The Chicken" (**Packet**)  
Jeffrey Archer, "Just Good Friends" (**Packet**)  
Amy Coplan, "Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions"

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Jan. 29                    Giacomo Rizzolatti, Leonardo Fogassi, Vittorio Gallese, "Mirrors in the Mind" (**Packet**)  
Vittorio Gallese, "The Roots of Empathy: The Shared Manifold Hypothesis and the Neural Basis of Intersubjectivity" (**Packet**)  
**GROUP ASSIGNMENTS**

Jan. 31                    Vittorio Gallese, "The Roots of Empathy: The Shared Manifold Hypothesis and the Neural Basis of Intersubjectivity" (**Packet**)  
Hannah Wojciehowski and Vittorio Gallese, "Interview" (**Packet**)

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Feb. 5	MEET IN BLANTON MUSEUM—WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 (research)
Feb. 7	Jane Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 due
Feb. 12	Jane Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
Feb. 14	Jane Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
Feb. 19	Jane Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
Feb. 21	RESEARCH EXERCISE—WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 due
Feb. 26	Amy Shuman, "Introduction: Subversive Stories and the Critique of Empathy," in <i>Other People's Stories</i> (Packet)
Feb. 28	Albert Camus, <i>The Stranger</i>
Mar. 5	Albert Camus, <i>The Stranger</i> WRITING ASSIGNMENT #3 due
Mar. 7	MIDTERM EXAM
Mar. 12	SPRING BREAK
Mar. 14	SPRING BREAK
Mar. 19	LIBRARY RESEARCH SEMINAR MEET IN PCL Research Paper Prospectus due (200-250 words) Chinua Achebe, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Mar. 21	Chinua Achebe, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Mar. 26	Chinua Achebe, <i>Things Fall Apart</i> Annotated bibliography due (5 books and articles)

Mar. 28 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

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Apr. 2 Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*  
**Research Paper, Draft # 1 due (5-6 pages)**

Apr. 4 Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*  
Group discussion of research

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Apr. 9 Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*  
ORAL REPORTS, Group 1

Apr. 11 Vikas Swarup, *Q & A*  
ORAL REPORTS, Group 2

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Apr. 16 Vikas Swarup, *Q & A*  
ORAL REPORTS, Group 3

Apr. 18 Vikas Swarup, *Q & A*  
ORAL REPORTS, Group 4

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Apr. 23 Vikas Swarup, *Q & A*  
ORAL REPORTS, Group 5

Apr. 25 SECOND EXAM

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Apr. 30 "Slumdog Millionaire"  
Film Discussion  
**Research Paper, Final Draft due (7-8 pages)**

May 2 Conclusions on Empathy and Narrative  
Course Evaluations

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS COURSE:

**Attendance policy.** Attendance is required for this course. More than three unexcused absences will result in a lower final grade; more than five unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Tardiness policy:** Students who come to class more than 10 minutes late will be counted absent for that day.

**Classroom etiquette:** Please turn off all cellphones and electronic devices before class begins. Students who text in class will be asked to leave and will be counted absent. Please do not disrupt the class by leaving while we are in session; if for some reason you need to leave the room, please take your books with you and come back another day.

**Make-up exams and late papers:** I do not schedule make-up exams. If you miss an exam for a legitimate reason, you will have the opportunity to write a 5-6 page paper instead.

**Papers are due at the beginning of class** and must be submitted to the Blackboard website. In general I do not accept late papers, though extensions can be obtained if you ask me—preferably in person--more than 48 hours in advance of the deadline.

**Assignments and Grading:**

1st one-page written assignment	5%
2 <sup>nd</sup> one-page essay	5%
3 <sup>rd</sup> written assignment	10%
Midterm	15%
Research paper prospectus	5%
Research paper bibliography	5%
Oral presentation	20%
Second exam	15%
Research paper, 2 drafts (average)	20%

**The University's Undergraduate Writing Center:**

If you would like some additional help in working on your essays, please feel free to visit the University's Undergraduate Writing Center. The UWC is located in FAC 211, 471-6222 (<http://uwc.utexas.edu/home>). They describe their mission as follows: "The Undergraduate Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Any undergraduate enrolled in a course at UT can visit the UWC for assistance with any writing project. They work with students from every department on campus, for both academic and non-academic writing. Whether you are writing a lab report, a resume, a term paper, a statement for an application, or your own poetry, UWC consultants will be happy to work with you. Their services are not just for writing with "problems." Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance they provide is intended to foster independence. Each student determines how to use the consultant's advice. The consultants are trained to help you work on your writing in ways that preserve the integrity of your work."

**OTHER POLICIES:**

*Note on the University's grading system:* I will be using the plus/minus system for final grades. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

A = 93-100      A- = 90-92      B+ = 87-89      B = 84-86      B- = 80-83      C+ = 77-79  
C = 74-76      C- = 70-73      D+ = 67-69      D = 64-66      D- = 60-63      F = 0-60

*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.

## OFFICE HOURS:

My office is located in Parlin 230. I will hold office hours from 2:00 to 3:30 TTh, and by appt. You may also reach me at my office (1-8768) or by e-mail, but I prefer meeting in person. I look forward to getting to know each of you and to working with you this semester.