



Peru State College
ENGLISH 450: ENGLISH SEMINAR
The Geography of Imaginative Literature
Syllabus: Spring – 2012

Instructor: Dr. Dan Holtz

Office: Fine Arts 206

Office Hours: 8 – 9:15 a.m. and 3:45 – 4:45 p.m. on M & W
9:30 – 11 a.m. and 3:30 – 4 p.m. on T & Th
Other times available by appointment

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Web page: <http://www.hpcnet.org/peru/schoolartsandsciences/language/holtz>

Course Meets: 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., Mondays & Wednesdays

Required Textbooks:

Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck

Cry the Beloved Country by Alan Paton

Holes by Louis Sachar

Plainsong by Kent Haruf

House Made of Dawn by N. Scott Momaday

Required Software: None

Course Description: The capstone class for Language Arts and English majors, English 450 is a research-directed seminar which focuses on various issues, authors, and topics in literature (Women's Literature, Literary Theory, Major Authors) currently being discussed and debated nationally or internationally. This particular offering of this course focuses on five writers' conceptualizations of place in works from various genres, including novels meant for adults, an adolescent novel, and a travelogue/memoir. The course supports the College's goals of instilling in students independent critical thought and the intellectual capacity for change. It also supports the English Department's goals of fostering critical reading skills and the clear expression of ideas, as well as the goals of promoting students' abilities to interpret and understand major literary works in a variety of genres and their abilities to master language skills in composition.

Prerequisites: None

Objectives:

Upon completion of this course you should:

Understand more thoroughly how writers develop a sense of “place” and the importance of that element in imaginative writing.

Be more familiar with the characteristics of writing from a variety of genres.

Be more familiar with classic American literature that is appropriate to the abilities of adolescent readers.

Understand how the writers we study influenced or were influenced by the times in which they lived.

Have gained a greater understanding of the field of English as a profession.

Have gained a more refined ability to respond to literature through both writing and speaking.

Understand more thoroughly how various approaches to literary criticism may be used to analyze a piece of literature.

At the beginning of the course, we will discuss how these objectives fit into the College’s and School’s mission and goals.

Expectations & Instructional Approach

Classes will include lectures about the lives of the authors, their writing styles and techniques, and historical backgrounds to the literature. Just as often, though, classroom time will be devoted to whole-class or small-group discussion of the literature. And classroom time will include presentations by you and your classmates about the work you are doing for this class and about key issues that you see concerning English/language arts as a professional field. Finally, some classroom time will be given to the viewing of selected videos that concern the writers and historical backgrounds to their work.

Attendance and participation are vital to the learning experience. Consequently, I expect you to be at each class having read the material and ready to participate in the day’s discussions and exercises. Please be in class on time. In order to foster a climate conducive to learning, please join me in treating your classmates with respect. I encourage you to ask questions, to seek my help when you need it, and to help your classmates understand the material.

Assessment and Grading

Place Paper: In this paper I want you to describe, “to take us into,” the **place** that has been the most important piece of geography in your life. This place may be the home or the home town in which you grew up, the high school you attended, the office where you work, your favorite vacation spot, the land on your parents’ farm, your dorm room in college—any place whose geography has made the most important impact on your life. As you will see from our discussions, **place** is not limited to the actual physical characteristics of a locale. It may include many other things, many of which should become a part of your paper. This paper must be a

minimum of **four full pages** (and a maximum of six), typed and double-spaced, with one-inch margins on the top, bottom, and sides and a typeface no larger than 12 pts.

Part of your grade on this paper will stem from your sharing with the class its main ideas and your intention for the paper in a brief (four to five-minute) oral report. This paper is **due Wednesday, February 29**. The reports will take place in the two weeks after mid-term break.

Seminar Presentation: Most importantly, this presentation must put forward important ideas or material about what you think it means to be a professional in the field of English/language arts. The presentation must also demonstrate that you know how to research effectively, so it must incorporate, correctly, ideas you have gained from outside sources. Because English/language arts or liberal arts majors have skills that can be used in a variety of ways—teaching, writing, editing, publishing, public relations, etc.—you may take your presentation in any of these directions or more. Thus your presentation, for example, may explain how the author of a literary work (probably a short story) on which you are reporting uses and develops place. Or it may overview the typical duties, opportunities, and challenges of a person who works in the editing field. Or it may present some of your own creative writing and elaborate on your intentions in that writing and what you hope to do in your writing career. Basically, I want your presentation to demonstrate some important aspect of how you are going to use the skills you have gained as an English/language arts or liberal arts major in a professional setting.

You will give this presentation either individually or with one other class member. If yours is a paired presentation, it must fall into the range of 12 to 15 minutes; if it is an individual presentation, it must be eight to 10 minutes. **I do not want you to fall below or drift above these parameters more than one minute.** When you give your presentation, you must **dress in a way that is appropriate** to the context of the material you are presenting. In other words, if your presentation concerns teaching English, you must dress in a way that is professional for teachers. Or if your presentation concerns publishing or public relations, you must dress accordingly. On the days of these presentations, I will invite other college faculty and professional staff to class to observe, so I want you to be aware of this possibility.

No matter what the topic of your presentation is, you must also submit a one- to one-and-a-half-page summary (typed, double-spaced) of its ideas and intentions. This summary must also include a separate “works-cited” page (in correct MLA style) that indicates the outside sources you used to prepare the presentation.

These presentations will be given during the last couple of weeks of the course.

Tests: On the last discussion day for the first two pairs of books and the last book, you will have a 100-point **objective test** to check your recall and understanding of these books. Questions for these tests will most likely concern a combination of the following material: the books’ characters, literary devices, and plot development; historical background to the stories; biographical information about the authors; methods of literary criticism, and the like.

Issues and Concerns Roundtable: Your part in this, **which must be at least three but no more than five minutes long**, should concern an important challenge, issue,

opportunity, etc. that you see in the fields of English/language arts and/or English teaching. Your aim in this report should be to present information about a significant topic and, thus, to stimulate discussion about the field of English/language arts as a profession. The topic you choose may arise from your personal experience and understanding of the field, or it may be one you discover from perusing a professional journal or magazine, such as the *English Journal*. Examples of suggested topics are the uses of an English major for careers in fields other than teaching English, strategies for the effective teaching of grammar, strategies for the effective teaching of writing, strategies for the effective teaching of literature, the relevance of required English courses in high school or in college, effective elective English courses for high school and college, graduate degrees in English, what it means to be a “professional” in the field of English, how to encourage free-choice student writing, and the like. **You must clear your topic with me before you present it in the roundtable.**

Conference Sessions: You will have at least two conference sessions with me. In the first of these sessions, we will discuss your plan for your place paper and address other issues or concerns you may have about the course’s materials or requirements. In the second session, we will discuss your plan for the seminar presentation. These sessions will be held during regular class time, so they will replace your attendance during those class periods. The first of these sessions begins **January 25**.

Tentative Course Schedule

First Five Weeks: (I will supply the next five weeks’ schedule during the second week of February.)

Date	Assignment	Activity
Jan. 9	None	General Introduction/ Syllabus/Introduction to first reading assignment
Jan. 11	John Steinbeck, <i>Travels with Charley</i>, pp. 3-58	Lecture information about the current book & author and discussion of the reading.
Jan. 16	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , pp. 59-119	Video/s on John Steinbeck **Lecture information about the current book and discussion of the reading.
Jan. 18	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , pp. 123-165	
Jan. 23	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , pp. 166-224	No class – First conferences
Jan. 25	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , pp. 229-277	
Jan. 30	Alan Paton, <i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i>, Book 1-chpts. 1-9	No class – First conferences
Feb. 1	<i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i> , Book 1-chpts. 10-17	

Feb. 6	<i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i> , Book 2-chpts. 18-24	
Feb. 8	<i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i> , Book 2-chpts. 25-29 and Book 3, chpt. 30	
Feb. 13	<i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i> , Book 3-chpts. 31-36	Test on first two books. **All in-class periods will include this activity.

FINAL TEST Period – Thursday, May 3, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Order of Readings

First Pair of books: *Travels with Charley* (Penguin Books) by John Steinbeck and *Cry, the Beloved Country* (John Wiley & Sons) by Alan Paton

Second Pair: *Holes* (Random House Children’s Books) by Louis Sachar and *Plainsong* (Vintage) by Kent Haruf

Last Book: *House Made of Dawn* (Harper Collins) by N. Scott Momaday

Grading Scale

You may earn a total of 1,000 points in this course.

The place paper counts 250 pts.

The seminar presentation counts 350 pts.

The three tests count 300 pts., 100 points for each of them.

Your report for the issues and concerns roundtable counts for 50 pts.

Your attendance and active participation in the conference sessions count for 50 pts., 25 for each one.

The following total-point levels will earn the following grades:

900 – 1,000 pts. = A	850 – 899 pts. = B+	800 – 849 pts. = B
750 – 799 pts. = C+	700 - 749 pts. = C	650 – 699 pts. = D+
600 – 649 pts. = D	Below 599 pts. = F	

College’s Incomplete Coursework Policy

To designate a student’s work in a course as incomplete at the end of a term, the instructor records the incomplete grade (I). Students may receive this grade only when serious illness, hardship, death in the immediate family, or military service during the

semester in which they are registered prevents them from completing course requirements. In addition, to receive an incomplete, a student must have completed substantially all of the course's major requirements.

Unless extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise, students must initiate requests for an incomplete by filling out an Incomplete Grade Completion Contract, which requires the signature of the student, instructor, and Dean. The Incomplete Grade Completion contract cites the reason(s) for the incomplete and details the specific obligations the student must meet to change the incomplete to a letter grade. The date by which the student agrees to complete required work must appear in the contract. The Dean, the instructor, and the student receive signed copies of the Incomplete Grade Completion Contract.

Even if the student does not attend Peru State College, all incomplete course work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester. Unless the appropriate Dean approves an extension and if the student does not fulfill contract obligations in the allotted time, the incomplete grade automatically becomes an F.

College's Academic Integrity Policy

The College expects all students to conduct themselves in a manner that supports an honest assessment of student learning outcomes and the assignment of grades that appropriately reflect student performance. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to understand and comply with instructions regarding the completion of assignments, exams, and other academic activities. At a minimum, students should assume that at each assessment opportunity they are expected to do their own original academic work and/or clearly acknowledge in an appropriate fashion the intellectual work of others, when such contributions are allowed. Students helping others to circumvent honest assessments of learning outcomes, or who fail to report instances of academic dishonesty, are also subject to the sanctions defined in this policy.

Instances of academic dishonesty may be discovered in a variety of ways. Faculty members who assign written work ordinarily check citations for accuracy, run data base and online checks, and/or may simply recognize familiar passages that are not cited. They may observe students in the act of cheating or may become aware of instances of cheating from the statements of others. All persons who observe or otherwise know about instances of cheating are expected to report such instances to the proper instructor or Dean.

In order to promote academic integrity, the College subscribes to an electronic service to review papers for the appropriate citations and originality. Key elements of submitted papers are stored electronically in a limited access database and thus become a permanent part of the material to which future submissions are compared. Submission of an application and continued enrollment signifies your permission for this use of your written work.

NSCS Board of Trustees Policy 4220 states that each College “. . . will establish

a distance learning assessment policy that will include, at a minimum, a substantial culminating experience that is proctored.” Peru State College’s policy is that each course that is offered entirely online will feature a proctored final exam that substantially measures the extent the course’s stated learning objectives are achieved. Online course syllabi will clearly state that, regardless of grades earned previously, the proctored final exam must be passed in order to receive credit for the course. Courses which feature graded site-based activities (e.g., teaching demonstrations) and/or video-taped presentations that occur near the end of the term, and that are designed to substantially assess the achievement of learning objectives, can be considered in compliance with this policy. Project-based capstone and graduate courses utilizing real-time discussions held by web-cam, phone or in person with the faculty member as part of the assessment process can also be considered in compliance with this policy.

Should an occurrence of academic misconduct occur, the faculty member may assign a failing grade for the assignment or a failing grade for the course. Each incident of academic misconduct should be reported to the Dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). The VPAA may suspend students for two semesters found to be responsible for multiple instances of academic dishonesty. The reason for the suspension will be noted on the student’s transcript.

A faculty member need present only basic evidence of academic dishonesty. There is no requirement for proof of intent. Students are responsible for understanding these tenets of academic honesty and integrity. Students may appeal penalties for academic dishonesty using the process established for grades appeals.

Title IX Compliance Notice

Peru State College is an equal opportunity institution. PSC does not discriminate against any student, employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or age in employment and education opportunities, including but not limited to admission decisions. The College has designated an individual to coordinate the College’s nondiscrimination efforts to comply with regulations implementing Title VI, VII, IX, and Section 504. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies and practices may be directed to Eulanda Cade, Director of Human Resources, Title VI, VII, IX Compliance Coordinator, Peru State College, PO Box 10, Peru, NE 68421-0010, (402) 872-2230.

Students requesting reasonable accommodation and tutoring services should contact the Center for Achievement and Transition Services (CATS).

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