

**English 39203: The Political Novel
Section C, Fall 2018
3 Credits / 3 Hours
Mon. and Wed., 11:00am-12:15pm
NAC 4-121B**

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Introduction

Welcome to English 39203: The Political Novel. The course description is as follows:

In The Political Novel, we will explore the reciprocal relationship between literature and politics through a range of modern and contemporary works. Though we will primarily address how these works challenge political thought and practice, we will also examine the ways they invest individuals' lives, locales, and beliefs with broad political significance. In the course of our discussions, we will explore the historical underpinnings of the novels as well as touch upon a number of topics, such as the formation of ideologies, revolution and reform, exiles and intellectuals, gender and class, and alternative histories.

Our readings are sorted into four separate units that each address a different political theme: citizenship, gender, empire, and government. Of course, these themes are not restricted to their respective sections, and I hope each unit will provide us with the vocabulary to speak and write about these issues in *all* of our texts, which I very much look forward to analyzing with you.

Course Goals and Objectives

- Learn to identify the ideologies present in a text, both those it champions and those it challenges
- Hone skills of close reading, literary analysis, and critical argumentation
- Develop an original and compelling writing voice
- Discover the pleasure of reading these texts

Required Materials

All books are available at the CCNY Bookstore.

- Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*. ISBN-13: 978-1555976903
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. ISBN-13: 978-0393352566
- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*. ISBN-13: 9780385490818
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*. ISBN-13: 978-0375703867
- Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*. ISBN-13: 978-0140185850
- Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*. ISBN-13: 978-0451465641

Grading Scale: 94-100 = A; 90-93 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C

Classroom Participation

This is a *discussion-based course, not a lecture-based one*. I strongly believe that **learning is a social practice**, and by voicing your reading of these texts to your peers, you are helping to educate the entire classroom, *yourself* and *myself* included. However, I am aware that some people are more comfortable speaking than others—in fact, public speaking regularly tops polls of Americans’ greatest fears—and **your participation grade will also include *active listening***. However, there will also be **no toleration of *deliberately racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or ableist language***. I use the word *deliberately* because **we all have gaps in knowledge and experience and part of the purpose of a college education is assisting each other in filling in those gaps**. Therefore, I encourage respectful debate when your peers or I have said something that is hurtful, insensitive, or ignorant.

Essays/Assignments

Three times during the semester, I will ask you to write and revise a **750-word essay**. These are deliberately short (around three pages) so that we can focus on **writing as a continuous practice rather than as a culmination of your learning at the midpoint and end of the semester**. **Optional prompts** will be written in response to student interests and **passed out, along with assignment guidelines, one week before each first draft is due**.

Accommodating Disabilities

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to register with the Access Ability Center/Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Access Ability Center/Student Disability Services, North Academic Center, Room 1-218, phone number (212) 650-5913.

Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in any educational program receiving federal financial assistance. Sexual harassment, which includes acts of sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX, and is considered a Civil Rights offense. City College encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to a faculty member, counselor, or staff; confidential resources are available through the City College Counseling Center at (212) 650-8222.

Classmate Contacts

Name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____ **Email:** _____

Name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____ **Email:** _____

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Part One: Citizenship

- Wed. 8/29 Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1925)
- Wed. 9/5 Kafka, *The Trial* (cont'd)
- Wed. 9/12 Kafka, *The Trial* (cont'd)
- Mon. 9/17 Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014)
- Mon. 9/24 Rankine, *Citizen* (cont'd)
- Wed. 9/26 Rankine, *Citizen* (cont'd)
- Su. 9/30 First Draft of 1st Close Reading Essay Due**

Part Two: Gender

- Mon. 10/1 Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)
- Wed. 10/3 Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (cont'd)
- Su. 10/7 Final Draft of 1st Close Reading Essay Due**
- Wed. 10/10 Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (cont'd)
- Mon. 10/15 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)
- Wed. 10/17 Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (cont'd)
- Mon. 10/22 Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (cont'd)
- Wed. 10/24 Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (cont'd)
- Su. 10/28 First Draft of 2nd Close Reading Essay Due**

Part Three: Empire

- Mon. 10/29 Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (1999)
- Wed. 10/31 Smith, *White Teeth* (cont'd)

Su. 11/4 Final Draft of 2nd Close Reading Essay Due

Mon. 11/5 Smith, *White Teeth* (cont'd)

Wed. 11/7 Smith, *White Teeth* (cont'd)

Mon. 11/12 Smith, *White Teeth* (cont'd)

Wed. 11/14 Smith, *White Teeth* (cont'd)

Part Four: Government

Mon. 11/19 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (1924)

Wed. 11/21 Zamyatin, *We* (cont'd)

Mon. 11/26 Zamyatin, *We* (cont'd)

Wed. 11/28 Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935)

Su. 12/2 First Draft of Political Dialogue Due

Mon. 12/3 Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (cont'd)

Wed. 12/5 Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (cont'd)

Su. 12/9 Final Draft of Political Dialogue Due

Mon. 12/10 Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (cont'd)

Wed. 12/12 Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (cont'd)