“The writer is the person who stands outside society, independent of affiliation and independent of influence. The writer is the man or woman who automatically takes a stance against his or her government. There are so many temptations for American writers to become part of the system and part of the structure that now, more than ever, we have to resist. American writers ought to stand and live in the margins, and be more dangerous. Writers in repressive societies are considered dangerous. That's why so many of them are in jail.”

--Don DeLillo, from the 1988 interview with Ann Arensberg, published in Vogue

As we consider novels from the later half of the 20th century, we’ll see if the above commentary from novelist Don DeLillo holds true.

GOALS

As an English major progressing through our curriculum, we call upon you to improve continually in your ability to demonstrate the following:

1. the ability to discuss literature, including engaging in an exchange of ideas, and offering and supporting insights.
2. the capacity to sustain controlled, critical arguments that analyze and synthesize texts.
3. an understanding of the craft of writing, including concision, diction, grammar, and syntax.
4. the ability to produce creative writing that shows an awareness of language, freedom from cliché, and an understanding of genre, style, and topic.
5. the ability to identify and use a range of sources suitable to the scholarly conversation on a particular topic, to evaluate and integrate source material, and to document accurately.
6. an understanding of the literary tradition, the historical and cultural contexts of literature, and critical methods of reading.
7. the ability to give well-planned, engaging presentations.
As a participant in this particular course, you should seek to

a. understand the themes, techniques and history of American fiction since 1945
b. apply those understandings to specific literary works

TEXTS

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
On the Road by Jack Kerouac
The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
White Noise by Don DeLillo
Housekeeping by Marilyn Robinson
The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan

ASSIGNMENTS

Your first responsibility is participation. While I do not take attendance, please know that 10% of your final grade is based on participation. If you’re not here, you can’t participate. By “participation,” I mean active involvement in the discussion. While I am sympathetic to those who, in Bartleby’s phrase “prefer not to,” I also note that Bartleby suffered, without complaint, the consequence of his decision. Since participation is 10% of your final grade, you should know that a person who does not contribute regularly and intelligently, based on a completed reading of all assignments, cannot receive better than a B in this course.

To participate, you must be prepared. You must have read and thought about all of the assigned readings in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Regularly, I will give simple quizzes that test your preparation. These quizzes are worth 10% of your final grade.

Over the course of the term, you will write two papers and one take-home essay exam. You will give one presentation. These assignments will be explained in detail when they are assigned.

GRADES

Your final grade will be based on the following percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-home Final</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

(Much of the following was devised by Professor Kalata, and I use it with her permission.)

Attendance. Excessive absences will directly affect your grade. You may miss three classes. After these three, you will lose 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional class you miss (e.g., an A- course grade will change to a B+; a B+ course grade will change to a B). Absences will be excused only in emergency situations, with appropriate documentation. Please be aware that “self-reported sick in room” notices from the Student Health Center will not change an absence from unexcused to excused. Note, too, that two late arrivals—or early departures—of 15 or more minutes constitute an absence. I will mark sleepers and anyone using a cell phone and sleepers absent. In fact, I’ll ask those people to leave the classroom.

Deadlines. Late papers are penalized 10% per day late, including the first day and weekends. Computer, jump drive, or printer problems do not justify late or shoddy work. It is unacceptable to blame your computer or the computer labs for late papers.

Honesty. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating or lying will not be tolerated. Any evidence that you have used others’ ideas without accrediting a source will result in failure of the assignment, consultation with the Dean, and, possibly, failure of the course and permanent dismissal from the College. Please familiarize yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy & Procedures described in your Student Handbook.

Respect. I would like for us to cultivate a culture of respect in our classroom. Please maintain a respectful attitude toward the course, your fellow students, and me; in turn, I will do the same for you. Know that disrespectful behavior can negatively affect your participation grade. Also, please adopt a professional tone (and include opening and closing salutations) in e-mail correspondence. For example, a professional, respectful e-mail might read: “Dr. Swerdlow, Can you help me with an assignment? Sincerely, John Doe.” If your e-mail message is poorly written or otherwise unprofessional, I will ask you to revise it before responding to your question.

ATHLETICS & EXTRACURRICULARS: If you are involved in College athletics or other extracurricular activities and will miss class meetings because of games, performances, etc., please notify me in advance of any class sessions you will miss. All work is to be submitted prior to the excused absence.

CELL PHONES should be out of sight and turned off at all times, or I will become very cranky.