

ENG 760, section two: Studies in Literary Genres: Satire

Autumn 2008

Wednesdays 7:00-9:45 pm, FDH 608

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Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 3:00-4:00 pm or by appointment

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In this course we will examine the theory and practice of satire from the classical period to the present day. Rather than attempting to cover the entire history of satire and its instantiations in various literary and nonliterary forms (poetry, fiction, drama, journalism, visual art, and so forth) we will highlight three moments: antiquity, the early modern period, and the twentieth century. Questions we will consider will include: What is satire? How has it evolved over time? How does it work? What techniques does it use? What is its social function? What is its relationship to other genres and modes? Can satire transcend its historical moment?

Required Texts: (available at the bookstore or elsewhere)

William Baldwin, *Beware the Cat* (Huntington)

Jonathan Swift, *Major Works* (Oxford)

Alexander Pope, *Major Works* (Oxford)

Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (Back Bay)

Nathaniel West, *Miss Lonelyhearts & Day of the Locust* (New Directions)

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (Harper)

George Saunders, *Pastoralia* (Riverhead)

Documents on electronic reserve available at <http://ereserves.library.unlv.edu>

Documents available through Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) accessible through the "databases" section of the library website.

Course requirements: Presentation, weekly discussion questions, and a final paper.

Presentation: Each of you will be expected to present to the class on a work of satire outside of the syllabus. You can choose whatever you want, as long as you can make a good case that the work you're presenting is satirical. You could pick a text from any period of literary history and any national tradition or another work by one of the authors we're reading. You could also pick a nonliterary work, something from contemporary culture, such as a film, a work of journalism, a work of visual art, a website, or an episode of a TV show. Because this is an election year, you shouldn't have trouble finding examples. If appropriate you should use visual aids like film clips. In your presentation, you should briefly describe the work you have chosen and why you have chosen it. You should explain why you consider it to be satire, what the objects of its satire are, what sort of effects it is trying to produce, how it attempts to achieve those effects, and whether or not you think the work is successful. Talk about the work in relation to the critical readings, if appropriate.

Discussion questions: Each week you will be asked to devise at least one discussion question based on at least one of the day's readings. Your questions should raise broader topics for discussion, identify a moment of ambiguity or contradiction within a text, make connections between primary and secondary readings, or make connections across historical periods. They should *not* be mere factual queries. You should email your questions to me at least two hours before class begins, so I can compile the questions and distribute them to the class.

Final paper: Your final paper is of the traditional graduate seminar paper variety. It should be in the range of fifteen to twenty pages, following standard formatting conventions. Each of you should work with me to devise a topic that best suits your intellectual interests, whether theoretical, historical, archival, or textual. Your focus does not have to be restricted to the works on our syllabus, but your topic must draw upon themes and issues we've covered in class. You will be asked to submit a prospectus several weeks before the paper is due, and you must receive my feedback on the prospectus before proceeding with your topic.

Disabilities: The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) houses resources for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), room 137. Their numbers are 895-0866 (voice), 895-0652 (TDD), and 895-0651 (fax). For additional information please visit <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc>

Schedule:

August 27: Introduction to the course, hand out syllabus, sign up for presentations.

Classical Models:

September 3: Horace, satires 1.1, 1.10, 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8; Juvenal, satires 1, 3, 5, 6, 10; Gilbert Highet, introduction to *The Anatomy of Satire*; Northrop Frye, "The Nature of Satire" (all reserve)

September 10: Petronius, "Trimalchio" (from *Satyrical*); Lucian, "A True Story" and "Dialogues of the Dead"; Howard Weinbrot, "Clearing the Ground: The Genre That Ate the World" from *Menippean Satire Reconsidered* (all reserve)

Early Modern Satire:

September 17: William Baldwin, *Beware the Cat*; Mikhail Bakhtin, introduction to *Rabelais and His World* (reserve)

September 24: John Dryden, *Mac Flecknoe* (ECCO); Daniel Defoe, *The Shortest-Way With the Dissenters* (ECCO); John Partridge, *Squire Bickerstaff Detected* (ECCO); Jonathan Swift, the Bickerstaff Papers, "A Modest Proposal," "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift"; Wayne C. Booth, chapter 3-4 of *A Rhetoric of Irony* (reserve)

October 1: Jonathan Swift, "Meditation Upon a Broom-Stick," "A Description of a City Shower," "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," *A Tale of a Tub*

October 8: Alexander Pope, *Peri Bathous, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry*; The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated; Epilogues to the Satires; Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot

October 15: Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*, An Epistle to a Lady

Twentieth-Century Satirical Fiction:

October 22: Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*

October 29: Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*

November 5: Nathaniel West, *The Day of the Locust*

November 12: Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

November 19: George Saunders, *Pastoralia*. **Paper prospectus due on or before this date.**

November 26: Thanksgiving eve. No class – use this time to work on your final paper.

December 3: Final session

December 12: **Final paper due.**