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## ENGLISH 691: FAULKNER'S SUBJECTS

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Spring, 2012: Tuesdays 6-8:30, Bondurant 112W  
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### OBJECTIVES

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In philosophy (and grammar), the term *subject* is often opposed to that of *object*, such that the latter is a thing contemplated or acted upon, and the former is an agent who thinks and acts. But *subject* also has an older meaning: the *OED* lists several definitions that resemble this one: "A person (rarely, a thing) that is in the control or under the dominion of another; one who owes obedience *to* another." Faulkner's characters routinely exhibit this tension. Because of his narrative technique, we are given extensive insight into their *subjectivity*—that is, their perceptions of themselves as thinking and acting—but we also observe the constraints they encounter, which emerge both from their social environments and from the fissures in that subjectivity itself. In this class, we will read psychoanalytic theory alongside Faulkner's novels in order to expand our analytic repertoire and also as one way—among others, such as considering the expansion of mass culture, the cultural imaginaries attached to imperialism, and the significance of plantation spaces—of understanding how these characters are subjects *in, of, and to* discourse.

Accordingly, in this course, we will:

- Expand our insight into the oeuvre and narrative strategies of one famously innovative author, while also positioning him in a broader literary and cultural field;
- Develop greater knowledge and understanding of psychoanalytic theory;
- Consider important political and cultural factors shaping Faulkner's modernism; and
- Practice collaborative and independent research and analysis.

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### REQUIRED TEXTS

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Available at University Bookstore (though no specific edition is required):

- William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)
- William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930)
- William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931)
- William Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932)
- William Faulkner, *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* (1939)
- William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)
- William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses* (1942)
- Suzan-Lori Parks, *Getting Mother's Body: A Novel* (2004)

All other readings will be made available on Blackboard under "Online Readings."

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### POLICIES

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- Due dates have been scheduled to help you complete your final project on time. Lateness (beyond a certain point) will damage your grade. If you discover that you cannot meet a deadline, contact me immediately to establish a revised schedule.
- You are expected to uphold the University Creed (<http://www.olemiss.edu/info/creed.html>), particularly its clauses on civility, integrity, academic honesty, and academic freedom. Failure to do so will damage your grade.
- It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable classroom accommodations to students who have verified disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

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### GRADES

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Your course grade will be determined by a weighted average:

- Presentation and bibliography prepared for discussion of novel: 15% (7.5% each)
- Class participation: 25%
- "Conference" presentation: 10%
- Documents related to final project (bibliography, research statement, etc.): 10%
- Final project: 35%

You must complete all assigned work to pass this class. You are expected to participate in every class. Except in rare and dire circumstances, more than two absences will substantially damage your grade; more than four will result in failure of the course.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

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Note that one objective of this class is to "practice collaborative . . . research and analysis." Active participation—in every class, by every student—is crucial to fulfilling this goal and is accordingly required. For each class, you should be prepared to discuss views shared by other participants in the course, but you are also required to bring questions or comments based on certain passages in the course reading. To be clear, for each novel—and, where applicable, for at least one of the theoretical readings for that week—you should locate one passage in the text that yields significant meaning and/or ambiguity. What can we learn from the passages? What critical methods might help us "unpack" them? Be prepared to initiate discussion on your chosen passages.

Please note that you can also participate online: though you are not required to post on each week's reading, you are welcome, at any time, to contribute to the Forum on Blackboard. If you happen to come across Faulkner-related news (updates on the David Milch series for HBO, anyone?), for example, or interesting essays or conferences, please post such news to the "Findings and Resources" discussion board. If you would like to share reflections or stimulate discussion (which may continue in the classroom or online), please post on the "Notes and Queries" blog.

## PRESENTATIONS AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES ON CRITICISM OF ONE NOVEL

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During the semester, each of you will be required to prepare an annotated bibliography and presentation on one of Faulkner's novels.

- Sign up for one of the available time-slots; these are available in a wiki on the course's Blackboard site ("Information").
- In consultation with the professor, compile 4 scholarly essays or book chapters on a related theme (e.g., race, style, memory, gender, etc.) concerning one novel. To do this, you can and should consult such search engines as the *MLA Bibliography*, but you might also conduct some "genealogy" on a recent article; that is, after finding something you like, you could look into some of its most relevant sources. Part of your task, here, will be to differentiate helpful essays from those that are less helpful; don't expect to use everything you initially consult. (Otherwise, the number of required sources would be higher!) Above all, you are looking for insight into the critical history of these novels: what is one of the questions to which scholarly readers keep returning?
- Conduct a presentation in class in which you elucidate that shared and vital question explored by the essays you collect. This presentation should last about 15 minutes, and you should provide some context for the question--why do these critics find it so compelling? why and how do people argue over it?--and also briefly explain some of the methods critics use to analyze the question.
- Write up your findings in the form of an annotated bibliography, including full citation information for each source, as well as a brief description of the argument (major claims, methodology, etc.). After doing the work required for your presentation, you should find this step easy, but it is still vital: by the time we are done, we should have a nice "archive" of scholarly resources.

## FINAL PROJECT

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You will design your final project in consultation with the professor. For many of you, that will be an academic research essay of 15-25 pages (varying according to enrollment in M.A./M.Ed. or Ph.D. program), but it may be something different. (Some students might choose to prepare a detailed unit on

teaching Faulkner for high school students, for example, or even to create a multi-media project related to Faulkner studies.) All projects must be approved by the professor and must be accompanied by each of the following related documents, submitted by the due dates listed on the schedule. If at all possible, final projects should be submitted via Blackboard.

### INITIAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

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You should communicate with the professor about your plans for the final project before spring break, but you must submit a proposal immediately after spring break. This proposal need not posit a thesis, but should articulate the line of investigation that you plan to pursue, as well as the main texts (understood broadly) on which you will write. You need to articulate your research question clearly, and explain how you will approach that question. If you are planning to prepare something other than a research paper, you will need to provide a more detailed proposal. The extent to which I can helpfully advise you will depend on the quality and quantity of information you provide me here. Length may vary widely—from .5 to 1.5 pages, for example—and formats may vary too.

(You may combine paragraphs and bulleted lists, for example.) Please submit these bibliographies via the forum on Blackboard: Final Projects/Proposal.

### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Include six (for M.A.) or 10 (for Ph.D.) scholarly sources that you may cite in your final project. (Feel free to ask if you aren't sure what counts as "scholarly"! I may have to decide on a case by case basis.) Provide full citation information for each source, as well as a brief description of the argument (major claims, methodology, etc.) Also, describe the relevance of each scholarly item to your project. For example: will you be disputing this author's claim? Will it be used to support a certain section of your argument? Will it be used to provide historical context or methodological support (in which case, describe)? If it turns out that this item may not be useful in your project (and you should not submit a bibliography in which no items will be useful), how has reading it helped to shape your plans for the project? Please note that this document is required for all students: even if you are not preparing a traditional scholarly paper, you will still need to incorporate research into your project. Please submit these bibliographies via the forum on Blackboard: Final Projects/Annotated Bibliography.

### FORMAL DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

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The purpose of this document is not only to crystallize your argument, but also to develop a clearer sense of your audience. Where your initial proposal provided a more general sense of your project, this document should explain your contribution to your scholarly (or institutional) field more precisely. For what purpose are you pursuing this project? What audience will be interested in your project? This document should be about 1.5 double-spaced pages long; for those writing papers, it may serve as a draft of your introduction, and those pursuing other kinds of projects can think of this as an opportunity to provide a justification for the project. (How would you present it to committee designing curriculum, for example, or providing grants?) In an appendix, you should also specify what terms and contexts you will need to clarify for the audience you have targeted. Please submit these statements via the forum on Blackboard: Final Projects/Research Statement.

### PRESENTATION

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- Your presentation will provide a brief overview of your final project. It should clearly and concisely describe:
  - the problem/question you have chosen to investigate
  - existing scholarship on this question
  - your methodology
  - your preliminary conclusions

- In presenting your research findings to your classmates, you have an excellent opportunity to enhance the development of your final project. As you prepare your presentation, consider carefully:
  - how to explain the significance or purpose of your project (in other words, how to “pitch” it) and
  - how to organize and articulate your work in an audience-friendly manner.
- Presentations must include at least 12 minutes worth of material; they will be stopped at 15 minutes. You will not be able to include all of your examples, so be sure select details sufficient to illustrate your point.
- Students are expected to provide questions and feedback for their classmates’ presentations: attendance and participation are just as important during the last session of class as they are earlier in the semester.
- Feel free to supplement your talk with images, video or audio clips, presentation software, and/or well-formatted handouts. Please also share these materials if possible via the forum on Blackboard: Forum/Final Projects/Presentations.
- Presentations will be graded according to:
  - Vigor of research and analysis
  - Clarity and organization of content
  - Style (use of media, consideration of audience, response to questions, etc.)

## SCHEDULE

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### **T, 1/24 Introduction**

William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929): focus on sections 1 and 2

### **T, 1/31 States of Narration**

*The Sound and the Fury* continued

Sigmund Freud, “Family Romances” (1909), “The Unconscious” (1915), and “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917)

Édouard Glissant, from *Faulkner, Mississippi* (1996, tr. 1999)

### **T, 2/7 Subjects in Space**

William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930)

Sigmund Freud, from *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905, 1949) and from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)

Mary Louise Pratt, “Modernity and Periphery: Toward a Global and Relational Analysis” (2002)

### **T, 2/14 Subjects, Troubled and Troubling**

William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931)

Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (1949, 1966, 2002)

Patricia E. Chu, from *Race, Nationalism and the State in British and American Modernism* (2006)

### **T, 2/21 Minds and Bodies**

William Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932)

### **T, 2/28 *Light in August*, continued**

Frantz Fanon, from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952, 1967)

Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1922) OR *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930)

### **T, 3/6 Narratives, Inner and Outer**

William Faulkner, *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* (1939)

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (1944)

**T, 3/13    SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS**

**T, 3/20    Trying to See/“Trying to Say”**  
William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)

**W, 3/21    INITIAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE!**

**T, 3/27    *Absalom, Absalom!*, continued**  
Jacques Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis” (1953)  
Antonio Benítez-Rojo, from *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1992)

**T, 4/3      Empire and the Imaginary**  
William Faulkner, “Mythical Latin-American Kingdom Story” (1933)  
Jacques Lacan, “Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis” (1948)  
Edward Said, from *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)

**T, 4/10    Subject and Polity**  
William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses* (1942)

**W, 4/11    ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE!**

**T, 4/17    *Go Down, Moses*, continued**

**Th, 4/19   FORMAL DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM DUE!**

**T, 4/24    Citing and Signifying: Beyond Yoknapatawpha**  
Suzan-Lori Parks, *Getting Mother’s Body: A Novel* (2004)  
Pascale Casanova, from *The World Republic of Letters* (1999; tr. 2004)  
**Recommended:** Brian Norman, from *Neo-Segregation Narratives: Jim Crow in Post-Civil Rights American Literature* (2010)

**T, 5/1      CONFERENCE: PRESENTATION DUE!**

**T, 5/8      FINAL PROJECTS DUE!**