

LIT 6856: Desperate Domesticity: The American 1950s

(Spring 2024)

Class # 13482

Section 1MB1

1.7.24

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3:00 & by individual appointment

Class meets in TUR 2305 on Tuesdays, periods 6-8 (12:50-3:50)

DESCRIPTION

This course explores fraught constructions of domesticity in American literary and popular culture of the 1950s: including the nuclear family, gender roles, consumerism, the rise of suburbia, the civil rights movement, and alternative domesticities. In addition to a lively range of literature, we'll explore fifties family sitcoms (*Ozzie and Harriet*, *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver*) plus the teen rebellion films *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Blackboard Jungle*. Our unit on Campus Life features an archive visit to explore UF student publications from the 1950s. Toward the end, we'll consider how the American 1950s in plays out in contemporary culture.

Our literary texts will include: *Stories of John Cheever*, Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha*, James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son*, Flannery O'Connor's *The Complete Stories*, Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt*, Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, and Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*.

Our assignments: class participation, a 15-minute presentation on a postwar cultural text, several Perusall annotations, a GenEd assignment keyed to University Archives, a 1.5 page conference paper proposal, and a 16-20 p. seminar paper (MFA option: 8-10 p. conference paper + creative response)

TEXTBOOKS

John Cheever, *Stories of John Cheever*

Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha*

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Stories*

Patricia Highsmith, *The Price of Salt*

Robert Lowell, *Life Studies*

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*

(Any edition with the complete text should work; I posted a list on UF's Text Adoption site.

Additional course readings + viewings available online through Canvas).

MY POLICIES

As this is a graduate seminar, I'll keep it short & simple:

1. We need you to be present in class each week. (Contact me if there is an issue.)
2. We need your weekly participation.
3. You need to submit all assignments, including digital participation.
4. You should make an appointment to discuss your seminar/conference paper with me either before or after you've received feedback on your Conference Paper Proposal.
5. *Paper Format for Proposal & Papers*: Please use a 12 point font, 1-inch margins, and double spacing. Thanks.
6. *Social Media Policy*. Let us be respectful of one another on social media as well as in our course communications. I often post about my teaching, and it's always something positive. I never describe or name my students on social media. On my blog I only share (and credit) student's work by permission. Whether in person or online, we are a community.

UF POLICIES

1. You must *complete all assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. Read the policy [here](#).
3. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the [Student Honor Code](#).
4. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. (DRC phone # is 352-392-8565.)
5. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus [Counseling and Wellness Center](#): (352) 392-1575.
6. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
7. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

About UF Course Recordings: *This is a seminar-format course that centers on discussion and student presentations; it is not a lecture course. Student participation in discussion counts toward the course grade.* UF students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. *A class lecture does not include academic exercises involving student participation.* Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE (Other details, including links & updates, are in Canvas Modules).

Date	Wk/Module	Read/View <i>before</i> class	DUE
1.9	1 Fifties Frameworks	<p>Elaine Tyler May, Intro, <i>Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era</i> + the chapter “Containment at Home: Cold War, Warm Hearth”</p> <p>John Cheever, “The Season of Divorce”</p> <p>Gwendolyn Brooks, Emmett Till poems</p> <p>Allen Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California”</p> <p>Sylvia Plath, “The Applicant”</p> <p><i>Eyes on the Prize</i>, Part 1: Awakenings (Emmett Till lynching & trial)</p> <p><i>Leave It to Beaver</i>, “Lumpy Rutherford” (Jan. 1958)</p> <p>MB blog post “Aisles Full of Annotations!”</p>	
1.16	2 Nuclear Family Fictions	<p>Selected stories by John Cheever</p> <p>Essays by Michael Kimmel and Trysh Travis</p> <p><i>Special Guest</i>: David Leavitt</p>	Annotation 1
1.23	3 Sitcom Families	<p>Selected episodes of <i>Ozzie & Harriet</i>, <i>Father Knows Best</i>, <i>Leave It to Beaver</i></p> <p>May chapters “Containment at Home” + “The Commodity Gap”</p> <p>Mock essay “The Horror of ‘Honey, I’m Home!’”</p>	<p>Sitcom Worksheet</p> <p>Report 1: Emily Post, <i>Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage (1945 ed.)</i> - any 250 pages, including “Mrs. Three-in-One”</p> <p>Report 2: William Whyte, <i>The Organization Man (1956)</i></p>
1.30	4 Black Metropolis	<p>Gwendolyn Brooks, <i>Maud Martha</i> and 3 poems</p> <p><i>LitHub</i> and <i>New Republic</i> pieces on Brooks</p> <p>Book chapter by Paige Glotzer & MB</p>	Annotation 2
2.6	5 Segregation & Resistance	<p>James Baldwin, <i>Notes on a Native Son</i></p> <p>Recordings of Baldwin reading and his 1965 appearance on the Dick Cavett show</p> <p>Baldwin’s 1980 visit to UF at the <u>Living Archive</u>, hosted by UF African Studies</p> <p>Teaching Guide from 2021 DD seminar</p>	Report 3: <i>The White Problem in America (1965)</i> , by editors of <i>Ebony</i>

2.13	6 Rural Domesticity	Selected stories of Flannery O'Connor Essays by Paul Elie and TBA	Annotation 3 Report 4: Benjamin Spock, <i>Baby and Child Care</i> (1957)
2.20	7 Lover's Secrets	Patricia Highsmith, <i>The Price of Salt</i> Essays by Margaret Talbot & TBA	Annotation 4 Report 5: Ferdinand Lundberg & Marina F. Farnham, <i>Modern Woman: The Lost Sex</i> (1947)
2.27	8 Teen Rebellion	<i>Rebel Without a Cause</i> (Nicholas Ray, 1955) <i>Blackboard Jungle</i> (Richard Brooks, 1955) 2 educational films about teens Essays by Ramona Caponegro and TBA	Annotation 5 Report 6: Dorothy Baruch, <i>How to Live with Your Teenager</i> (1953)
3.5	9 Campus Coeds Meet in Library East!	1955 UF Yearbook (online) Yearbook Highlights projects from UF students Essay by Bridget Retzliff & Zachary Lewis Materials from University Archives materials	Archive Worksheet Canvas Discussion: Archive Assignments
3.12	10 Spring Break!	Relax.	
3.19	11 Family Secrets	Robert Lowell, <i>Life Studies</i> Essays by Christopher Grobel, Jeffrey McDaniel, Michael Hofmann, MB	Annotation 6 Paper Proposals Report 7: Alfred Kinsey, <i>Sexual Behavior and the Human Male</i> (1948), Part 2 only
3.26	12 Feminine Mystiques	Sylvia Plath, selected poems and <i>The Bell Jar</i> Essays by Renee Dowbnia and MB	Annotation 7 Report 8: Betty Friedan, <i>The Feminine Mystique</i> (1963)
4.2	13 Otherworldly Domesticity	Ray Bradbury, <i>The Martian Chronicles</i> Andrea Krafft, "Down to Earth: Mundane Concerns and Marginalized Individuals in Ray Bradbury's Rocket Stories" Krafft, "Appliance Reliance: Domestic Technologies and the Depersonalization of	Report 9: Ryan Cornelius, <i>Across the Space Frontier</i> (1952) + Harold Goodwin, <i>The Real Book About Space Travel</i> (1956)

		Housework in Postwar American Speculative Fiction”	
4.9	14 Paper Pitches!	Paper Pitches	Seminar & Conference Paper Pitches
4.16	15 Reframing the Fifties	Essays by Justus Nieland, Emily Matchar, David Brooks, Charles Blow, and MB	
4.23	16 Seminar Luncheon	<i>No class on Tuesday</i> , but Lunch at MB’s TBA	Seminar Papers due by Noon on Tuesday April 30