**Assessment Guidelines**

ENG2307 Late 20th-Century Literature in English

Spring 2020

**Examination (Portfolio)**

The exam is a portfolio that consists of two parts:

1. A 2-hour written exam at the end of the term.
2. A term paper.

Regulations:

* A pass mark is required on both parts of the exam in order to pass the course.
* Both exam parts have to be taken in the same semester.
* The exams will be graded separately with a combined final mark. The 2-hour exam counts as 50% and the term paper counts as 50% of the grade.

*+ They are supposed to answer 4 questions from section I, and 5 questions from section II. I imagined giving out a maximum of 15 points for each question in section I, and a maximum of 8 points for each question in section II.*

*SO: 4 x 15 = 60*

*5 x 8 = 40*

*for a total of 100 points*

**2-Hour Written Exam**

Part I (Passages) primarily assesses the student’s ability to use sections from the assigned texts to demonstrate their knowledge of 1. each author’s distinctive style, and 2. each author’s literary and/or social significance. Good responses to each passage will be informed by class lectures, discussions, and independent thinking. Incorrect identification of the text and author constitutes a failed response. Responses should address how the selection relates to the rest of the text, how it is written, and how it relates to historical and cultural contexts.

This section is worth 60% of the final exam grade. Students should have used approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes on this part of the exam.

1. E.L. Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel*

* The passage lyricizes electricity, a double-edged force that both allows for illumination and civilization, on the one hand, and that killed the Rosenbergs and Daniel’s parents, on the other.
* The style of this passage is a departure from the style of other parts of the novel. This exemplifies Doctorow’s postmodernist emphasis on fragmentation, discontinuity, and the mixing of different narrative styles.
* The passage is part of a pattern in the novel which uses electricity as a metaphor for making connections between the past and the present.
* The passage rhymes a measure of electrical resistance (ohm) with part of Buddhist mantra (om).

2. Adrienne Rich, “Diving into the Wreck”

* This passage is the ending of the poem, after the solitary diver has journeyed underwater and experienced a transformation of identity
* the poem presents an allegorical quest that can be understood as an attempt to rewrite or recreate history from a less patriarchal perspective.
* the poem attempts to provoke critical explorations of the patriarchal myths and beliefs that impede the full development of women
* the poem uses grammar (especially pronouns) creatively in order to reach towards alternative forms of identity
* the poem is closely connected to the Women’s movement of the 60s and 70s

3. Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

* In this passage, the character Stamp Paid hears supernatural voices surrounding 124 Bluestone Road – he understands the voices as coming from all the African Americans killed, violated, tortured, and abused by white people
* link between haints, ghosts, and a different sense of memory and history
* the spectral presence of the traumatic past in African American and American history
* the word “*mine”* as a reflection on Sethe’s intensely possessive relationship to her children

1. Toni Cade Bambara, ”Gorilla, My Love”

* In this passage, the narrator is struck by the failure of adult society to live up to its word.
* the story is a reflection on the way names are used to cement social relations, but can also be used to deceive or misrepresent
* like many of Bambara’s stories in the collection, this passage is written from the 1st person perspective of an adolescent narrator
* the style here is a blending of colloquial African American speech with a more literary use of language. Bambara uses this style to capture some of the nature and values of African American oral culture
* the narrative is full of digressions and asides, a reflection on the value of the elliptical and the circuitous in African American storytelling and culture.

1. Allen Ginsberg, Part I of ”Howl”

* this passages shows the use of anaphora as structuring element of the poem – the repetition of “who” at the beginning of most lines
* this passage reflects on the aim of the poem: “to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose” in ways that subvert the static conventions and overemphasis on rationality of American society
* the rhythm of the lines attempt to engage readers on the level of feeling and the body and not just on the level of reason
* influence of jazz, Whitman, and the Old Testament prophets
* valorization of intense experience, whether religious, sexual, or narcotic
* example of Beat poetry

Part II (Short-to-medium-length questions) assesses student’s command of the assigned literary texts and of some of the course more important terms and ideas. Students will answer 5 of the 6 questions, answering them as completely as possible in no more than 2-4 sentences. This section is worth 40% of the total exam grade.

Students should have used approximately 50 minutes for working on this essay.

1. Not sure if you have read Carson’s *Autobiography of Red*, but it is a retelling of Stesichoros’s Geryoneis, the account of the red monster that Hercules killed in one of his labors. Here are the relevant passages from the novel in which Carson discusses Stesichoros:

* Adjectives: “These small imported mechanisms are in charge of attaching everything in the world to its place in particularity. They are the latches of being” - p.4
* “…Stesichoros began to undo the latches. / Stesichoros released being. Suddenly there was nothing to interfere with horses being *hollow hooved.”*

1. 1956
2. Driving shows up both in Creeley’s “I Know a Man,” where reckless driving is posited as the antithesis of Creeley’s careful, halting, circumspect rhythms and line breaks. It also shows up in the essay (which they read and we discussed), “Notes Apropos ‘Free Verse’”. In that essay, Creeley uses the “analogy of driving” to clarify his own “sense of writing,” i.e. a kind of poetry that is flexible and improvisatory:

“The road, as it were, is creating itself momently in one’s attention to it, there visibly, in front of the car. There is no reason it should go on forever…”

1. Lots of good answers to this one. We read parts of an interview in which Doctorow distinguishes between myth and history:

“History is a battlefield. It’s constantly being fought over because the past controls the present. History is the present. That’s why every generation writes it anew. But what most people think of as history is its end product, myth. So to be irreverent to myth, to play with it, let in some light and air, to try to combust it back into history, is to risk being seen as someone who distorts truth.”

Good answers will talk about the constructed nature of history, its commonalities with fiction, and/or the interplay between subjective and objective approaches. Doctorow’s novel moves back and forth between 1st and 3rd person perspectives.

1. Paul D: “You you’re best thing, Sethe. You are.”

- this rhymes with Sethe’s earlier description of her children as “the parts of here that were precious and find and beautiful”

(On the last page, Paul D. also says: “me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow.”)

+ Paul D. pushes Sethe to re-evaluate her intense and singular sense of herself as a mother

+ As in the beginning of the novel, Paul D. suggests the importance of a future not totally determined by the past

1. Below is part of the handout on postmodernism I gave my students. We talked about reflexivity in relationship to *The Book of Daniel*, as well as pastiche and fragmentation. Carson’s playful rewriting of the Geryon myth could also be seen as postmodernist.

+

**Postmodernism** is suspicious of simple, unified narratives. The fear is that simple, unified narratives inevitably suppress the truth.

Mary Klage: From a literary perspective, the main characteristics of post -modernism include:

1. an emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity in writing (and in visual arts as well); an emphasis on HOW reading (or perception itself) takes place, rather than on WHAT is perceived. An example of this would be stream-of-consciousness writing.

2. a movement away from the apparent objectivity provided by omniscient third-person narrators, fixed narrative points of view, and clear-cut moral positions.

3. a blurring of distinctions between genres, like the distinction between history and fiction

4. an emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, and random-seeming collages of different materials.

5. a tendency toward reflexivity, or self-consciousness, about the production of the work of art, so that each piece calls attention to its own status as a production, as something constructed.