

Semester in Bath, Spring 2004

ENGL 117:

## Film and Literature

Wednesdays 1:30-4:30 ☼ Room 17.2.1

Instructor:

David Mesher

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Office Hours:

W 10:00 -1:00 and by appointment

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*Course Description:* This course looks at six contemporary English, Scottish, and Irish novels (all published since 1987) that have been made into films, allowing a comparative approach in class lectures and discussions on several levels: between various fictional techniques and themes; between the rendering of these techniques and themes in literature and film; and between the application of those literary and cinematic themes to contemporary British, Irish, and American societies and cultures.

*Course Goals:* First, to provide help and opportunity for students to improve their abilities in reading, discussing and writing about literature and film, and to increase their understanding of those art forms, with a focus as much on form as on content. Second, to introduce students to examples of contemporary literature written in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Third, to enhance the students' understanding of the historical, demographic, geographic, and cultural background of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Last but not least, to read, to view, and to appreciate some great works of literature and cinema.

*Required Texts:*

Nick Hornby. *High Fidelity*. Riverhead Books.

Roddy Doyle. *The Barrytown Trilogy: The Commitments/The Snapper/The Van*. Penguin.

Irvine Welsh. *Trainspotting*. Norton.

Graham Swift. *Last Orders*. Vintage.

A.S. Byatt. *Possession*. Vintage.

Helen Fielding. *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Penguin.

In addition, students should have access to a dictionary, thesaurus, composition handbook (from English 1A or 100W, for example). That dictionary, incidentally, should not be reserved for essays alone. Students are expected to look up any unfamiliar words encountered in the texts, and to be able to define them when called upon to do so in class. Obviously, this is particularly important in a class covering works with settings distant from us geographically and culturally, since many of the places, concepts, items, and expressions may be

unfamiliar. Remember Churchill's famous quip: that the Americans and the British are "two peoples, divided by a single language."

*Assignments and Grading:* There will be two essays, each counting 25% toward the final mark; and one exam, also counting 25%. There will also be occasional quizzes, one class presentation, and an annotation assignment, which will help determine the remaining 25%, along with

participation in class discussions, and the timely completion of readings and written work.

*Submission of Written Work:* Essays must be typed, double-spaced, and follow standard MLA format. Papers may be handed in only during class and only by a student in attendance. Do not leave them in the office or anywhere else. Please keep a copy of all work submitted (on disk at least), and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester. Please do not submit late work, or unassigned work, except by prior arrangement. Students should anticipate a significant delay in the return of any late work.

Within two weeks after the first essay is returned, each student will resubmit a revision of that essay, together with the marked original. This revision is technical in nature—a way to ensure that the marked corrections of grammar, spelling, factual information, style, and comparable problems are understood by the student. Students are therefore strongly encouraged to proofread and revise their essays heavily before submitting the original version, especially because successful correction of such errors on the revision will not change the original grade. However, the grade of the first essay will not be counted, and the work will not be considered complete, until the revision is acceptably submitted. *All work on the first essay must be completed before the next essay can be submitted.* Even in the case of late essays, the first paper must be acceptably revised before the second paper can be submitted, regardless of any delay or inconvenience this may entail. No such revision is required on the second essay, but you should redouble your efforts in writing the second essay, to ensure that the kinds of mistakes marked and corrected on the first essay and its revision do not recur on the second. To help me check that this is the case, the marked copies of the first essay and its revision must be accompany the second essay when it is submitted.

*Oral Presentations:* Each student will be assigned a topic and will present a brief talk on it to the class. Presentations will last no more than five minutes;

one week before the scheduled presentation, the student will hand in a written summary of it.

*Annotations:* Nick Hornsby's *High Fidelity* will be used for a class annotation project. Students will each receive a list of terms to be annotated. If the project is successful, the annotations will then be compiled and posted on the internet. So that students can see examples of successful annotations, the URLs for projects completed by other classes will be given at the time of the assignment.

*Plagiarism,* the submission of another's work as one's own (in any sense), is the sort of intellectual dishonesty that undermines the very education you are here to receive, and must be dealt in accordance with university policy.

*Please Note:* If you need accommodation because of a disability or if you have emergency medical information to share with me, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours (listed at the top of this page).

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU [Catalog](#) ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC, for No Credit, shall replace D or F. In A, B, C, No Credit courses, NC shall also substitute for W (for Withdrawal) because neither NC nor W affects students' grade point averages.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

This statement shall be included in all Department of English syllabi or "greensheets."