REQUIRED MATERIALS:


Articles on reserve
2 theatre tickets (~$3 each) to MCTC’s *Growing Up Naked* and *Oedipus*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES: Because literature is a representation of reality and thus invites a variety of interpretations, it provides an ideal framework for reflection upon the moral life. In this course, through our reading and discussion of literary and ethical texts, as well as through related articles from a variety of disciplines, we will consider moral issues concerning: the environment; identity; duties to kin; love, marriage, and sex; racism and sexism. Our goal will be to develop an awareness of the complexity of moral issues and of the need for interdisciplinary understanding in informed decision-making. In grappling with our own values and moral position taking, we will enhance our capacity for moral discernment, criticism, and argument.

COURSE METHOD: This course will consist primarily of reading, discussion, student presentations, and several writing assignments, including an ongoing journal.

EVALUATION: Journal (20%), student presentation (20%); essays (20%, 25%), attendance and participation (15%). It is within the instructor’s purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for any assignments and for the final course grade.

READING ASSIGNMENTS: All students will complete the daily reading assignments detailed in the syllabus. In addition, each student will sign up to read one of the excerpted literary works, in its entirety, in preparation for his/her oral presentation. Each student will also be responsible for choosing a recently published secondary article from a scholarly journal in the discipline of his/her major, relating to the day’s topic (not necessarily to the day’s literary text), to be approved and put on reserve (2 copies) for the class to read at least one week in advance. (See presentation evaluation sheet, attached.)

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: Student presenters will begin each day’s discussion with an explanation of how the day’s text relates to the moral topic under consideration (not mere plot summary). Since the rest of the class may have read only an excerpt (with which the presenter should be especially familiar), the presenter will be the authority on the text, prepared to help throughout the session with questions relating to background and context. The presenter will also explain how the article he/she has assigned (see above) sheds light on the moral issue at hand, and should conclude the presentation with two open-ended ethical questions (one on the literary text, one on the reserve article) designed to begin class discussion. The presentation should be 10-15 minutes in length, and a hard copy of the presentation should be handed in to the instructor. (See presentation evaluation sheet, attached.)
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: Apart from occasional in-class writing assignments, there will be three writing projects:

A. An ongoing journal, which I will collect daily, will be a crucial tool in preparing you for class and in generating discussion. Each journal entry will have three to four numbered components:
   1. A general comment on the Singer or other main reading, written in light of the ethical issue under consideration. Please read the “Issue” section at the back of the Singer text, responding to any questions posed there. If the day’s assignment includes more than one excerpt, choose and address just one of the texts. (100 or more words)
   2. A hypothetical situation, real or imagined, that presents a dilemma related to the ethical issue at hand. (150 words or more)
   3. A general comment upon the secondary, reserve article. How does it shed light for you on the current ethical topic (not necessarily on the literary text itself)? (150 words or more)
   4. When a section of the Blackburn text has been assigned, comment on the reading, summing it up to the best of your ability (100 words or more)

   **** At the right hand corner of the journal entry, record your name, the date the assignment is due, the author’s name, the title of the work, and a total word count. (You should also include a word count at the end of each of the numbered sections.)

   ****Your journal entries will be due at the start of each class, and if you have fulfilled the above requirements you will receive full credit for the entry. *** Since the journal is designed to enhance class discussion, entries submitted apart from class (due to an absence, even if the entry is submitted in advance) or at the end of class (unless typed) will receive no more than half credit.

B. A 4-5 page essay on a topic to be announced. **See “Rubric” (attached).

C. A 4-5 page essay on a topic to be announced. **See “Rubric” (attached).

NOTE: Due dates for essays are firm. If for some extraordinary reason you must be late, you need to talk to me. Late papers automatically receive a lower grade.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to attend each class, promptly, with your assignment read and your journal entry completed. The success of our class depends upon how well we can articulate our individual and collective responses to the readings and to the complex moral issues they pose. I will read off your name at the beginning of each class, both to learn who you are and to keep track of your attendance. It is your responsibility to consult me if you are late or absent. Your participation grade will reflect your regular, voluntary engagement in class discussion. Full attendance without such engagement will earn no more than a grade of C for participation.

**Please turn off and put away all cell phones during class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own. This includes such instances as quoting directly from a published work without giving the author credit (i.e. proper citation), inserting the author's words as your own, using or "borrowing" another student's work, buying a paper from a professional service, etc. It is your responsibility to be familiar with what constitutes plagiarism and, in the event of uncertainty, to ask in a constructive manner about a writing in question before it is due in a final version. You are also required to keep all note cards and rough drafts on papers and assignments until given a final grade for that course. Evidence of plagiarism and cheating will be dealt with in accordance with the college policy on academic honesty found in the Student Handbook. Please read this policy in its entirety. In the event of a suspected infraction – in fairness to your peers and the standards of the college – it is my job to send the materials in question to the Dean’s Office at which time you are given the chance to provide your perspective on the matter.
SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS:

Readings should be completed by the day on which they are listed. This schedule may be revised as the course progresses. I will announce changes in class.

Week 1

Mon. Jan. 19  Introduction

Wed. Jan. 21  Singer, Preface
             Blackburn, Intro.

Week 2

Mon. Jan. 26  THE ENVIRONMENT: Climate Change/Global Warming
             Al Gore, Nobel Lecture
             Blackburn, pp. 9-19

Wed. Jan. 28  Film: An Inconvenient Truth and/or “The First 100 Days” (National Teach-In on Global Warming)

Fri. Jan. 30  An Inconvenient Truth and “The First 100 Days,” continued

Week 3

Mon. Feb. 2   An Inconvenient Truth/”The First 100 Days” discussion
             Robinson, “Imagining Abrupt Climate Change: “Terraforming Earth”
             Blackburn, pp. 19-29

Wed. Feb. 4   Robinson, Forty Signs of Rain
             Blackburn, pp. 29-37

Possible event sponsored by the Environmental Coalition

Week 4

Mon. Feb. 9   WHO AM I?
             Introduction
             Ralph Ellison, from Invisible Man
             Blackburn, pp. 37-46

Wed. Feb. 11  Kathy Lette and Gabrielle Carey, from Puberty Blues
             Blackburn, pp. 47-50

Week 5

Mon. Feb. 16  No class: Required attendance at MCTC’s Growing Up Naked, Feb. 19-22

Wed. Feb. 18  James Baldwin, from Giovanni’s Room
             Blackburn, pp. 50-55


Fri. Feb. 20  Film: Educating Rita

Week 6

Mon. Feb. 23  Discuss Growing Up Naked
             Discuss Educating Rita
             Blackburn, pp. 56-65
             Essay Due
Wed. Feb. 25  Tom Wolfe, from The Bonfire of the Vanities  
Blackburn, pp. 65-73

Spring Recess

Week 7  
Mon. March 9  George Eliot, from Middlemarch  
Blackburn, pp. 74-81

Wed. March 11  William Shakespeare, from Macbeth  
Blackburn, pp. 81-86

Week 8  
Mon. March 16  RACISM AND SEXISM  
Introduction  
Harriet Beecher Stowe, from Uncle Tom’s Cabin  
Lerone Bennett, Jr., “The Convert”  
Blackburn, pp. 86-93

Tues., March 17:  Required attendance at “Leadership in a World of Divided Feminism”

Wed. March 18  William Shakespeare, from The Taming of the Shrew  
Henrik Ibsen, from A Doll’s House  
Blackburn, 93-97

Week 9  
Mon. March 23  DUTIES TO KIN  
Introduction  
i. The Duties of Parents to Their Children  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Unnatural Mother”  
Charles Dickens, from Bleak House  
Joseph Kanon, from The Good German  
Blackburn, pp. 97-102

Wed. March 25  ii. The Duties of Sisters and Brothers  
Sophocles, from Antigone  
William Shakespeare, from Measure for Measure

Fri. March 27  Film: The Good Mother

Week 10  
Mon. March 30  iii. The Duties of Children to Their Parents  
Zitkala-Sa, “The Soft-Hearted Sioux”  
Ambrose Bierce, “A Horseman in the Sky”  
Alice Munro, from “The Peace of Utrecht”  
Blackburn, pp. 103-107

Wed. April 1  Miller, The Good Mother  
Blackburn, pp. 108-112

Thurs., April 2- Sun., April 5:  Required attendance at MCTC’s Oedipus
Week 11   Mon. April 6   Discuss MCTC’s *Oedipus*  
Blackburn, pp. 112-116

Wed. April 8   **LOVE, MARRIAGE, AND SEX**  
Introduction  
Jane Austen, from *Pride and Prejudice*  
William Shakespeare, from *Romeo and Juliet*

Easter Recess

Week 12   Wed. April 15   Vikram Seth, from *A Suitable Boy*  
Blackburn, pp. 116-124  
**Essay Due**

Week 13   Mon. April 20   Leo Tolstoy, from *Anna Karenina*  
Blackburn, pp. 125-133

Wed. April 22   Guest speaker

Week 14   Mon. April 27   George Bernard Shaw, from *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*  
John Cleland, from *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*  
Daniel Defoe, from *Moll Flanders*

Wed. April 29   Review; Conclusions  
Blackburn, pp. 133-135