

McAdams Adaptation Syllabus

English 011-013
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Course Description/Rationale

“Texts are not finished objects,” Edward Said famously wrote in *Culture and Imperialism*. Instead, every time we adapt a text from a certain country, we appropriate it to accommodate our cultural values and norms, in the process often erasing the values and norms of the “source country” with the fears, desire, prejudices, assumptions, and expectations of the American public. As the self-proclaimed global super-power, the American culture industry rapaciously exploits, appropriates, and feeds off cultural production from across the globe. In this class, we will study these acts of adaptation with a subtle eye and sensitive ear for shifts in theme, audience, rhetoric, and popularity. As the majority of our examples will consist of film adaptations, we will supplement these analyses with specifically filmic readings and lexicons. While starting

by observing changes in textual adaptation, we will broaden this investigation to address more exigent and abstract questions concerning global perceptions of the United States, to explore how religious, ethnic, and cultural values are disrespected or erased through the adaptation process, and identify specific historical occasions (wars, elections, trade exploitation, colonization, genocide/slavery) whose treatment is different depending on the country. In other words, **how/what/why** account for the changes in textual adaptation from a global perspective? Or, also, from a Large Time perspective, which is a clunky way of arguing that, for example, America's treatment of racial issues was so different in 1916 than 2016 (still tons of problems, obviously) we can argue that it was essentially a different country/culture--thus the inclusion of *Birth of a Nation* (1916) and (2016). (*Hamilton* would work equally well but I don't we have the \$ to see that!!!)

Class Protocol

This class might function differently than those to which you are accustomed. Essentially, I propose to design this classroom experience to be as democratic and collaborative as possible. We will discuss this more through the first weeks, but the way I envision such a scenario would be to empower you, individually, or in groups, to 1) find and share relevant texts or news related to the class topic; 2) suggest new sub-topics of study; 3) and help me design the syllabus. At this point, this description is provisional—as we discuss it amongst ourselves, we will find certain things we want to do and certain things we don't. The important thing is that you should be involved and concerned, and in this way ensure that you get the most out of this class.

As a corollary to the previous paragraph, it's my firm conviction that not only does intensive writing improve writing quality, but also that editing the writing of others' not only promotes a generous, collaborative classroom, but it also makes you more self-reflexive about your own writing. Therefore, we will install a Google Drive workshop platform that will be running in a constant cycle—probably in groups of 4, where you will edit 3 papers and receive 4 edits to your paper. We will schedule a Google Drive workshop early in the semester to demonstrate what I expect, but I imagine at this point you are all well aware off GD and shouldn't have any trouble using it in the capacity I

envision. The difference between peer review and workshop, as I define it, is that in a workshop we think a lot more creatively (which fits this class) about the characters, tone, symbology, time sense, and figurative language used in the student text.

Guidelines for Papers

Please include your name, class section, date, and assignment description in the upper left-hand corner of the paper's first page. Use 12 pt. font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Make sure that your final copy is free of typos and spelling errors. Take advantage of the advanced options in Word's spelling & grammar check, but most importantly read through your final copy several times before submission to catch careless errors. Use cloud technologies like Google Docs, Dropbox, SkyDrive (?), Spider Oak, and iCloud to save all version of a paper—in the year 2017, it's pretty lame to say you lost the (one) hardcopy of your paper and don't have any other recovered/saved files.

Participation

This class depends on knowledgeable discussion of assigned materials and cultural issues. Your participation is an essential component of each class; therefore, I expect you to be an engaged member of our classroom community. This means that you should read assigned texts carefully, take notes, and come to class prepared to engage in thoughtful and respectful discussions with your classmates. Active participation also includes bringing paper drafts to conferences, writing workshops, and peer-review sessions. Most importantly, your response posts and, as importantly, your responses to colleagues' response posts, generate beneficial extracurricular discussions that may lead to paper ideas and promote class conversations. Please don't fall behind on these.

Response Posts: ~250 word post due Saturday 12 PM about anything we discussed that week. (8 due throughout semester)

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Responses to RP's: (2) ~100 word post due Monday before class agreeing with, politely refuting, adding on to, etc., what other students' have written. (8 [sets of 2] due throughout semester)

“Minutes”

(Almost) every class session, I will ask one of you take “take minutes.” This doesn't mean that you literally are the “court stenographer” and have to write everything down, but if an interesting discussion occurs, or somebody mentions a website or film they've seen, or I remark in passing that [] could be a good topic for a paper, write this down and load it in the class Drive folder. You might also either 1) take a picture of the board I'm writing on; or 2) copy down everything of note on it, since it gets erased pretty quickly. Put your name on the file name in the form “Minutes, Sept. 10, McAdams.” Skim through these when thinking of your paper topics—I guarantee you'll be reminded of some interesting topics that, understandably, you've forgotten about in the interceding weeks.

Part of your participation grade may also come from quiz grades. There will be unannounced reading/film quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes are actually designed to function as prompts to get you thinking about possible paper topics, and thus are not intended to trip you up, but it will be clear if you have not done the readings, which will result in a lowering of participation grade and, possibly, a meeting with me. You CANNOT make up a missed quiz.

Academic Honesty Policy: The Student Guide contains an extensive section on academic honesty and plagiarism that you should read thoroughly. Appropriating someone else's ideas or words without giving them credit, whether intentionally or not, is unethical and is subject to the penalties described in the guide. **You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism and for avoiding both deliberate and unintended plagiarizing.**

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, please contact the Office of Academic Support Services, University Center 212 (610-758-4152) as early as possible in the

semester. You must have documentation from the Academic Support Services office before I can grant any accommodations.

Texts and Materials

- 1) A collection of critical readings, prose works, films, documentaries, interviews, and reviews that contextualize adaptation as both an act of cultural imperialism and provides historical contexts (concentration camps, space travel, organized crime, colonialism/war).
 - a) Schlink, *The Reader* (German novel, 1996)/ *The Reader* (American film, 2008)
 - b) *Solaris* (Soviet film [Tarkovksy], 1972)/ *Solaris* (American film, 2002)
 - c) *Internal Affairs* (Chinese film, 2002)/ *The Departed* (American film, 2006)
 - d) Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (British novel, 1903)/ *Apocalypse Now* (American film, 1979) + (**Adaptation**)
 - e) NB: all movies will be watched by students on their own time, with selected scenes shown and discussed in class. **Movies can be viewed via streamable link on CourseSite (see SwankPortal)**
- 2) Selections from *Adaptation and Appropriation*, (Julie Sanders 2005, Routledge)
- 3) Selections from *Envision: Writing and Researching Arguments*, (Alfano/O'Brien 2016, Pearson)
- 4) Selected .pdfs. All .pdf's to be found on **Eng 011-013 Google Drive Folder**