

Pamela Fox: Class Fictions In The Contemporary U.S.

(Upper-division English course)

[Prof. Pamela Fox](#)

This interdisciplinary course examines U.S. literary and popular representations of "low" classes/cultures (working class/poor/'underclass') from the 1990s to the present moment. With the aid of recent theory and cultural criticism, we will focus on ways in which categories such as race, gender, and sexuality help to construct our contemporary notions of what "class" means in the United States. We will be studying a wide variety of texts, forms, and genres-fiction, autobiography, film, and music-and taking up a broad spectrum of issues.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Acker, *Class Questions, Feminist Answers*

Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*

Hooks, *Bone Black*

Mar, *Paper Daughter*

Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*

Zandy, *Hands: Physical Labor, Class, and Cultural Work*

Supplementary readings available as either electronic reserve (designated as "ER" in syllabus) via Lauinger Library's on-line course reserves or as PDF file on course Blackboard site (designated as "Bb" in syllabus). For the Lauinger reserves, go to the library website, click on "Reserves" near bottom of the page, and search by instructor name (the readings will appear under the graduate version of the course, Engl 675). For the Blackboard readings, enter the course site and click on "Documents" button on left-hand site.

COURSE SYLLABUS

8/28 Course Introduction

Theorizing Class Identity, Resistance, and Representation

9/2 In-class film: *People Like Us: Class in America*
Steinhauer, "When the Joneses Wear Jeans" (Bb)

9/4 Scott and Leonhardt, "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide" (Bb)
Acker, Chapter 2, "Feminists Theorizing Class," in *Class Questions*

9/9 Acker, Chap. 3, "Thinking About Gendered and Racialized Class"
Adair, "Class Absences: Cutting Class in Feminist Studies" (Bb)

9/11 Kadi, "Stupidity Deconstructed" (ER)

- A. Fox, "Voicing Working Class Culture" (ER)

9/16 Zandy, "God Job," in *Hands* (pp. 36-49)
 Hollibaugh, "A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home" (ER)
 Russo, "Conclusion: The View From Breezewood" (Bb)

9/18 Sweeney, "The King of White Trash Culture" (ER)
 Goad, "White Niggers Have Feelings Too" (ER)

9/23 P. Fox, "De/Re-fusing the Reproduction-Resistance Circuit" (ER)
 Gagnier, "The Literary Standard, Working-class Autobiography, and Gender" (ER)
 Strangleman, "Class Memory: Autobiography and the Art of Forgetting" (ER)

9/25 Zandy, *Hands*, 61-94

9/26 (Fri.) TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE (by 5 pm in my English Dept. mailbox)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

9/30 Mar, *Paper Daughter* (first half)
 Smith, "Autobiographical Manifestos" (ER)

10/2 finish *Paper Daughter*

10/7 hooks, *Bone Black* (first half)
 hooks, "Writing Autobiography"; "From Public to Private: Writing *Bone Black*" (ER)

10/9 finish *Bone Black*
 hooks, "Class and the Politics of Writing" (ER)

FICTION

10/14 Short fiction by/about working-class men:
 Alexie, "Indian Education" (Bb)
 Dybek, "Blight" (Bb)
 Diaz, "Nilda" (Bb)
 Boyle, "The Fog Man" (Bb)

10/16 Carver, "Preservation" (Bb)
 Jones, "The Store" (Bb)
 Lord, "My Special Friend" (Bb)

10/21 Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*
 Allison, "A Question of Class" (ER)

10/23 finish *Bastard*
 Sandell, "Telling Stories of Queer White Trash" (ER)

- 10/28 Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*
- 10/30 finish *Under the Feet*
Zandy, "Stillness, Motion, Bodies," *Hands*, 144-156
- 11/3 (Mon.) SHORT PAPER DUE (by 5 PM in my English Dept. mailbox)
- 11/4 Acker, Chap. 4, "Is Capitalism Gendered and Racialized?"
Acker, Chap. 7, "Conclusion-Some Optimistic Proposals"

FILM [AVAILABLE ON STREAMING SERVER VIA BLACKBOARD]

- 11/6 Zaniello, "Filming Class" ("R")
American Movie
- 11/11 *Real Women Have Curves*
- 11/13 *Sherrybaby*
- 11/18 *Hustle & Flow*

MUSIC (FOR THIS SEGMENT, SONG FILES WILL BE DOWNLOADED TO BLACKBOARD)

- 11/20 **Country**
Ching, "Acting Naturally: Cultural Distinction and Critiques of Pure Country" (ER)
P. Fox, "Recycled 'Trash': Gender and Authenticity in Country Music Autobiography" (ER)
Fox and Ching, "Top 40 Alternatives? Gretchen Wilson, Miranda Lambert, and the Dixie Chicks" (Bb)

- 11/25 **Country/Hip Hop Intersections**
Rubin, "Working Man's PhD: The Music of Working-Class Studies" (ER)
A. Fox, "White Trash Alchemies of the Sublime: Country as 'Bad' Music" (ER)
Rose, "A Style Nobody Can Deal With: Politics, Style and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop" (ER)

- 11/27 HOLIDAY: THANKSGIVING BREAK

- 12/2 **Hip-Hop Music and Culture**
Keyes, "Empowering Self, Making Choices, Creating Spaces" (ER)
Neal, "Postindustrial Soul: Black Popular Music at the Crossroads" (ER)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1. Attendance and class participation. Daily attendance is mandatory-I keep track-as is participation in class discussion. Absent and silent members affect the entire group's ability to function productively as an intellectual community. To sharpen your contributions to class discussion, you should come to class each time with readings annotated-key words, phrases, and passages underlined-and with comments/questions. Missing more than 2 classes will negatively affect your grade.
- 2. Group Presentation. Once this semester, you will work collaboratively with several class members to teach the class a particular topic (sign-up sheet will be passed around on 9/4). This will entail more than leading discussion on the assigned texts of the day; the group will conduct research to present additional information and material, enhancing, questioning, or commenting on the assignment. You will also devise and distribute to the class a typed set of questions. You and your partners will receive a grade for this effort.
- 3. You will be handing in 3 out-of-class written assignments: 1 take-home exam; 1 short essay (5-7 pp.); and 1 longer paper (10-12 pp.). Instructions for these assignments will come later, but please note due dates on syllabus. Unexcused late papers will be marked down one-half a letter grade each day that they are late.

COURSE POLICIES:

****ALL WORK MUST BE YOUR OWN OR BE PROPERLY ACKNOWLEDGED.** You should familiarize yourself with Georgetown's honor code, particularly the university's statement on plagiarism, "Acknowledging the Work of Others." The statement offers a clear and concise explanation of what constitutes plagiarism (as well as other violations of academic integrity)> It can be found at "Academic Integrity" on the English Department's home page.

****Please turn cell phone off when you enter the classroom.**

****NO laptop use in the classroom. Sorry, but it leads to far too much distraction.**

****Your course grade will be broken down in the following way:**

Short essay: 25%

Take-home exam: 20%

Final essay: 25%

Class participation: 15%

Group presentation: 15%