

**CL 485.01, Abjection and Alterity in the Contemporary Novel**

Özlem Öğüt Yazıcıoğlu, Spring 2023

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Class hours: MWW 234, JF332 TB240 TB240

Office hours: MW 87 or by appointment

**Syllabus**

(subject to minor changes)

**Course description:**

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva describes abjection as “an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself” (1). Abjection, thus, uncanny and haunting, unsettles the exclusive boundary of Subject and Object, Self and Other. The novels under discussion in this course engage with otherness, i.e., alterity and difference, in both ontological and epistemological terms, that expand the boundaries of subjectivity, so as to require relational, dialogic, and multifariously pluralized re-conceptualizations of self and identity. An in-depth study of these novels will also reveal conceptual frameworks where literature and aesthetics can engage in fruitful interdisciplinary conversation with philosophy and anthropology. An ethics of otherness, be it in the context of race, gender, species, or class, will hold center stage in our discussions focusing on the decolonization of the mind and the body, through a recognition of the interrelation of the material and the spiritual, and of the biological and the technological.

**Course requirements:****Preparation:**

You must come to class having read the particular material assigned for each particular day of class, as indicated in the schedule.

In addition, you must consult academic books and articles available online or in print in the library to gain a critical perspective from which you can discuss the related issues that constitute the focus of the novels under consideration.

You must **start research for your term paper as early as possible** so that you can develop a clear argument and envision the progress of your paper towards a conclusion.

**In-class performance:**

Regular participation in class (discussions; (pop-)quizzes) is required. Not to attend classes will automatically lower your participation grade.

**Forum posts:**

Throughout the semester, you will be expected to post on 4 Forums on a certain topic or question. 3 best posts from among a total of 4+ (including original posts and high-quality responses to a post by a classmate) will count towards your Forum grade at the end of the semester.

Each of your posts must consist of one or two coherent, informative, explanatory, but concise paragraphs (200-250 words in total; slightly more or less is fine) with a concrete argument/idea supported by one or two specific references to the text(s) in question.

You must read other students' posts before you post yours, in order to avoid repetitions. If you cannot come up with an original idea, you may prefer to respond to other students' posts, but only with a significant contribution (an additional supporting idea or example, or an objection supported by textual evidence).

Please remember that there is absolutely no room for irrelevant or redundant information or words in original or additional comments. Any information that is not directly relevant to, or any word that is not absolutely necessary will only reduce the quality of your comment, waste the time of your fellow students and, of course, lower your grade.

**Midterm Exam:**

All students **MUST** take the midterm exam.

**Term paper:**

You must start doing research for an original term paper as soon as we finish discussion on the first novel in our reading list. Your term paper must focus on a novel of your choice, which lends itself to a fruitful discussion in the framework of our course, but is not included in our syllabus. You can consult me about such novels, and I can make some suggestions in accordance with your interests.

Your term paper must consist of 8-10 double-spaced pages (12 font; Times New Roman or Calibri; MLA style).

You must consult with your instructor about possible topics and works that are of interest to you before or soon after the midterm exam. Please try to come up with at least two possible topics (works) to write on, so that we can choose the best one.

While researching and reflecting upon your subject, you will consult some scholarly articles. Please mark those that are of primary interest to you, since you might (probably will) include them in your **annotated bibliography**.

Please be sure to meet the deadlines for the submission of **an abstract** including a working title (the abstract presenting **a solid framing argument** encompassing the primary text(s) that you will study, as well as its/their dialogue with critical texts/theories you will use in your paper); **an annotated bibliography** (on 3 or more academic sources that are directly relevant to your discussion), and **an outline** (a full-sentence outline; you may even add short quotes or paraphrases from your primary and secondary sources to support arguments and sub-arguments), as indicated on the schedule.

You will be graded on the basis of all of the above. Further guidelines and links about each stage of the process and the format will be provided on Moodle. All materials for the term paper will be submitted as **Turnitin** assignments on Moodle.

**Important warning about academic dishonesty!** Any form of academic dishonesty will automatically lower your grade to F and might also lead to disciplinary action.

#### **Assessment:**

Midterm exam	25 %
Class participation (including very short (pop-) quizzes)	20 %
Forums	15 %
Term paper	40 %

(Title and Abstract 5 %; Annotated Bibliography 10%; Detailed Outline with the Revised Abstract that should serve as an Introduction to your paper 10 %; Submitted Term Paper 25% above + 15 % = 40 %)

### Course Plan, Schedule of Readings:

Week 1: (13 and 15 Feb.)	Introduction "Approaching Abjection" (pp.1-18) from <i>Powers of Horror</i> by Julia Kristeva
Week 2: (20 and 22 Feb.)	"Approaching Abjection" (pp.1-18) from <i>Powers of Horror</i> by Julia Kristeva  <i>Tar Baby</i> , Toni Morrison, Chapters 1-2
Week 3: (27 Feb. and 1 March)	<i>Tar Baby</i> , Toni Morrison, Chapters 3-7
Week 4: (6 March and 8 March)	<i>Tar Baby</i> , Toni Morrison, Chapters 8-11
Week 5: (13 March and 15 March)	from <i>Homo Sacer</i> , Giorgio Agamben  <i>The Tortilla Curtain</i> , T.C. Boyle, Part I
Week 6: (20 March and 22 March)	<i>The Tortilla Curtain</i> , T.C. Boyle, Part I and II
Week 7: (27 March and 29 March)	<i>The Tortilla Curtain</i> , T.C. Boyle, Part II and III
Week 8: (3 Apr. and 5 April)	<b>REVIEW and MIDTERM</b>
Week 9: (10 Apr. and 12 Apr.)	From "Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway  <i>Salt-Fish Girl</i> , Larissa Lai, pp. 1-58

**ABSTRACTS to be submitted by April 14 (via Turnitin, Moodle)**

**April 17-23 SPRING BREAK, RAMAZAN BAYRAMI, ULUSAL EGEMENLİK VE ÇOCUK BAYRAMI**

Week 10: *Salt-Fish Girl*, Larissa Lai, pp. 59-146  
(Apr. 24 and Apr. 26)

Week 11: *Salt-Fish Girl*, Larissa Lai, pp. 147-203  
(May 3)

**Annotated Bibliography and Detailed Outline with the Revised Abstract to be submitted by May 5 (via Turnitin, Moodle)**

Week 12: *Salt-Fish Girl*, Larissa Lai, pp. 205-269  
(May 8 and May 10)

Week 13: Review  
(May 15 and May 17)