

ANG-7150/LIT-7110 The Cultural Politics of Shame

Description:

For some time, anthropologists and ethnologists held that modern Western civilisation is a guilt culture while more ancient and tribal societies are shame cultures. However, from the public shaming of individuals to moments of collective and national shame, from the shamelessness of reality television stars and political leaders to the more private shame felt by sufferers of mental and eating disorders, there is much evidence to suggest that we are still a society that is shaped by shame. This seminar will engage with a range of disciplinary approaches to shame – including those of evolutionary biology, behavioural psychology, law and criminology, moral philosophy, political science, and cultural studies – to better understand how shame works. As literature allows us sustained and probing views into the social and psychological lives of people, we will apply our theoretical readings to works of fiction and non-fiction by a range of writers from different cultures and historical periods. In so doing, we will discuss the universal human experiences of shame and how it determines so much of our political, cultural, social, and internal worlds.

Evaluation:

Participation: 10%

Class Presentation: 30%

Colloquium Presentation: 20%

Final Paper: 40%

*** Nota bene: Les étudiants inscrits dans LIT-7110 sont les bienvenus à soumettre leurs travaux en français.

Required Texts:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (9780199537808)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (9780199536382)

George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (978014139302)

Roddy Doyle, *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (9780749395995)

Laurie Halse Anderson, *Wintergirls* (9780142415573)

J.P. Donleavy, *The Ginger Man* (9780802144669)

* These books are in stock at Librairie La Maison Anglaise Bookstore, Place de la Cité, 2600, boul. Laurier, Sainte-Foy, Québec, Canada G1V 4T3. (418) 654-9523 or (800) 228-5818.

* There will also be many texts freely available through the course portal.

* The Bonenfant Library has numerous works available on shame and the shame-pride axis. A number of these are on reserve under my name and the course.