



“We all have a hunger.”—Florence + The Machine

“Eating is a human right.”—Abby Case

“My father believes hunger is in the mind. I know differently. I know that hunger is in the mind and the body and the heart and the soul.”—Roxane Gay

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:15-11:15 AM

Class Information

Meeting place: Goldwin Smith 158

CRN: 18246

Section: 102

Meeting time: 8:40-9:55 AM T/R

REQUIRED TEXTS:

🌐 *Life & Times of Michael K*—J.M. Coetzee

- 🌐 *Nervous Conditions*—Tsitsi Dangarembga
- 🌐 *The Vegetarian*—Han Kang
- 🌐 *Hunger*—Steve McQueen
- 🌐 *White is for Witching*—Helen Oyeyemi

Texts are available for purchase through the Cornell Bookstore, Amazon, &etc. Films are available through the course reserve for this class on Canvas. Podcast episodes are available to stream through iTunes and Spotify.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We all eat, or need to eat; while this seems obvious, even neutral knowledge, eating itself is fraught with complexity. This course does not only engage with eating, however—throughout the semester, we will be exploring what it means to have a body that requires food. We will consider what hunger, as an organizing principle, exposes about our own understandings of embodiment, colonialism, global resource inequality, and our consumptive practices. Writing for the course will include several creative and analytical assignments, culminating in a longer work of public writing and ending with the possibility to write and film a short documentary, record a podcast, or begin a critical memoir. These modes of expression will enable us to thoughtfully and critically read a text, respond to that text, support these responses with evidence, learn to revise our thinking, and, as this is an English class, also how to read these texts creatively and critically. To this effect, thinking about what it means to have a body, and the efforts we must take to maintain that body, will assist us in thinking precisely and with attention to detail, and will encourage us to question our own underlying assumptions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- 🌐 Learn to close-read and analyze a variety of texts (print, film, and otherwise)
- 🌐 Practice and test our abilities as writers in a number of different contexts and assignments—these will include in-class responses, weekly critical responses, group writing, and several revised essays
- 🌐 Learn how to write ethically and with respect to the minds and ideas of others, avoiding plagiarism and other forms of intellectual and academic dishonesty
- 🌐 Effectively organize a longer essay to produce a cohesive, polished argument
- 🌐 Learn different modes of argumentation and provide appropriate and sufficient evidence for the claims we make
- 🌐 Learn and identify the aspects of what constitutes a narrative—its common forms, tropes, and how these expectations may be subverted
- 🌐 Enter into an ongoing conversation by engaging with primary and secondary research sources
- 🌐 Establish standards for academic discourse and participation through in-class discussion, peer evaluation, and collaborative assignments

THE BASICS:

Papers: Expectations for each writing assignment will be made explicit on the according assignment sheets—look to your assignment sheets for answers before emailing me. Essays must be typed, formatted, and documented according to MLA standards for written work. Due dates are made explicit in the syllabus and on assignment sheets. Failure to turn in any of the written assignments will affect your grade significantly, and you cannot pass this class if you do not turn in first *and* final drafts of *each* essay. We will be using our Google Drive folder for all essay and written submissions, so your papers will need to be submitted to your file in our shared Google Drive folder. I will use Google Drive because Blackboard/Canvas is the literal worst.

Workshops: You will be required to workshop your rough draft of your final essay with your peers. A workshop will take place the day your draft is due and is a required aspect of the drafting process. As such, workshopping this draft will figure into your final grade for the essay as a whole—if you miss peer review, it will negatively affect this grade.

Conferences: You will be expected to attend two 20-minute conferences throughout the course of the semester to discuss ongoing writing assignments and your work in class. These will be held during the ninth and thirteenth weeks of the course. Sign-ups will be circulated the week before.

Office hours and contacting me: My office hours are Tuesday mornings from 10:15 AM to 11:15 AM and are held in Goldwin Smith 340. I am also open to making appointments with students who have scheduling conflicts with my posted hours. My email address is mo433@cornell.edu. This is the best way to contact me. As a rule, however, I do not check my email after six in the evenings during the weekday, and do so less frequently over the weekend. Please allow for 24 hours to respond to you before you send a follow-up email.

Late work: All work should be completed by the due dates made explicit in this syllabus and on your assignment sheets. As a rule, I do not accept late work in the absence of extenuating circumstances. It is your responsibility to have all materials ready for each class meeting. Assignments turned in after the due date (meaning the class meeting) will be deducted a full letter grade for *every day* they are late. You *must* turn in your first draft. ***I will not grade a final essay that did not go through the drafting process, and I will not grade a final essay if you did not turn in a first draft.*** If you are ill or need to miss class the day any written work is due, you must email the work to me before the class meets. I am open to granting extensions, but you need to contact me at least 48 hours before the final due date. If you miss a workshop, you will be required to show me that each member of your peer group has added comments to your file in Drive. In the event of something significant (e.g. prolonged or sudden family illness, emergencies, etc), please contact me and we will proceed appropriately. **I will not chase after you about missed or late assignments.**

A note on incompletes: Because this course is collaborative and based heavily upon process and revision, turning in a significant portion of work after the end of the semester is difficult for you and for me. In other words, I will not grant requests for incompletes except for in very rare circumstances. As always, however, come talk to me.

A note on plagiarism: I expect all work turned in to be the original work of each student. Do not submit work that is not your own in both conception and execution. Do not submit work that was completed for another class. Plagiarism in this class is grounds for immediate failure, and if it becomes a problem also grounds for expulsion from the university. If you have questions about proper documentation and citation methods, please see me or set up an appointment with a consultant in the Writing Center.

Technology policy: Excessive phone use in my class is more of an annoyance than it is productive, so please refrain from doing so. We will be spending substantial time every class on group work and workshopping, so I encourage you to use your laptops and tablets for note-taking, writing, and in-class revisions. If they become a problem, however (and I can always tell if they do), I reserve the right to ask that they be put away for any given class period. Also: I do not allow photographs to be taken in my classroom unless I am aware that the photo is being taken and I have given my explicit permission for you to do so. I do not allow video recordings in my class to that same effect. It's a little creepy, even if it's meant to be endearing/for the Vine (or TikTok, RIP Vine).

Disability statement: Please see me during the first week of class if you have a documented disability and I will be happy to make accommodations. Your access in this course is important and a **priority** for me. Please give me your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that we have adequate time to arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and/or SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu. If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS and keep me apprised of anything that comes up for you. SDS is located on level 5 of Cornell Health, 607-254-4545, sds@cornell.edu.

Title IX statement: As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination with a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Victim Advocacy Program here at Cornell, 607-255-1212, victimadvocate@cornell.edu.

Basic Needs Security: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable me to direct you towards any resources that I may possess.

A note on content: Please note that the texts we will be reading and watching contain content some might find controversial or upsetting, including explicit language, violence, and sexual content. If you are concerned that such material might prevent you from completing the course, you might want to reconsider your enrollment in this class. I do not assign texts that are violent for the sake of creating a spectacle, nor do I assign content without thinking for quite some time about why the intellectual, analytical, and creative merits of a text are, by necessity, elaborated through violent actions and occasionally disturbing content. In other words, I am not and will never assign content to traumatize or for shock value. Furthermore, for this course particularly, many of the texts and images we examine will directly confront eating disorders and body size. There will be numbers involved in this endeavor in the form of statistics, and several readings reference weight and clothing sizes. If this will be difficult for you, *please see me*.

Cornell Writing Centers: The Cornell Writing Centers (WC) provide support for individuals at any stage of the writing process. It is a free resource available to everyone on campus—faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students—for nearly any kind of writing project: applications, presentations, lab reports, essays, papers, and more. Tutors (trained undergraduate and graduate students) serve as responsive listeners and readers who can address questions about the writing process or about particular pieces of writing. They can also consider questions of confidence, critical reading, analytic thought, and imagination. Writing tutors also have experience working with non-native speakers of English. During the academic year, the WC are open Mondays through Thursdays from 3:30 – 5:30pm (Mann Library & Rockefeller Hall 178) and Sundays through Thursdays from 7:00 – 10:00pm (Olin library Room 403; Uris Library Room 108; Tatkon Center Room 3343; Flora Rose 110). Writers can schedule appointments or drop in at a convenient time. For more information or to schedule an appointment, go to: <https://cornell.mywconline.net/>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

In order to pass this class to your and my satisfaction, your efforts must reflect a willingness to engage with class material and requirements at a level consistent with your own educational goals. In other words, you are your grade, and I evaluate your work. To break this down so you know what you may expect from me:

- 🌐 **B-level work** will include final written work of satisfactory quality, including participation, depth, and thoroughness in your contributions to your workshop group and the class as a whole. You attended all workshops and conferences and enthusiastically participated in all aspects of the writing process, from invention to preliminary drafts culminating in a thoroughly revised, well-developed final draft that has been submitted in accordance to set deadlines. You have also completed all homework assignments on time and in accordance with assigned requirements. Additionally, you will have completed each component part of your essay assignments in a timely and satisfactory manner.
- 🌐 **A-level work** will include all of the elements and specifications required of a B-level project, but with a pronounced excellence in quality. There will be evidence of a deep and thorough engagement with assignments and subject matter throughout the term. Your in-class participation has been consistent, topical and productive, and you will have demonstrated a marked interest in learning from the class and your classmates, and in improving as a writer and thinker.
- 🌐 **C-level work** will include a mix of satisfactory and unsatisfactory quality in written work and throughout the writing process, including first and final drafts of your essays and their component parts. Your in-class participation is sporadic.
- 🌐 **D-level work** (or below) will include written work of unsatisfactory quality, a marked lack of participation, and an unsatisfactory engagement or a failure to engage with the writing process.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (30% OF YOUR FINAL GRADE):

You cannot expect to succeed in this class without attending regularly and participating in class (either individually or in groups). To that effect, I will allow you two absences, no explanations necessary, as I recognize that life is messy and unpredictable. Absences in excess of this number will lower your final grade—more than five will result in failure of the class. If you miss more than three class meetings, it will lower your grade significantly (half a letter grade). You must attend conferences—failure to do so will qualify as two absences. Participation will be assessed based on your contributions to in-class discussions and group work in addition to your preparedness for class—including coming to class with all assigned work finished and all reading completed. When online reading is required, you will be expected to print copies of each reading/have annotated copies ready on your laptop or tablet, as we will be using them in class. If you arrive to class more than fifteen minutes late, you will be considered absent and lose points for that day. If you must miss class due to participation in a university-sponsored athletic event, religious observances, or an emergency, please contact me in advance to be certain of my requirements for make-up work. Make-up work will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Homework (any assignments not listed as an essay or part of an essay) is figured into this percentage, as well.

WRITTEN WORK (70% OF YOUR FINAL GRADE):

Written work for this course will consist of four formal essays and a creative project. For each essay, you will develop an arguable thesis and provide sufficient evidence to support that central claim, with an emphasis on revision and final polish. Of these four essays, three will undergo extensive revision. Essays should be submitted (in first and final draft) to your Drive folder. For workshopping, you should be prepared to respond to your peers' drafts in Drive. All

essays must be uploaded to Drive on or before the time designated on your assignment sheet, the day they are due.

Essay Assignments and Due Dates:

- Essay #1: 2 page ungraded autobiographical(ish) response (0%) | Due in Drive: Friday, September 6th
- Essay #2: 2-3 page visual analysis (5%) | Due in Drive: Tuesday, September 24th | Final Due in Drive Sunday, September 27th
- Essay #3: 4-5 page textual analysis (15%) | Draft due in Drive: Thursday, October 17th | Final due in Drive: Sunday, October 20th
- Essay #4: 8-10 page public research essay (20%) | Proposal due in Drive: Tuesday, November 12th | Draft due in Drive: Tuesday, November 19th | Final due in Drive: Sunday, November 30th
- Essay #5: 5-6 page creative project (15%) | Proposal due in Drive: Tuesday, December 3rd | Final due in Drive: Thursday, December 19th

My PHILOSOPHY:

- 🌐 I believe in messy first drafts, and I believe that the strength of our writing reveals itself in revision, rather than an anxious struggle to produce a perfect first draft.
- 🌐 I believe in writing assignments that are ambitious in process, but not in scope. I do not assign very long essays, and because of this, I want to emphasize the importance of developing skills and moving beyond what you are comfortable with in your own writing.
- 🌐 When I refer to “process,” I want to encourage you to think about writing as something that emerges from sustained hard work, rather than spurts of inspiration or innate brilliance.
- 🌐 To that effect, I believe that every student possesses the ability to develop into mature, effective writers. With practice, and with lots of reading, you *will* improve—it’s unavoidable.
- 🌐 I believe that writing is a social act. Social in that you are joining an ongoing conversation with other writers, but social also in the sense that you must share your writing with others to truly understand how your writing is received and how you may improve. Your work and your intellectual development needs to be shared with me and with your peers.
- 🌐 I believe that writing is meant to be challenging, disruptive, and is meant to expose writers and readers to some vulnerability or dissonance. Learning how to create a productive, critically energetic piece of writing means that you need to learn how to create this kind of experience for a reader, in a mature and open manner.

This syllabus is subject to change and I may revisit due dates, assignment requirements, or reading schedules based on adjustments to workloads or to allow more time for us to spend on different aspects of our learning process.

COURSE CALENDAR

Question: What Do We Believe About Bodies, and What Does “Body Politics” Mean?

Week One

- Thursday 8/29: Introductions; **essay #1 assigned**

Week Two

- Tuesday 9/3: Coole, “Body Politics” (*The Oxford Handbook for Gender and Politics*); Brown and Gershon, page 1; “Body politic” from *The Encyclopedia of Political Theory*; Foucault, “The Body of the Condemned” and “Docile Bodies”
- Thursday 9/5: Caldwell, “Body Identity Development”; Taylor, “The House Next Door”; Machado, “Unruly, Adjective”; Syllabus quiz

Question: What Does it Mean to Be Hungry?

Week Three

- Tuesday 9/10: Wilson, “Hunger”; Boland, “Anorexic”; O’Reilly, “Thin”; Visual analysis; **essay #2 assigned**
- Thursday 9/12: Kang, *The Vegetarian*, 1-43

Week Four:

- Tuesday 9/17: Kang, *The Vegetarian*, 44-60; Adams 25-38
- Thursday 9/19: Kang, *The Vegetarian*, 63-103

Week Five:

- Tuesday 9/24: Peer review
- Thursday 9/26: Kang, *The Vegetarian*, 104-160

Week Six:

- Tuesday 10/1: Kang, *The Vegetarian*, 160-end; **essay #3 assigned**
- Thursday 10/3: Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K* 1-33; EarthTalk, “Use It and Lose It”; Nixon, “Slow Violence” (Chronicle article)

Question: Who Gets to Be Nourished, and Who Must Starve?

Week Seven:

- Tuesday 10/8: Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K* 34-75; Finley, “A Guerilla Gardener in South Central LA”
- Thursday 10/10: Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, 76-126

 Week Eight:

- Tuesday 10/15: No class; Fall Break
- Thursday 10/17: Draft workshop

 Week Nine: Conferences (Tuesday-Thursday)

- Tuesday 10/22: Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, 129-end
- Thursday 10/24: No class; conferences

Question: How is Hunger Political?

 Week Ten:

- Tuesday 10/29: McQueen, *Hunger*; “Timeline of 1981 Hunger Strike”; Barnett, “A History of Hunger Strikes”
- Thursday 10/31: Wainaina, “How to Write About Africa” AND “The Ethics of Aid,” August 27th, 2009 episode of *On Being* podcast; Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* Ch. 1-3; **essay #4 assigned**

 Week Eleven:

- Tuesday 11/5: Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, Ch.4-7; Rueda and Lus, “Decolonize Your Diet”
- Thursday 11/7: Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, Ch. 8-10; Oladipo, “How Anti-Blackness Fuels My Eating Disorder”

What Happens When We Refuse to Maintain Ourselves?

 Week Twelve:

- Tuesday 11/12: Library visit
- Thursday 11/14: Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 1-70; Clare readings

 Week Thirteen: Conferences Tuesday-Thursday

- Tuesday 11/19: Draft workshop
- Thursday 11/21: No class, conferences

 Week Fourteen:

- Tuesday 11/26: Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 71-125; Simpson, “Disabling Justice?”
- Thursday 11/28: No class, Thanksgiving Break

 Week Fifteen:

- Tuesday 12/3: Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 126-200; **essay # 5 assigned**
- Thursday 12/5: Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 201-end ; Tandoh, “The British Bun is Dying

Question: What Does This All Mean for Us Right Now?

Week Sixteen:

- Tuesday 12/10: Gay, “My Body is Undisciplined”; Mull, “The Latest Diet Trend is Not Dieting” Taylor, “The Body is not an Apology”