Liberal Studies 420, “Transitions: A Faculty/Student-Guided Seminar”

Spring Semester 2008, Period A5, 12:10-1 p.m.
Hendrix-Murphy Building Seminar Room and DWReynolds 131

Four faculty members and up to 16 students with majors in any field will read, study, discuss, and write about eight works of contemporary literature, music, drama, and/or film.

“Transitions” is designed for undergraduates moving into the latter part of their college experience. The course underscores a desired transformation from initial course roles to a new status where students move towards becoming intellectual peers of faculty members. Thus, “Transitions” is envisioned not as an end to students’ “journeys” or “explorations” but as an academic transition to the scholarly life while students are still on campus. The course also anticipates post-graduate transitions from Hendrix College to graduate and professional schools, careers, and other positions of intellectually rigorous leadership. The “Transitions” course is designed to be a culminating educational experience, an enjoyable and stimulating exercise of skills acquired at Hendrix College.

Faculty will select four works, and four teams of students will each select another work to teach the entire class--including faculty--with the guidance of a faculty mentor. A faculty mentor will work with each team to present the work to the class. Faculty members refined the course concept during summer workshops, when they also researched, selected, and prepared to teach the following works.

Faculty-Selected Works

The following are the required editions and may be purchased from the Hendrix College Bookstore. The CDs and DVDs will be placed on reserve in the Bailey Library Media Center.

**Eric Binnie** (Coordinator, Theatre Arts and Dance)

**Ralph McKenna** (Psychology, American Studies)

**Lyle Rupert** (Economics and Business)

**Carol West** (English, Africana Studies)
Peter Weir, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Criterion Collection series, 1998 from the original production in 1975;
Gillian Armstrong, *My Brilliant Career*, 1979; and
Philip Noyce, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, 2002

For more information about faculty, their interests, and why they selected these works, please see pages 5-6.
### Daily Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JANUARY 14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASSES BEGIN</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>GT, day 1</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>MLK Day: No classes</td>
<td>GT, day 2</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>GT, day 4</td>
<td>GT, day 5</td>
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<td>FEBRUARY 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PAPER 1 on GT due</td>
<td>Disc. student works ideas</td>
<td>Paper 2 on TLT due</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Refine stdt. choices</td>
<td>TLT, day 1</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>TLT, day 3</td>
<td>TLT, day 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Messiah, day 2</td>
<td>(in DWR131) Messiah, day 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Paper 3 on Messiah due</td>
<td>Prep day</td>
<td>Paper 2 on TLT due</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARCH 3</td>
<td>Dead, day 2</td>
<td>Dead, day 3</td>
<td>Dead, day 1</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>Interim Rpts.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Paper 4 on Dead due</td>
<td>H&amp;G, day 2</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>H&amp;G, day 4</td>
<td>Paper 5 due on H&amp;G</td>
<td>Brazil, day 2</td>
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<td>Paper 6 on Champ due</td>
<td>Brazil, day 1</td>
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<td>MAR 31</td>
<td>Champ, day 2</td>
<td>Champ, day 3</td>
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<td>Paper 5 on Brazil due</td>
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<td>Brazil, day 3</td>
<td>(NCUR) Champ, day 4</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Champ, day 2</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Paper 6 on Champ due</td>
<td>PHR, day 2</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>PHR, day 4</td>
<td>Paper 7 on PHR due</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Student Evaluation Day</td>
<td>Reading Day</td>
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<td>FINAL EXAMS BEGIN</td>
<td>MAY 1</td>
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Course Responsibilities

Essay and Participation Expectations
Students will write essays (typically 4–5 pages) on each work, with the exception of the work they present, making seven in total. The required essay length will be stipulated by the faculty mentor primarily responsible for that segment of the course. Non-literary assignments may vary from this format. Essays will be read by faculty, graded, and returned to students. No formal writing style (e.g., MLA, APA) is required, but students should be consistent in the use of the one style they select, paying particular attention to the citation of sources consulted and referenced in their writing.

Essays are typically due a few days after the last class on each work (specific dates are indicated below). Extensions are anticipated only in extreme situations and must be approved by the faculty member in advance. Essays submitted late will be penalized.

This is a seminar; therefore class participation is expected and will carry significant weight in the determination of grades. The quality and frequency of individual contributions to group discussions will be considered in evaluating student understanding, analysis, and integration of the selected works.

Class Attendance
Regular class attendance is expected. Because “Transitions” is a highly collaborative course, quality group discussions are dependent upon the active presence of members of this seminar. If you must miss a session of “Transitions”, be sure to alert at least two of the faculty members well in advance of the course meeting. Unexcused absences will be reflected in participation grades.

Grades
Course grades will be calculated in the following manner:

Essays: All seven essays are required (no essays on the work you present). If you have a passing grade on all seven, your best six grades will be weighted equally. Otherwise, all seven essays will be averaged for this grade component ................................................................. 60%

Class participation: Understanding/synthesis/integration of materials ......................... 20%

Your presented work: Graded as a team ................................................................. 20%

Essay Deadlines

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PRESENTER(S)</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gulliver’s Travels</td>
<td>Prof. Binnie</td>
<td>February 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Lecturer’s Tale</td>
<td>Prof. McKenna</td>
<td>February 15</td>
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<td>Messiah</td>
<td>Prof. Rupert</td>
<td>February 25</td>
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<td>The Brief History of the Dead</td>
<td>N. Forsten, C. McDermott (McKenna)</td>
<td>March 16</td>
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<td>The True Story of Hansel &amp; Gretel</td>
<td>H. Flammer, E. Schneider (Binnie)</td>
<td>March 26</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>R. Hoyle, P. Wightman (West)</td>
<td>April 4</td>
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<td>Breakfast of Champions</td>
<td>A. Ragula, H. Leach (Rupert)</td>
<td>April 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Picnic at Hanging Rock</td>
<td>Prof. West</td>
<td>April 23</td>
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Faculty and the Works They Selected

Dr. Eric Binnie, Coordinator: Professor, Theatre Arts and Dance.  
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

Why Dr. Binnie is teaching this work. The Hendrix-Murphy theme for this academic year, *Possible World, Other Worlds*, immediately brought to mind Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. It is a classic tale of travel to fantastic lands, highlighting many different spheres of human activity, which are shown to be sadly deficient if compared to those of the native occupants of the imaginary lands. Irish literature has long been an interest of mine, and I am particularly drawn to Irish satirists like Swift. Implicitly, he mocks the dominant, London-based, culture, while ostensibly telling a simple tale of exotic travel. When first published this work was instantly successful with all ages of readers, at all levels of society. Yet the dark fury of the concluding section inevitably raises for critics questions about the relationship between length of a work and the effectiveness of its satire.

Dr. Binnie's academic interests: Theatre and drama, Shakespearean production, Irish literature, African literature, anything about his native Scotland, study abroad.

Dr. Binnie's other interests: Reading, acting, dancing, cooking, and traveling.

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Dr. Ralph McKenna, Professor of Psychology, American Studies.

James Hynes, *The Lecturer's Tale*  

Why Dr. McKenna is teaching this work: The 2007-2008 Murphy Theme invites us to look at other worlds as a way to better understand our own. Ever since first reading Edgar Allen Poe back in junior high school (“The Tell-tale Heart,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “The Raven,” etc.) I have been intrigued with the interface of literature and the supernatural. Add to this a love of academic satire, particularly the writings of David Lodge, and you have a rationale for my selection of James Hynes’ *The Lecturer’s Tale* for this year’s “Transitions” course. This novel reminds me most of my graduate school days at the University of Connecticut in the late ‘60s; still, there are aspects of personalities and academic in-fighting encountered during my years as a professor at both Wilson College and Hendrix College. One need only examine programs from current professional meetings, or papers in contemporary journals to see that Hynes' seemingly bizarre portrayal of academic life is but a modest satirical exaggeration of professional life among academics driven by desires for tenure and power via control of academic turf.

Dr. McKenna’s academic interests: Interface of psychology, music, and American culture; indigenous American music, Appalachian and Ozark mountain, Cajun, bluegrass, jazz, rock and roll; undergraduate research in social psychology; effects of music on person perception and social behavior; impression management and tactical behavior in interpersonal relations; methodological benefits and ethical dilemmas of field research; effects of television on human behavior; applying social psychology to environmental and consumer issues. He is also the author of a book based on research largely collected by Hendrix College undergraduates: *The Undergraduate Researcher’s Handbook: Creative Experimentation in Social Psychology*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995.

Dr. McKenna’s other interests: Distance running and biking, folk music and jazz, organic gardening, faculty basketball/wallyball/participatory sports with friends, photography.
Professor Lyle Rupert, Professor of Economic and Business, Social Sciences Area Chair.

George Frideric Handel, Messiah

Why Professor Rupert is teaching this work: Handel’s Messiah is one of the most famous, ageless, and beloved works in the history of music. It is still the most recorded musical work in the world. Large and small churches, community groups, and schools perform selections from Messiah, or even the entire work, at Christmas, Easter, or anytime throughout the year. It is one of my favorite works of music, and I’ve sung, conducted, and/or accompanied it many times. Not only is the music fun and interesting, but the libretto is full of meaningful and connected Biblical passages describing the Messiah. From the perspective of the Murphy theme for this year, “Possible Worlds, Other Worlds,” Messiah is a good fit because of its use of prophesy and the presentation of eternal life, both of which are certainly worlds “other” than our physical world. We will study this work from several perspectives: the libretto and the history it describes: the music and how it emphasizes and enriches the words; and the historical context of this work as it was written, and as it is relevant today. We might even do a group singing of “The Hallelujah Chorus” (while standing, of course)!

Professor Rupert’s academic interests: I have taught in the Department of Economics and Business for 21 years. My primary teaching responsibilities include financial and managerial accounting, financial management, and business computer classes. Professionally, I have also been involved in church music for almost 31 years as organist and/or music director.

Professor Rupert’s other interests: I enjoy participating in various activities such as golf/wallyball/basketball, working with wood, reading, and solving Sudoku and Kakuro puzzles. I also serve the community by working with non-profit organizations. I’m usually a board member (e.g. Treasurer) or provide volunteer services such as accounting, tax, payroll, and financial functions.

Dr. Carol West, Professor of English, Africana Studies

Peter Weir, Picnic at Hanging Rock

Why Dr. West is teaching this work: I’ve been intrigued by Peter Weir’s Picnic at Hanging Rock ever since my first viewing of this film several years ago. It’s haunting beauty, its claustrophobic social worlds, and above all its mysteries invite speculation and debate. Relating to the 2007-08 Murphy theme of “Other Worlds,” Weir’s film places Australia’s natural environment at its center, but nature and the supernatural intermingle in mysterious ways. I’m attracted to teaching Picnic at Hanging Rock as the ultimate discussion film, raising the most basic questions of “What happened?” and “What does it mean?” I look forward to the “Transitions” participants’ interpretations, theories, and the enjoyable arguments that should ensue. My “Transitions” segment provides further contexts through a few additional "worlds" of Australian cinema: Gillian Armstrong's My Brilliant Career and Phillip Noyce's Rabbit-Proof Fence. These films offer other visions of Australia's past and the challenges of its physical and social environments.

Dr. West’s academic interests: Africa (especially African literature and film), post-colonial literature and theory, Jane Austen, Chaucer, grant-writing for outreach projects.

Dr. West’s other interests: Travel, films, detective fiction, pets, writing.
Assigned Preparations

**Professor Eric Binnie, Faculty Work #1: Gulliver’s Travels**
Assigned reading includes sections of Swift’s text plus some contextual and critical readings each day totaling about 100 pages. Because of our relative unfamiliarity with the seventeenth/eighteenth century language the study of this one work extends over five class days rather than the usual four.

**Day One:** Biographical and Historic Context, pages 3-25, plus Part I [Lilliput] pages 26-89.
**Day Two:** Critical History, pages 269-304, plus Part II [Brobdingnag] pages 90-147.
**Day Four:** Deconstructionism and Perspective, pages 366-395, plus Part IV [Houynhnms] pages 205-266.
**Day Five:** Reader Response Criticism and Perspective, and Psychoanalytical Criticism and Perspective, pages 396-464.

**Professor Ralph McKenna, Faculty work #2: The Lecturer’s Tale**
**Day One:** Part One: A Man’s Reach, pages 1-73.
**Day Two:** Part One: A Man’s Reach, pages 74-158.
**Day Three:** Part Two: The Rope Dance, pages 159-319.
**Day Four:** Part Three: The Blazing World, pages 321-388.

**Professor Lyle Rupert, Faculty work #3: Messiah**
For each day, please read the libretto and listen to the music of the assigned section at least twice. Think about the message of the libretto and how the style of the music related to it.

**Day One:** Biographies of George Frideric Handel and Charles Jennens
   Historical context of the libretto
   Part One - Prophecy
   Movements 1(Sinfonia) through 12 (For unto us a child is born)

**Day Two:** Part One - Birth and Mission
   Movements 13 (Pifa) through 21 (His yoke is easy)
   Part Two—Passion and Death
   Movements 22 (Behold the Lamb of God) through 32 (But Thou didst not leave)

**Day Three:** Part Two - Resurrection and Spreading of the Gospel
   Movements 33 (Lift up your Heads) through 44 (Hallelujah)

**Day Four:** Part Three - Ascension, Judgment, and Eternal Life
   Movements 45 (I know that my Redeemer liveth) through 53 (Worthy is the Lamb)

Paper topics will be distributed during Day Four.

**Professor Carol West, Faculty work #4: Picnic at Hanging Rock**
**Day One:** Discussion of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*: first impressions
**Day Two:** *Picnic at Hanging Rock*: background, theories, and contexts of Australia
**Day Three:** Discussion of *My Brilliant Career*
**Day Four:** Discussion of *Rabbit-Proof Fence*
Works Selected and Led by Student Members of the Course

Faculty members will mentor four groups of students as they select and prepare a work for the class. Students may wish to consider works that would explore the Hendrix-Murphy Foundation theme for the year.

Hendrix-Murphy Foundation 2007-2008 Theme: Possible Worlds, Other Worlds in Literature and Language: Fantasy Science fiction, myth, and folklore enchant us by creating new worlds to explore. Literary and other artists weave imaginative spells with strands that range from magical realism, surrealism, and absurdism to utopia, dystopia, and apocalypse. These intriguing new worlds also reflect reality, helping us think about our own world. Alternative realities that emerge from such new worlds may help us understand the past, present, and the future.

Some Faculty-Suggested Possibilities
Here, as examples of course possibilities, are a few works that were mentioned by faculty during our summer workshops.

From Professor McKenna
Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*
Martin Scorsese, *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* (DVD)
Martin Scorsese, *The Last Waltz* (DVD)
Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*
Kevin Brockmeier, *The Brief History of the Dead*

From Professor Binnie
Brian Friel, *Translations, or Dancing at Lughnasa* (plays)
Justin Cronin, *The Summer Guest*
James Hogg, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*
Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of the Lion*

From Professor Rupert
Simon Winchester,
*A Crack in the Edge of the World*
Walt Disney, *Fantasia* (DVD)
J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*
Michael Crichton, *Timeline*

From Professor West
Ingmar Bergman, *Cries and Whispers* (DVD)
Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*
Brian de Palma, *Dressed to Kill* (DVD)

Student Selected Works

**Student Work #1, The Brief History of the Dead**
Student team members:
   - Nick Forsten
   - Chance McDermott
Faculty mentor: Dr. McKenna

**Student Work #2, The True Story of Hansel and Gretel**
Student team members:
   - Holly Flammer
   - Eric Schnieder
Faculty mentor: Dr. Binnie

**Student Work #3, Brazil**
Student team members:
   - Ryan Hoyle
   - Phil Wightman
Faculty mentor: Dr. West

**Student Work #4, Breakfast of Champions**
Student team members:
   - Alex Ragula
   - Haley Leach
Faculty mentor: Prof. Rupert