

**Spring 2015: ENGL 2329.012 American Literature**  
**Islomania: Islands, Environment, and Biogeography**

islomania, n. a passion or craze for islands; an obsessional enthusiasm or partiality for islands

“Islomania stimulates the imagination and sends it ranging to islands not yet visited or into times other than the present” – Franklin Russell, *The Secret Islands*



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**Section Information:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:50am, Room TBA

What is the appeal of islands? Why do they fascinate us? Islands are viewed alternately (or sometimes simultaneously) as exotic paradises, retreats from civilization, deserted locales, savage wastelands, havens for biological diversity and/or experimentation, and so on. As a particularly distinctive geographical feature, islands have captivated human attention and imagination. They are of great interest not only to writers, but also scientists and environmentalists. The isolation and insularity of islands magnifies numerous social, political, economic, scientific, and environmental issues. How have islands shaped our understandings of individual identity, social/communal identity, race and ethnicity, nature and the environment? How do we shape islands, and how do they shape us? This course focuses on works of American literature that center around islands. We will read texts from different time periods (18<sup>th</sup> century – present day) that cover a mix of science and nature writing, speculative and science fiction, as well as more traditional “literary” works, and, in doing so, question the distinction between these genres. The readings cover a variety of different island locations including Hawaii, the Caribbean, the Galapagos, and Newfoundland.

**Generic Course Description:**

Concentration on works of American literature with focus on how cultural, geographic, and political issues shape and reflect literature in a particular culture. Examines at least three genres and six authors. Emphasis on critical thinking, reading, and writing. This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirements in Language, Philosophy, and Culture. The required objectives of these courses are the development of students’ critical thinking, communication skills, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. Many elements of this course foster development of these objectives, which are explicitly addressed in the “Signature Assignment” (see below). The Departmental guidelines for sophomore literature can be found by typing

“sophomore literature” in the “Search UT Arlington” box on the University website: <http://www.uta.edu/uta>.

### **Core Objectives:**

Critical Thinking Skills: To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

Communication Skills: To include effective development and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.

Teamwork: To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Personal Responsibility: To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

### **Course Goals:**

To encourage students to see that literary studies matter and to foster enjoyment of literature, as students engage with ideas and beliefs in ways that extend beyond English classes.

To help students recognize that literature does not occur as isolated literary events, but as complex dialogue within cultural and historical contexts.

To develop students' ability to read critically by studying a variety of literary elements.

To enable students to demonstrate their understanding of and their ability to analyze literary texts both orally and in writing.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students should be able to demonstrate their understanding of and their ability to analyze literary texts both in writing and in online written discussion.

Students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of a variety of literary terms and elements.

Students should be able to identify a variety of literary elements within literary texts.

Students should be able to conduct research using the internet and UTA Library resources.

Students should be able to demonstrate ability to utilize technology in a variety of forms.

### **Required Texts:**

Unca Eliza Winkfield – *The Female American or, The Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield*

ISBN: 978-1551112480

\*second edition\* has different ISBN

Jamaica Kincaid – *A Small Place*

ISBN: 978-0374527075

Jonathan Weiner – *The Beak of the Finch*

ISBN: 978-0679733379

Herman Melville – *Billy Budd and Other Stories*

ISBN: 978-0140390537

Or – *The Encantadas and Other Stories*

ISBN: 978-0486440842

Louise Erdrich – *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*

ISBN: 978-0062309969

Kurt Vonnegut – *Galapagos*

ISBN: 978-0385333870

Michael Crichton – *Jurassic Park*

ISBN: 978-0345538987

Hanya Yanagihara – *The People in the Trees*

ISBN: 978-0345803313

Films you are responsible for viewing (outside of class):

*The Galapagos Affair* (streaming on Netflix and Amazon Prime)

*Galapagos: The Islands that Changed the World* (Amazon Prime)

### Grading:

Individual Blog Posts	20%
Signature Assignment	30%
Weekly Quizzes	10%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Participation	5%

Final grades will be calculated as follows: A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, F=69%- and below.

### Descriptions of major assignments and examinations:

**Individual Blog Posts:** You will be required to write and post five (5) blog posts throughout the semester (see calendar for dates). Students will need to create their own blogs through WordPress (<https://wordpress.com/>). These blogs will be a way to share your writing with me, your fellow classmates, and the general public. Each of your required posts should be at least 300 words in length. In each post, you will draw connections between two of the readings discussed in class by that point. Connections could mean comparing and contrasting readings or considering how one reading adds to, complicates, or enriches another reading. You should also discuss the ethical dimensions of the texts in terms of social, political, or environmental issues. A thesis statement isn't necessary. Outside research isn't necessary.

### Signature Assignment:

Overview

The signature assignment addresses all four of the course University prescribed objectives.

**Personal responsibility:** This essay includes the integration of outside sources; it, therefore, requires students to demonstrate personal responsibility as they use the words and ideas of other writers in an accurate and ethical manner. Citing sources properly isn't just a matter of mechanics. It's a question of personal responsibility (with real consequences for students) that overlaps with students' responsibility to the academic community of which they are a

part. The construction of a clearly articulated thesis statement supported by a careful analysis of textual evidence demonstrates **critical thinking** and **communication skills**. The development of a well-organized essay that demonstrates the correct use of grammar and other writing mechanics and demonstrates an awareness of the how to appeal convincingly to an audience further addresses the communication objective. The critical analysis of the way the selected text engages a significant issue of social responsibility related to identity formation addresses the **social responsibility** outcome.

### Specific Requirements of the Signature Assignment

Write a well-organized, effectively developed 4-5 page (approximately 1000 – 1250 words) analysis of one of the texts assigned in this course. (There will be an additional MLA style formatted Works Cited page.) The paper should critically analyze the way the text engages a significant issue of social responsibility and how the text's engagement with that issue is tied into islands. Students should anchor the paper's argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims.

Possible issues include: race and/or slavery; class and/or economic oppressions; colonialism and/or empire; post colonialism; cultural difference and/or cultural discrimination; religious discrimination; human mastery of nature and/or the environment and/or animals; national identity controversies; the social implications of a change in literary movements or genres; sexual orientation disability; globalization and/or neocolonialism; the way the work of literature itself can be seen as a rhetorical attempt to engage effectively in significant regional, nations, or global issues.

In a brief introductory paragraph, you should anchor your paper's argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement (which can be more than one sentence). *Support your claims with appropriate examples from the text you selected and with appropriate information or quotations from the required two secondary sources.* I will expect the use of coherent sentences and paragraphs, and grammar, spelling, and punctuation appropriate for a sophomore English course

### Responsible Integration of Sources (personal responsibility)

Students must properly integrate material from two secondary sources into their analysis in a way that gives credit to the authors whose ideas and language they are incorporating. This is not a research paper or a summary of the work of literature, but a paper in which students draw on the selected text and secondary sources to communicate an interpretive argument about their chosen text through the lens of social responsibility. The Library offers a quick, on-line plagiarism tutorial: <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/> **Take the tutorial; print out the "Results" page, and attach it to your Works Cited page.**

Appropriate Secondary Sources:

- National newspapers (e.g., *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Fort Worth Star Telegram*)
- Print magazines (e.g., *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *New Yorker*, *Time*, *Newsweek*)
- Online magazines (e.g., *Slate*, *Salon*)
- Scholarly articles (e.g., academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals; you can find citations for these articles by using the MLA International Bibliography database, JSTOR, or Project Muse—all of which UTA's library gives you access to online)
- Scholarly books or book chapters (it's a good bet a book is scholarly if it's published by an academic press, such as Duke University Press; if you're not sure, ask your instructor)
- Historical documents (e.g., old newspaper articles, letters, speeches, journal entries) from academic databases (see the History subject guide on the library website for ideas)

Students interested in using a source that isn't listed here, should check with the instructors.

The criteria indicated above were designed for this course. The general criteria to receive a passing grade are the following for all the sophomore English courses except English 2350: Your essay should be a Word document that is double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-pt., Times New Roman (or some other easily readable) font. Follow the MLA's recommendations for formatting, citation, and style. **Here is a direct link to the Library's excellent guide to MLA format:** <http://www.uta.edu/library/help/files/cite-mla.pdf>

**In order to receive a passing grade on the signature assignment, students *must***

1. write an essay that is at least 4 pages long, but no more than 5
2. integrate two appropriate sources
3. have a thesis
4. have a title
5. incorporate evidence (i.e., quotations) from the literary text
6. have a Works Cited page using MLA form

**Weekly Quizzes:** Weekly short-answer quizzes will be given to ensure that students have read the assigned material.

**Midterm and Final Exams:** The midterm and final exams will be in-class short-answer and essay exams designed to ensure that students have read and understood the assigned texts, their cultural and historical contexts, and can recognize and discuss their literary elements. Class time will be set aside before each exam for review of materials.

**Class Participation:** You will be graded daily on class participation, which includes coming to class prepared, making thoughtful contributions in response to the readings, asking and answering questions, and presenting a general attitude of interest in the course content. To receive full credit for participation each class you must: arrive to class no more than 5 minutes late, not leave class early, and demonstrate active engagement and preparation for each day's activities (this includes bringing the necessary readings, papers and other materials needed for each day).

**Attendance:** At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I have elected to take attendance but will not factor attendance into the grade.

**Classroom Behavior:** Class sessions are short and require your full attention. All cell phones, pagers, iPods, MP3 players, laptops, and other electronic devices should be **turned off and put away when entering the classroom**; all earpieces should be removed. Store newspapers, crosswords, magazines, bulky bags, and other distractions so that you can concentrate on the readings and discussions each day. Bring book(s) and e-reserve readings (heavily annotated and carefully read) to every class. Students are expected to participate respectfully in class, to listen to other class members, and to comment appropriately. I also expect consideration and courtesy from students. Professors are to be addressed appropriately and communicated with professionally.

According to *Student Conduct and Discipline*, "students are prohibited from engaging in or attempting to engage in conduct, either alone or in concert with others, that is intended to obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with, or that in fact obstructs, disrupts, or interferes with any instructional, educational, research, administrative, or public performance or other activity authorized to be conducted in or on a University facility. Obstruction or disruption includes, but is not limited to, any act that interrupts, modifies, or damages utility service or equipment, communication service or equipment, or computer equipment, software, or networks" (UTA Handbook or Operating Procedures, Ch. 2, Sec. 2-202). Students who do not respect the guidelines listed above or who disrupt other students' learning may be asked to leave class and/or referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*



*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

Instructors may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:** All students must have access to a computer with internet capabilities. Students should check email daily for course information and updates. I will send group emails through MyMav. I am happy to communicate with students through email. However, I ask that you be wise in your use of this tool. Make sure you have consulted the syllabus for answers before you send me an email. Remember, I do not monitor my email 24 hours a day. I check it periodically during the school week and occasionally on the weekend.

UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Conferences and Questions:** I have three regularly scheduled office hours each week. These times are reserved for students to drop by or to make an appointment to discuss course assignments, grades, or other class-related concerns. I will be happy to make other appointment times for you if your class schedule conflicts with regular conference times or if I am not available on certain days. If you receive a grade on an assignment or quiz about which you have questions, please wait twenty-four hours before discussing it with me. This gives you time to process the assignment comments and to think about how your course work meets the requirements set forth for each assignment. I do not discuss individual student issues in the classroom before, during or after class.

**Syllabus and Schedule Changes.** Instructors try to make their syllabuses as complete as possible; however, during the course of the semester they may be required to alter, add, or abandon certain policies/assignments.

Instructors reserve the right to make such changes as they become necessary. Students will be informed of any changes in writing.

**Course Schedule.**

**Defining Island Biogeography and Diversity**

**Week 1**

**01/20**

Course Introduction, Syllabus Overview

**Read:** David Quammen, “Island Getaway” (on Blackboard)

**01/22**

**Read:** Barbara Kingsolver, “Infernal Paradise” (on Blackboard)

Last Day to Register – 01/23

**Caribbean Paradise: Castaways and Corruption**

**Week 2**

**01/27**

**Read:** Unca Eliza Winkfield, *The Female American* (Volume 1)

**01/29**

**Read:** *The Female American*, cont. (Volume 2)

**Week 3**

**02/03**

**Read:** Francis Williams, “Carmen, or, an Ode” (on Blackboard)

**02/05**

**Read:** Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

**Due:** Blog Post 1

**Galapagos: Evolution and Devolution**

**Week 4**

**02/10**

**Read:** Annie Dillard, “Life on the Rocks: The Galapagos” (on Blackboard)

**02/12**

**Read:** Jonathan Weiner, *The Beak of the Finch* (Part 1)

**Week 5**

**02/17**

**Read:** *The Beak of the Finch*, cont. (Part 2)

**02/19**



**Read:** *The Beak of the Finch*, cont. (Part 3)

**Week 6**

**02/24**

**Read:** Herman Melville, *The Encantadas* (Sketch First – Sketch Seventh)

**02/26**

**Read:** *The Encantadas*, cont. (Sketch Eighth – Sketch Tenth)

**Due:** Blog Post 2

**Week 7**

**03/03**

Review for Midterm

**03/05**

Midterm

**Week 8 – Spring Break – no class!**

**Week 9**

**03/17**

**Watch:** *The Galapagos Affair* and *Galapagos: The Islands that Changed the World*

**03/19**

**Not All Islands are Tropical: Newfoundland and Lake of the Woods**

**Week 10**

**03/24**

**Read:** Franklin Russell, from *The Secret Islands* (on Blackboard)

**03/26**

**Read:** Louise Erdrich, *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (Chapters 1 and 2)

**Week 11**

**03/31**

**Read:** *Books and Islands*, cont. (Chapters 3 and 4)

**04/02**

**Read:** *Books and Islands*, cont. (Chapter 5)

**Due:** Blog Post 3

**Last day to drop – 04/03**

**Life Finds a Way: Islands in Speculative and Science Fiction**

**Week 12****04/07****Read:** Kurt Vonnegut, *Galapagos* (Chapters 1-27)**04/08****Read:** Vonnegut, *Galapagos* (Chapters 28 – end)**Week 13****04/14****Read:** Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park* (beginning through Third Iteration)**04/16****Read:** *Jurassic Park*, cont. (Fourth Iteration –Fifth Iteration)**Due:** Blog Post 4**Week 14****04/21****Read:** *Jurassic Park*, cont. (Sixth Iteration to end)**04/23****Read:** Hanya Yanagihara, *The People in the Trees* (beginning – Part II)**Week 15****04/28****Read:** *The People in the Trees*, cont. (Part III)**04/30****Read:** *The People in the Trees*, cont. (Part IV)**Due:** Signature Assignment**Week 16****05/05****Read:** *The People in the Trees*, cont. (Part V to end)**05/07**

Final Exam Review

**Due:** Blog Post 5**Final Exam – May 14, 8:00-10:30 am**