



Literature, Journalism, Writing, & Languages

Point Loma Nazarene University

Literature & Culture (LIT200): Contemporary Christian Literature

2 Units

Quad I ~ Spring ~ 2019

<b>Meeting days:</b> Tuesday/Thursday	<b>Instructor title and name:</b> Professor Kathryn Huff
<b>Meeting times:</b> 4:00-5:45pm	<b>Phone:</b> 619-672-9743
<b>Meeting location:</b> BAC 103	<b>E-mail:</b> kathrynhuff@pointloma.edu
<b>Final Exam:</b> February 26	<b>Office location and hours:</b> 3:00-3:55pm, T/Th BAC 118, main campus

**PLNU Mission: To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send**

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is a study of representative works of literature and their cultural contexts. In particular, we'll focus on contemporary *Christian* writers and *Christian* literature, exploring what we mean by the adjective *Christian* and the noun *literature* (high art that invites us to muse or popular genres that simply amuse?). We'll re-think how texts help us discover new ways to think about faith. We'll ask: does a writer's claim of faith mean that any writing produced automatically merits the imprimatur of literary critics? Should Christian writers be restricted to writing explicit depictions of the Gospel message? Can *non-Christians* write effective stories of grace and redemption? Finally, what *difference* are Christian writers making in the world today?

*Art is a conversation*, and so I invite you to sit down and have an imaginative chat with our writers. We'll ask questions about the specific formal and stylistic conventions they use in particular literary and cultural contexts. We'll explore a variety of genres (several of our writers write in several genres): fiction, essay, poetry, creative non-fiction, screen, song, and comedy. We'll explore and reflect on the role that Christian faith plays in the texts and on the role that the texts play in our culture. You'll be asked to read closely, share your interpretations in class, write often, and form your own ideas in response to the literature we read together.

Together, we will think, write, and speak critically about literature *and* contemporary culture through the lens of Christian faith. And maybe, let's hope, the world will notice.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND RECOMMENDED STUDY RESOURCES

1. *Lila*, by Marilynne Robinson. Farrar, Staus and Giroux, 2014.
2. *Boxers and Saints*, by Gene Luen Yang. First Second, 2013. [Note: These are two separate books. May be purchased as a boxed set.]
3. Online sources and Canvas files. It will be your responsibility to download and print out assigned readings from links and files in Canvas. You will need to read closely, making notes in the margins, underlining or highlighting, and commenting upon the texts. Bring the reading packets to class the day listed on the schedule.
4. Videos on Canvas.
5. Materials:
 

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  - a. Access to a computer
  - b. Cell phone—bring to every class session (if you don't have a cell phone, bring a laptop)
  - c. Access to a working printer
  - d. College-ruled notebook paper and one 3-ring binder that will house:
 

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    - i. Your course anthology in which you will compile all your printed class texts.
    - ii. Your reading journal [\*See option "e" below.] No need to remove any pages. Can be sheets of paper stapled together.
    - iii. Your collection of handwritten class notes. [Optional: The Cornell/Sketchnote method is a highly effective format for either the Reading Journal or your Notes. See the instructions in the Student Resources Module.]

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  - e. Optional separate reading journal notebook: One *slim* notebook or personal journal, any binding type. Feel free to personalize as you like.

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6. Approximately \$15-\$20 to cover your printing costs for readings and your essays. The copy center can print quickly, reliably, and cheaply. If you email your file in advance, you can pick up the next day.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will help you learn and apply key concepts and skills in literary studies so that you can engage with the concept of faith in contemporary Christian literature in meaningful, transformative ways. If you invest yourself fully, you should finish this course being able to:

Course Learning Outcomes	IDEA outcomes	Assessment of Learning
Closely read ( <b>comprehension</b> , <b>analysis</b> ) and critically analyze ( <b>analysis</b> ) texts in their original languages and/or in translation. (GELO 1d, 2b) (PLO 2, 3, 4)	Develop skill in expressing yourself orally or in writing <i>Analyze and critically evaluate</i> ideas, arguments, and points of view	TB Assignments Final Presentation Reading Journal Final Exam Class Discussion
Recall ( <b>knowledge</b> ), identify ( <b>knowledge</b> ), and use ( <b>application</b> ) fundamental concepts of literary study to read and discuss texts a. Standard literary terminology b. Modes/genres of literature c. Elements of literary genres. Literary periods (dates, writers, characteristics, and important developments) e. Extra-literary research (GELO 1d, 2b) (PLO 2, 3, 4)	Gain a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories)	Games TB Assignments Class Discussion Reading Journal Reading quizzes Final Presentation Final Exam
Connect ( <b>synthesis</b> ) the works with their own lives and with the social, cultural, and historical contexts of the works and their authors. (GELO 1d, 2b) (PLO 1)	<b>Apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)</b>	

	Gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.) Develop knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures Develop creative capacities	
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Assignment Categories	Grading Percentages	Grade scale:
Attendance/Engagement	10%	A=93-100
Binder & Reading Journal	15%	A-=92-90
Reading Quizzes	10%	B+=87-89
TS/IS Formal Writing Assignments	40%	B=83-86
Final Presentation	10%	B-=80-82
Final Exam	15%	C+=77-79
		C=73-76
		C-=70-72
		D+=67-69
		D=63-66
		D-=60-62
		F=0-59

### Assignment Descriptions

**Engagement (10%):** Excellent attendance, punctuality, and **active** participation in discussions, activities, and group projects. Voluntarily ask questions, engage with ideas of fellow classmates, and offer responses to the readings that show insight and honest interaction with the readings. Make sure I know what your voice sounds like by the end of the quad. Being on an electronic device while others are talking or during activities is disrespectful and reduces the total points earned for engagement. I cannot record points for a silent voice that has not participated in discussions or for ears that have not listened attentively to lectures, videos, or others. Unplug and tune in, i.e. invest in your own learning.

**Binder & Reading Journal (15%):** Hole-punch and add each annotated text to your binder (excluding the novels). Your textual annotations and reading journal will prompt you to write regularly and to practice the art of critical, close, and slow reading. Unless given accommodations by the DRC, you will write your notes and journal by hand. The binder will be your space to respond to the course readings and to record your evolving thoughts and feelings about faith in literature. For your Reading Journal, you will number, date, and write entries in response to the readings outlined on the syllabus. The Binder & Journal will be collected together once at mid-quad and once at the end of the quad, as noted on the schedule. Assessed holistically for completeness and depth of engagement with the readings, class activities, and lectures.

**Reading Quizzes (RQ, 10%):** Short-answer Canvas quizzes given at the beginning of class on days listed in the schedule. 10 quizzes total. Laptop or Canvas phone app required. No makeups. **Option:** Say you are absent or didn't read the assigned texts on a certain day, and you miss an RQ. Here's a solution: in lieu of up to two reading quizzes, you may read, listen to, or watch one of the supplemental materials in the modules, write a one-page literary analysis of the literary devices used in the piece, and discuss why or why not you think it qualifies as "Christian" fine art. (Note: You may also choose to watch any "Christian" film on DVD, Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, or Amazon Prime, and write your analysis of the film). If you have a disability, please let me know so we can arrange an alternate quiz format that will work for you.

## 2 They Say/I Say Formal Writing Assignments (40% total, 200 points each):

- Building our idea that art is a conversation, at mid-quad you will “talk back” to one text that you will select from one of our class readings. Your first TS/IS will focus on one text from poetry, fiction, or creative non-fiction. Your second TS/IS will focus on one text from essay, drama, lyrics, or comedy. Each TS/IS will have two distinct parts:

1. **They Say (100pts):** Write a focused, researched 2-4 page (approx. 700-1000 words) argument about your chosen text in which you analyze one or more literary elements that are key to your understanding of the text. In your introduction, state the author, the specific text, and the literary element/s you are focusing on. Assert a fresh claim (thesis) about how the writer’s use of the literary device supports and enhances the text’s theme, and state the effect that that device has on the reader. Support your claim with specific evidence (quoted lines and details) from the text as well as researched support from at least one expert in literary criticism (scholarly source). Make sure that all quoted material is seamlessly incorporated into your argument. Use proper introductions, citations, punctuation (quote marks, etc.), signal phrases, and explanations of the significance of the evidence in support of your thesis. Visit the Ryan Library librarians if you need assistance in locating scholarly sources.

Purpose: Formal scholarship. Refer to the guidelines in the handout for writing about literature. Use an appropriately formal tone (i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup>-person objective point of view; no 1<sup>st</sup> person, no slang, no contractions). Type and format papers using 8<sup>th</sup> ed. MLA style: 12-point Times New Roman, single sided, double-spaced, MLA heading, running header, 1” margins, correctly documented in-text citations and Works Cited page. See OWL Purdue online, me, or our wonderful librarians in our Ryan Library for correct format. Carefully edit and proofread for organization, logic, sentence structure, punctuation, MLA literary present tense, and Standard American English usage. Back claims with textual evidence. This is not a writing course, but because you have already learned how to write and research like a scholar in your composition class, I do expect university-level critical thinking and writing in this course. Superficial thinking, lackluster writing skills, lack of serious scholarship, lack of documentation, and lack of specific textual evidence make me grumpy. I will not tell you how to interpret texts, but I will insist that you think analytically and support your claims/opinions with evidence from the texts we read. Rubrics for each assignment are posted on Canvas with their corresponding assignment.

2. **I Say (100pts):** Write a creative piece (your stylistic choice of length) in response to and in the same genre as your selected text. You can even write a “sequel” to your chosen text. Apply and incorporate into your piece any literary elements that we have studied that suit the art you are creating. Practice the art and craft of creative writing. Imagine. Render your ideas in images that appeal to the five senses. Have fun. At the end of your response, write a reflective artist’s statement that discusses your writing process and literary devices you consciously used in your creative piece (Your artist’s reflection should be approx.250-300 words).

Purpose: Informal/Creative. It will be appropriate to use whatever point of view and level of diction seems best suited to your creative piece. Use 1<sup>st</sup> person singular PoV for your artist’s statement.

Due dates for each TS/IS are listed on the syllabus. Upload Word file to Canvas.

Option: For extra credit, you may bring a print copy to class and read (or sing, act, or show a video of) your creative piece to us on the due date.

- **FINAL PRESENTATION (10%, 100 points):** Toward the end of the quad, I will put out signup sheets, and you will choose a final presentation group. Your group will choose one writer that we **have not yet** covered in one of the genres that we **have** covered. As a group, you will present **one** of the following two options:
  - **Research presentation:** For your selected genre, research a writer your group believes should be added to our anthology. In the context of our working definition of what it means to be a contemporary Christian writer, explain why you believe your writer is should be included in our

anthology as a writer of fine Christian art (how does the writer make us muse about themes of faith and the human condition?), provide a short bio, analyze and evaluate the writer's unique literary techniques or style, share a key video clip so we can hear the writer or their words, and discuss what important contribution your writer is making to our culture. You may want to try to contact your writer for added insight and coolness. Include some form of visual presentation (e.g. video clip of the writer, emaze, PowerPoint, Prezi, the writer in person!, etc.). Be sure to include a slide for your Works Cited. Provide a handout (50 copies) of selected text. The group leader should upload the visual presentation to Canvas. 10-12 minute presentation. For the individual portion, write a one-page statement in which you explain your specific contribution to the project and what your experience working with your group was like. What did you discover? Upload your statement to Canvas.

**OR**

- o **Creative presentation:** For your selected genre, write and present a creative interpretation of the life and work of one of the writers we're studying. Write a one-page statement in which you describe your particular contribution along with an explanation of why you chose your writer, what about the writing dazzles you, and what important contribution you believe your writer is making to our culture. Each member of the group should upload your typed script and your description as a Word doc. In Canvas. 10-12 minute presentation.

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**FINAL EXAM (150 points, 15%):** "Take-home" Canvas quiz of literary terms and examples from course readings + 2 short essays in which you will draw on relevant course readings and content to articulate your definition and defense of contemporary Christian writers + one final short reflection. Open notes and texts. Computer and Internet are required. 2.5 hours outside of class time.

### **PLNU ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY**

Regular and punctual attendance at all classes is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If you miss more than 10% of class meetings (1.5 class periods), I may file a written report, which may result in your de-enrollment. If you are absent more than 20% (3 class periods), you may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for your work and participation. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In addition to excellent attendance and punctuality, your *engagement* with the course, your classmates, and me is essential and is worth 10% of your grade. Active engagement means that you will come to class fully prepared to discuss and engage with the readings and the ideas of your peers. I will expect you to contribute voluntarily, frequently, and insightfully to discussions. Distracted attention of any kind during lectures, activities, discussions, videos, or presentations will count as an absence and will reduce the points possible. In the event of absence for ANY reason, you are responsible for ANY information or class content missed. It is your responsibility to consult Canvas or to contact a classmate for any missed handouts, notes, or content for the session missed. Do not email me with any non-excused requests for missed content or extensions on assignment due dates. A courtesy email to notify me of your absence is appreciated but not required.

### **ASSIGNMENTS, INCOMPLETES, AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments are 100% required. Unless otherwise posted on Canvas, all assignments are to be submitted/turned in by the beginning of the class session when they are due. Points possible for late submissions will be reduced 10% for each day past the due date. Incompletes will be assigned only in extremely unusual circumstances. Absence from class does not mean you can turn in an assignment late. Emails requesting extensions will not be answered unless you have a documented emergency. You must still submit your work by the due date even if you are not in class on that day.

### EXTRA CREDIT TO EXTEND THE CONVERSATION

**Literary Events:** Feel free to attend other writing events (lecture, workshop, reading) at PLNU or around town. For up to two events, write a 1-2 page analysis/reflection evaluating the event in light of themes discussed in class. Due within one week of the event. 5 points per event, up to 2 events. **Attendance at PLNU's Writer's Symposium by the Sea in February is strongly encouraged. Come meet one of our writers: Christian Wiman!**

**Facebook Post:** Message one writer about whom you have written a reflection or creative analysis. Write a brief message of introduction, and attach your paper. Take a screenshot and show me for 5 points. Earn another 5 if you can prove an ongoing positive conversation with your writer.

**"I Say" Presentation:** On the days that TB's are due, you may read the creative piece (or an excerpt) you wrote (not to exceed 5 minutes). 5 points each.

### STUDENT ATHLETES

Any student athlete who is going to miss a class due to team obligations must speak with me and present official documentation by the end of Week 2 or as soon as the game schedule is posted. These absences will be excused, but assignments must still be submitted on their scheduled due dates.

### CANVAS

It is your responsibility to check your Canvas account often for announcements, course material, forms, handouts, videos, postings, and messages. This is the primary way outside of class to access course materials, submit assignments, and communicate with each other. **NOTE: The Canvas grade book calculates the percentage of assignments that have been graded, but it does not give an accurate view of your "running total" score in the class. You should not rely on it as a final reflection of your grade. I suggest you keep track of the points you earn out of 1,000 points possible.**

### ELECTRONIC DEVICES

You may bring your laptop or Smartphone to class. You will need it for some but not all in-class activities. BUT, until I give direction for use, all electronic devices must be silenced or turned off before the start of class. If during class you are seen texting, tweeting, checking email or Facebook, listening to music, or conducting any activity not related to the class activity at the moment, I will mark you absent for that day. Unauthorized use of technology is not the place for the classroom. There will be times when you will be allowed to use technology, and these will be announced ahead of time.

### COMPUTER OR PRINTER PROBLEMS

Problems with technology happen. However, you should always back up your files. If your computer crashes and you are unable to produce a copy of your work by the beginning of class, your paper will be late. Do not leave printing your assignments until right before class. If your printer breaks and you are unable to produce a hard copy of your work at the beginning of class, you must still upload it to Canvas. An electronic submission will not take the place of a hard copy. You must produce a hard copy and deliver it to me in class no later than the next session.

### STUDENT CONDUCT

As a valued member of a community of learners, you have an obligation to be responsible and respectful to classmates and the instructor and to ensure that the exercise of your freedom of expression does not impinge on the rights of others in their quest for learning. In addition, you must acknowledge the responsibility of the professor to create and preserve an environment conducive to the learning of all students. The instructor has the responsibility and authority to maintain appropriate student behavior. The instructor is also responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for this course.

### COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

This classroom will be a safe environment that is 100% free of discriminatory acts and bias. Cultural sensitivity will be strongly encouraged as you grow as contributors to the academic conversation and to the conversations in your life beyond the university. We will at all times practice the stated Core Values for PLNU:

- A willingness to hear and learn from many diverse voices is foundational to a Christian liberal arts education and prepares students to become truly educated people, equipped to live in a diverse society and world.
  - It is through the inclusion and experience of others from diverse backgrounds and points of view that we often begin to see dimensions of truth previously unseen by us.
  - Diversity not only enriches the educational endeavor, it is critical to it.
  - Reporting Discrimination & Bias Incidents: If you witness or experience an incident that could be considered unfair, biased, or discriminatory, please contact the Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Jeffrey Carr, at [diversity@pointloma.edu](mailto:diversity@pointloma.edu), (619) 849-2484, or by visiting Room 306 in Nicholson Commons. You can also use the main institutional reporting form to advise us of the incident.
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### PLNU ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

You will demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as your own when they are the results of someone else's creativity and effort. If I believe you have failed to correctly cite or have plagiarized another's work—in whole or in part, intentional or not—or if I detect any academic dishonesty, I may give you zero points for that assignment or exam, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. I will follow and you may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

### PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU's Disability Resource Center (DRC) within the first two weeks of class to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at [DRC@pointloma.edu](mailto:DRC@pointloma.edu). See [Disability Resource Center](#) for additional information.

### SUPPORT

You may count on my expertise and support to help you meet your course goals. However, I cannot support lack of planning or effort. Neither can I think for you. If you need assistance or feedback on any aspect of the course that is not addressed in class, I will be happy to meet with you before or after class to discuss your concerns and needs and to provide guidance and feedback. If you desire a longer session, you may drop in during office hours or schedule an appointment. For additional support, you are strongly encouraged to consult [Tutorial Services](#) or any of [Ryan Library's librarians](#).

### FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination **on its scheduled day**. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

**PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY**

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.



**COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS (subject to change at instructor's discretion)**

WEEK	DATE	READINGS & DISCUSSIONS	DUE DATES: QUIZZES & ASSIGNMENTS
1	1/8 1/10	<b>NO CLASS</b> Course introduction	
2	1/15 1/17	Poetry: Berry, Lee, Gioia, Wright, Oliver Poetry: Howe, Hudgins, Wiman, Nelson, Milosz	1/15: RQ1; RJ1 1/17: RQ2; RJ2
3	1/22 1/24	Short Story: Adichie, Wallace, McDermott Novel: <i>Boxers and Saints</i>	1/22: RQ3; RJ3 1/24: RQ4; RJ4
4	1/29 1/31	Novel: <i>Lila</i> Novel: <i>Lila</i> —No Quiz	1/29: RQ5; RJ5 1/31: Binder & Reading Journal 1-5 Due
5	2/5 2/7	Creative Non-fiction: Lamott, Lott, Wiman, McBride TB Presentations; Comedy: TBA Lyrics: TBA	2/5: RQ6 & RQ6; RJ7 & RJ7 2/7: <b>DUE on Canvas</b> ; TB I; RQ8; RJ8
6	2/12 2/14	Screen: In class watch <i>Three Billboards</i> Screen: In class watch <i>Three Billboards</i>	11/19: RQ9; RJ9
7	2/19 2/21	Essay: Robinson, Wiman, Berry Final Presentations (7); Final Exam Review (2/21 Extra Credit: Christian Wiman, 1-3:30, Fermanian Conference Room, free; 7-8:30pm, Crill Hall, \$5)	2/19: RQ10; RJ10—Last RQ & RJ! 2/21: <b>DUE in class</b> : Binder & Reading Journals (1-10) Final Presentations
8	2/26	Final Presentations in class (5); TB Presentations Canvas Final Exam (“Take home” online, outside of class time)	2/26: Final Presentations, cont'd <b>DUE on Canvas: Final Exam; TB II</b>

Support and meet some of today’s finest living writers. Plan to attend any or all of the events at PLNU’s Writer’s Symposium by the Sea:

- Monday, Feb. 18 -- documentary filmmaker Jody Hassett Sanchez
- Tuesday, Feb. 19 -- science fiction, fantasy, comics and graphic novelist Nnedi Okorafor
- Wednesday, Feb. 20 -- Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne
- Thursday, Feb. 21 -- poet and essayist Christian Wiman

Tickets are available online or at the door. Students: \$5.00