

## Realism, Influence and The Classic: The Case of Coetzee and Defoe

BA Advanced Course

Instructor: Maya Klein, Spring 2019

Wednesdays, 12-14 Rosenberg 001

Reception Hours: Wednesdays 11-12 (by appointment)

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### Course Description

This class will explore the relationship that 20th century writer J.M. Coetzee has with the “Father of the English novel” Daniel Defoe. We will pay particular attention to Coetzee’s dual position as a writer and critic and to the interplay between his nonfiction and fictional works.

We will read Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) alongside Coetzee’s rewriting of the novel some 250 years later in *Foe* (1986) as well as Coetzee’s essays “He and His Man” (Nobel Laureate Address 2003), “What is a Classic?” (1993) and “What is Realism?” (1997). Through Coetzee’s unique relationship with Defoe, we will examine a series of key questions regarding literature, including the notion of original creation; realism; the form of the novel; intertextual allusion and influence; “textual transvestism”, the double, and the classic. Primary texts: Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Coetzee’s *Foe* and the three essays by Coetzee. Secondary texts include (but are limited to) works by the following critics: Erich Auerbach, M.M Bakhtin, Georg Lukács, Ian Watt, Harold Bloom, Gilbert and Gubar, Julia Kristeva, Ankhi Mukerjee, Derek Attridge, Lucy Graham, and Marc Sanders.

### Important!

The novel *Foe* **will not be available on moodle**. Copies of the book can be found in the library on limited loan or purchased at bookstores. Students who plan on ordering the book online are encouraged to do so *in advance*.

### **Requirements:**

Attendance, Participation 10%

One-Two Page Response: 10% **Due by April 10**

Midterm Exam: 15 % **In Class May 15**

Final Paper: 65 %

**Responses** may relate to either a theoretical or a fictional work. One-two pages in length.

You can also relate to more than one theoretical work. For example: Describe Lukas’ approach to the realist form of the novel. How does it differ from other critics whose work we have read? What are some of the critiques that could be raised against his approach? If you choose to respond to a fictional work, examine one of the features of the text (a narrative strategy, its style or genre) and describe its relevance to the issues discussed in class. For example: describe the purpose of metafiction in Coetzee’s “What is Realism”, why is it employed?

Responses may be handed in after we have discussed the text in class, **and all are due by April 10.**

**There will be no extensions for written responses.**

**Course Schedule**

\*Schedule is subject to change during the semester. Changes will be announced in advance.

February 27: Introduction: Defining the terms, Realism and its Relation to the Novel.  
Excerpts from Dickens' *Hard Times*, Black Mirror

March 6 : Critical Orientation 1: Eric Auerbach, Ian Watt, Fiction excerpt Sheila Heti

March 13: Critical Orientation 2: Lukács, Gilbert and Gubar

March 20: J.M. Coetzee- "What is Realism?"

March 27: J.M. Coetzee- "What is a Classic?", Ankhi Mukerjee "What Is a Classic?"

April 3: Intertextuality: "He and his Man" Excerpts from Bakhtin, Kristeva

April 10 - Fictional and Literary Doubles, Marc Sanders "The Writing Business",  
Introduction to *Robinson Crusoe*

**Last class to hand in responses**

Passover Break April 16-27

May 1: *Robinson Crusoe*, "Crusoe's Legacy"

May 8: No Class (Remembrance Day)

**May 15: Midterm Exam**

May 22:- *Foe*

May 29: *Foe*

June 5: *Foe* Graham "Textual Transvestism"

June 12: Final Class, Review, the classic and the cannon. Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of Canonisation"

