

CLEN 4521 Topics in Comparative Literature: The World of Banned Books

Jonathan Abel

(First offered as an ExEAS course at Columbia University in Fall 2005)

Course Description:

This course examines the politics of literature banned across several centuries and continents. Texts have been classified as taboo, seized, and burned and their creators fined, jailed, tortured, and killed throughout history under many different political regimes. Incorporating a range of systems of censorship in Europe, the US, Japan, and China, we will examine differences in the modes of repression and the sometimes surprising connections between church and monarchy, fascism and democracy.

This course raises the following questions:

- How has censorship been used as political tool?
- What are the grounds on which censorship can be judged successful or incomplete?
- How has censorship been justified? When, if ever, is censorship justifiable?
- Who censors? Who is censored?
- What are local categories of censorship? Though books are banned for reasons of blasphemy, sedition, and obscenity in various guises in several cultures, are these global categories?
- How do writers write against a ban? How do they write within it?
- What are the roles of importation, technologies of circulation, and geography in the censorship of texts? How do border-crossings and forms of miscegenation offend?

Required Texts:

Coursepack (CP) available at Broadway Copy Center, 3062 Broadway at 121 Street

Books available at Labyrinth Books, 536 W. 112th St. between Broadway & Amsterdam

Satanic Verses

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

Ugly American

Beijing Doll

Optional Books also at Labyrinth: *Lolita*, *Elmer Gantry*, *Fahrenheit 451*, etc.

Evaluation/Grading:

Participation (50%)

Attendance and classroom participation	10%
Weekly Web Postings (Courseworks)	20%
<u>In-class presentation</u>	<u>20%</u>
Subtotal	50%

Written Individual Work

(see options below for break down)	50%
Total	100%

Course Requirements:

All course participants are required to do the following:

Class Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to complete all of the week's readings before class.

Courseworks Web Postings

Students are expected to participate in weekly online discussions on the course's Courseworks website, discussing their thoughts on the readings and class discussions. Here you will be free to discuss topics that do not get raised in class or in the readings. Also, these discussions can form the basis for ideas for the papers.

Topics and the manner of the discussion will be decided by **discussion leaders**. Each student will take a turn being a discussion leader. A given week's discussion leaders must write and post at least two paragraphs by Saturday at midnight.

Discussants (that is, everyone else) must write at least one response by the following Monday at midnight. Responses may be any length three sentences or over. They can respond to any one or all of the discussion leaders for a given week.

All students must sign up for a week to be a discussion leader **by the third week of class**.

In-class Presentation

The **presentation** will consist of a small research project and in-class oral/visual presentation. The purpose of the presentations is to educate the class on the historical contexts to a given week's banned text or on topics in banned literature which may be confusing or which may have been touched on only tangentially in class lectures or readings. Handouts (consisting of visual aids, timelines, definitions of terms, and/or annotated bibliographies) are required. Presentations should not exceed ten minutes in length.

All presenters should plan a meeting with me to discuss their topic **at least one week prior** to their presentation.

All students must sign up for a week to give a presentation **by the third week of class**.

All course participants must choose one of the following options to complete their requirements for the course.

Option A - *The following are the additional writing requirements for **undergraduate non-English majors**:*

Mid-term Paper 20%:

Short paper discussing one of the books covered in the first half of the semester must include work on both banned texts and the historical contexts of their banning. 3-5 pages double-spaced.

Final Paper 30%:

Comparative research paper on the banning of two books from different times and places. Final papers are individual labors. Students should discuss their topics with me during office hours prior to writing. Research papers should include a close analysis and interpretation (not mere summary) of at least two works, a discussion of how the works relate to course readings and sources not used in class. 7-10 pages double-spaced (excluding bibliography). All papers should be in the MLA (Modern Language Association) format.

Option B - *The following are the additional reading and writing requirements **for undergraduate English majors**:*

English majors are required to read all of the readings marked for English majors in the syllabus. In order to allow time for majors to do so, majors are allowed to subtract one set of regular readings from a week in which there is additional reading for English majors.

Mid-term Paper 20%:

Short paper discussing one of the books marked for English majors (see syllabus schedule). The paper must include work relating both the banned text to the historical contexts of their banning. 3-5 pages double-spaced.

Final Paper 30%:

Comparative research paper on the banning of two books from different times and places. One of the books must be from the books marked for English majors (see syllabus schedule). Final papers are individual labors. Students should discuss their topics with me during office hours prior to writing. Research papers should include a close analysis and interpretation (not mere summary) of at least two works, a discussion of how the works relate to course readings and sources not used in class. 7-10 pages double-spaced (excluding bibliography). All papers should be in the MLA (Modern Language Association) format.

Option C - *The following are the additional reading and writing requirements **for graduate students**.*

Graduate students are to have read the “optional” material and extra reading material.

Research Paper 50%

Comparative research paper on the banning of two or more books from different times and places. At least one of the books should be a book we have discussed in class. Final papers are individual labors. Research papers should include a close analysis and interpretation of at least two works, a discussion of how the works relate to course readings and sources not used in class. Students should discuss their topics with me during office hours at least twice during the semester (preferably before Thanksgiving). Papers are to be of publishable length, 15-25 pages double-spaced (excluding bibliography). All papers should be submitted in the MLA (Modern Language Association) format.

Class Schedule:

Week One

9/6 *Introduction* Terminology: Censored vs. Banned Books

9/8 Approaches to Banned Books: Indexes, Repression, and “Reading Between the Lines”

Richard Gibbings, “preface” *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* [vii-lxxxv] CP

Peter Fryer, “Introduction” *Forbidden books of the Victorians: Henry Spencer Ashbee's bibliographies of erotica* [1-15] CP

Henry Spencer Ashbee, “Preface,” *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* [iii-xxii] CP

Anne Haight, “Preface” *Banned Books* [vii-viii] CP

Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* [introduction] CP

Part I: Books Banned on Religious Grounds

Week Two

9/13

Martin Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* Available online:

http://oll.libertyfund.org/Texts/Luther0155/FirstPrinciples/HTMLs/0224_Pt03_95Theses.html

9/15

Confucius, *Analects* [Chapters 2, 5, 10, and 14] Available online:

<http://www.isop.ucla.edu/eas/documents/lunyu.htm>

***ENGLISH MAJORS OPTION

John Milton, “Areopagitica”

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/areopagitica.html>

Week Three

9/20 Categories for Censorship/Bans

Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* [1-50 , 139-179] Available online:

<http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/rbbr/toc.html>

9/22

Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, [“Recapitulation and Conclusion”] Available online:

<http://www.literature.org/authors/darwin-charles/the-origin-of-species/>

Richard Monastersky, “Demand for Their Data on Climate Chills Scientists” *Chronicle of Higher Education* article CP

****ENGLISH MAJORS OPTION

Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry*

Week Four “Banned Books Week 2005”

9/27 Intentionality: Is There a Genre of Banned Books?
Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses* [Chapters 1-4 (1-248)]

9/29

Week Five

10/4 Blasphemy: Religious Politics and Political Religions
Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses* [Chapters 5-9 (249-523)]
FILM: *Last Temptation of Christ*

10/6

Leonard Levy, "The Gay News Case," "The Rushdie Affair: Should All Religions Be Protected or None?" from *Blasphemy* [534-567] CP

Part II: Books Banned on Political Grounds

Week Six

10/11 Seditious: (Mis)using the past
Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* Available online:
<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/publications/machiavelli.html>
Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* Available online:
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>

Optional Readings:

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/>

10/13

***ENGLISH MAJORS OPTION

Nat Hentoff, *The Day They Came To Arrest The Book*

Week Seven

10/17 **FILM SCREENING:** *Fahrenheit 451*
7:30-9:30 p.m. in room 608 Schermerhorn

10/18 The Censoring of Censorship

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

10/20 **MID TERM PAPER DUE**

Stanley Fish, *There's No Such Thing As Free Speech: ...and it's a good thing too*
["Preface," "Introduction," Chapter 8 (102-119), Chapter 10 (134-140)] CP

Nat Hentoff, *Free Speech for me, but not for thee* ["Introduction" and "Chapter One"]
CP

***ENGLISH MAJORS OPTION

Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

Week Eight

10/25 *Banning vs. Expurgation vs. Burning*

William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American*

10/27

“The Sleigh,” Kuroshima Denji [60-73] CP

FILM: *Night and Fog in Japan*

Week Nine

11/1 *Humor and Censorship*

Wu Han, “Hai Jui dismissed from office” [introduction and play; 143 pages] CP

11/2 **FILM SCREENING:** *University of Laughs*

7:30-9:30 p.m. in room 608 Schermerhorn

11/3

“When that Day Comes,” (poem) Sim Hun CP

Part III: Banned on Sexual Grounds

Week Ten

11/8 *Academic Holiday*

11/10 Naming Obscenity

Giovanni Boccaccio, [First Night, Fourth Story; Fifth Night, Tenth Story]

Available online at: <http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/decameron/engDecIndex.php>

The Book of One Thousand and One Nights trans. Richard Burton, “The Porter And The Three Ladies Of Baghdad,” “Tale of the Second Eunuch, Kafur,” “Terminal Essay”

Available online at:

http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_1/tale3.htm

http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_2/tale8.htm#tale8.2

http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_10/essay.htm

***ENGLISH MAJORS OPTION

Geoffrey Chaucer, “Wife of Bath’s Tale” online at:

<http://www.librarius.com/cantales/wiftale.htm>

Week Eleven

11/15 Reading Spaces: Reading Males Writing the Female

Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, “Mr. Bluemound” [143-181] CP

Vladimir Nabokov, “On a book entitled *Lolita*” [311-17] CP

Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita In Tehran* [“Author’s Note,” and 3-37] Available online:

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/columbia/Doc?id=10039134>

***ENGLISH MAJORS OPTION

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*

11/17

Holbrook Jackson, *The Fear of Books* [1-18, 137-159] CP

Week Twelve

11/22 Local/Library Censorship

Chin P'ing Mei, *The Golden Lotus* [CP]

Carnal Prayer Mat

<http://www.netlibrary.com/summary.asp?id=39247>.

11/24

Charles R. Stone, *The Fountainhead of Chinese Erotica* CP

***ENGLISH MAJORS OPTION

James Baldwin, *Another Country*

Week Thirteen

11/29 Politics of Obscenity: the Banned Boston Principle

Chun Sue, *Beijing Doll*

12/1

D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* [Chapter 10] CP

Upton Sinclair, "How to be Obscene" *New Yorker* (July 2, 1927) CP

Week Fourteen

12/6 Exile, Psuedonyms, and Other Daring Literary Escapes?

"17," Ōe Kenzaburō [1-73] CP

Gershon Legman, *Love and Death: a study in censorship* [7-24] CP

12/8

FILM: *A Clockwork Orange*

Week Fifteen

Monday December 12

FINAL PAPER DUE