The Human Crisis in 20th Century Literature
Fisher 15 – 230
M, W, F 11:05 – 11:55

Course Description:
It is impossible to sum up the twentieth-century with any one phrase or word, but for the purposes of this class, the words are Modernism, Existentialism, Expressionism, Magical Realism, and Symbolism. These four words are descriptive of forms in narration that motivated new thoughts about identity and culture. Age old questions about the meaning of life and existence emanated from an era that sought articulation in the inner confines of mind and body within a social structure that seemed to have gone mad. Alienation, fear, disorientation and distrust are merely a few expressions we’ll find in these texts, but an ironic expression of freedom arises alongside this descent.

Questions:
Changes in the nineteenth century marked the way we thought about ourselves and culture in the twentieth century. What were those changes? What were the advantages and consequences of those changes?

The humanities sought new ways to articulate the human being in the twentieth century; why did this become a pressing issue?

How can we look at the twentieth century and how it influences our modern-day views and perspectives on the individual?

Required Text:
Nietzsche, Friedrich. “The Madman” from The Gay Science
Kafka, Franz. “Metamorphosis”
Duras, Marguerite. The Lover. Pantheon.

Supplies:
You are also required to purchase a flash drive and tag with your name and ID on it for this course. Your papers will be read and graded primarily on this instrument.

Film:
The Lives of Others
Life is Beautiful
Web Links:
Franz Kafka, “Metamorphosis.”

**Writing Assignments:**

**Response Journal:**
You are required to submit a response for each work discussed in class. This includes the short essay by Nietzsche and any films shown in class. Your response statements should be at least 125 words, typed and double spaced. These tests should be listed in a folder marked with your name and the word “journal.” My folder would be “Kette Thomas Journal.”

**Formal Writing:**
Two formal papers will be required.

The first is an essay of at least five pages in which you select a work from class and tease a question from its contents. In other words, this class is about generating questions, be they age old question seen through different lenses or reiterated in a new way, or new questions that take the 21st century perspective into account. I am not looking for a question that you can easily answer. I do not want you to produce a paper that acts as a sounding board for your thoughts and opinions on a particular item. These are things we can discuss in class. This paper is for those thoughts to go further until they reach a kind of “impasse.” This paper is about getting to a particular problem that motivates a research document.

The second is an essay of at least 8 pages in which you begin to research your question. Who has asked about these questions before? What texts (broadly speaking, this can include film, short story, essay and novel) effectively goes to the heart of the problem you want to expose, crystallize, etc? Your research paper should include at least two secondary sources. The most important element in this project is evidence of having challenged yourself to “transgress” the boundaries of your own comfort zone. Though I expect these questions to be somewhat directed at an audience, it is more important that the question arises out of personal curiosity or concern. You can develop a paper with you as the audience in mind, but keep in mind that others have to understand you.

These papers will be listed under a folder marked with your name and “formal essay.” For example, “Kette Thomas Formal Essays.” The actual essays have to be marked as “Essay One” and “Essay Two.” It can be a more creative name, but it has explicitly state which is the first and which the second.

**Presentations:**
After you have submitted your first essay, I will assign a panel for your presentation based on the kind of question you select to research. You are required to include some kind of visual apparatus to complement your written work. You will have 5 minutes to discuss your question with the class and HOW YOU CAME UPON IT IN THE FIRST PLACE. This requires more than “I was thinking that this was kinda weird.” Why was it “weird” to you? We will discuss this more in class. You have to prepare a paper of about three pages in order to stay within the time limits, but I welcome open dialogue. You should also be prepared for questions from the audience.

**Attendance:**
Attendance is mandatory. Much of the course involves conversation about course readings. If you miss those conversations, you will have missed a good deal of the course content. More than three unexcused absences will affect your grade.
Late Papers:
Papers must be submitted on time. Any late papers will affect your grade.

Grades:
Your grade will be based on the following:

- Journals: 25%
- Formal Essay #1: 25%
- Formal Essay #2: 25%
- Presentation: 25%

Criteria and other matters:
When papers are returned, most papers will have a letter grade on them. If you receive a grade lower than A, you may revise the essay and submit it no later than two weeks after it is returned. A few papers, though, will have an “R” on them. This means that the paper must be revised within two weeks of the time the paper was returned, and only the revision will be graded. I will usually suggest that individuals who receive Rs see me before revising. Please include the original paper with the revision.

DSS Statement:
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Dean of Students (7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (7-3310).

Plagiarism Statement:
Plagiarism—using the ideas or words of others without acknowledging the source—is unethical and a violation of University policy. Plagiarism cases will be handled by the Dean of Students. Some consequences of plagiarism could be failure of a paper or course. The University has subscribed to an anti-plagiarism service that can detect plagiarized material. If you have questions about the proper way to cite the ideas of someone else, please see me.

Course Schedule:
Week 1 (September 3-5)
W Introduction
F Discuss 19th Century contributions and Nietzsche's essay

Week 2 (September 8-12)
M Kafka
W Kafka
F Kafka

Week 3 (September 15-19)
M Wiesel
W Wiesel
F Wiesel

Week 4 (September 22-26)
M Film: Life is Beautiful
W Film: Life is Beautiful
F Discuss Film
Week 5 (September 29-October 3)
M Duras
W Duras
F Duras

Week 6 (October 6-10)
M Duras
W Duras (Film)
F Duras (Film and discussion)

Week 7 (October 13-17)
M Camus
W Camus
F Camus

Week 8 (October 20-24)
M Camus
W Film: The Lives of Others
F Film: The Lives of Others

Week 9 (October 27-31)
M Marquez
W Marquez
F Marquez

Week 10 (November 3-7)
M Marquez
W Marquez
F Marquez

Week 11 (November 10-14)
M Hurston
W Hurston
F Hurston

Week 12 (November 17-21)
M Hurston
W Hurston
F Hurston

Week 13 (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 14 (December 1-5)
M Presentation
W Presentation
F Presentation

Week 15 (December 8-12)
M Presentation