

English 330-003
Text and Context: Nabokov's *Lolita*
TR 9:30—10:45
BH 301

Professor: Lisa Zunshine
Office Hours: POT 1365, TR 10:50 am-12:20 pm

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Books:

Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading* (Vintage)
Nabokov, *Lolita* (Vintage)
Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (Random House)
Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (Anchor Books)
Thomas Berger, *Adventures of the Artificial Woman* (Simon and Schuster)

Movies:

Purchase used copies of Kubrick's *Lolita*, Lyne's *Lolita*, and Mendes's *American Beauty* early in the semester. You cannot make up any of the writing assignments based on the movies.

Requirements:

- attendance: you are allowed two unexcused absences (this includes family and transportation emergencies as well as all other situations not covered by a doctor's note specifying the exact hour of your medical appointment). After three unexcused absences, you lose one grade; after four absences, you lose two grades; if you accumulate five unexcused absences, you cannot pass this course. If you miss a class, do not e-mail me asking "what we did in class," or whether you "have missed anything important," or if there are any writing assignments due next day. Instead, contact another student from our class, whose e-mail is:

1.

2.

- written assignments—20% (these short papers should be typed and kept in a folder. You are required to turn in that folder at the end of the semester together with your final paper. Late written assignments are not accepted under any conditions, but you can miss one assignment without your grade being affected. Each paper should be 1-2pp, double-spaced, with the first sentence stating clearly your thesis and the rest substantiating your thesis with a close reading based on the primary text. No credit will be given to papers lacking a proper thesis or substituting close reading with retelling the story or paraphrasing a passage from the book)

- midterm examination—20%

- final examination—20%ⁱ

- two papers—40% (**important**: see the note on plagiarism belowⁱⁱ)

Schedule of Readings:

Aug 25 (R) Introduction

Aug 30 (T) "Spring in Fialta," "Cloud, Castle, Lake," "Mademoiselle O" (handout)

Sep 1 (R) *Invitation to a Beheading*, to the end of chapter four

Sep 6 (T) *Invitation to a Beheading*, to the end of chapter eleven

Sep 8 (R) *Invitation to a Beheading*, to the end of chapter fifteen

Sep 13 (T) *Invitation to a Beheading*, to the end of the book

Sep 15 (R) *Lolita*, pages TBA

Sep 20 (T) *Lolita*, pages TBA (nc)

Sep 22 (R) *Lolita*, pages TBA

Sep 27 (T) *Lolita*, pages TBA

Sep 29 (R) no class

Oct 4 (T) *Lolita*, pages TBA. Watch the two movies: the 1962 *Lolita*, with Peter Sellers, James Mason, Sue Lyon, and Shelley Winters, directed by Stanley Kubrick, and the 1997 *Lolita*, with Jeremy Irons, Dominique Swain, and Melanie Griffith, directed by Adrian Lyne)

Oct 6 (R) *Lolita*, pages TBA; Rebecca Mead, “Shopping Rebellion” (handout or http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?020318fa_FACT)

Oct 11 (T) *Lolita*, pages TBA. Watch *American Beauty* (1999)

Oct 13 (R) Review for the midterm. **First paper (5-7pp, typed, double-spaced) is due at the beginning of the class.**

Oct 18 (T) **Midterm**

Oct 20 (R) *Atonement*, to p. 89, or to the end of chapter 8

Oct 25 (T) *Atonement*, to p. 189, or until the sentence “For a long time he lay on his back smoking”

Oct 27 (R) *Atonement*, to p. 250, or to the end of part 2

Nov 1 (T) *Atonement*, to p. 330, or to the end of part 3

Nov 3 (R) *Atonement*, to the end of the book

Nov 8 (T) *Adventures of the Artificial Woman*, to the end of chapter eight

Nov 10 (R) *Adventures of the Artificial Woman*, to the end of chapter fifteen

Nov 15 (T) *Adventures of the Artificial Woman*, to the end of the book

Nov 17 (R) *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, pp. 1-40, until “We take turns; every week, one of us provides the pastry.”

Nov 22 (T) *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, 40-117, until “Hearing the news as I sat in my office in Washington, D.C., a feeling I had not experienced for a long time came over me: a sense of utter helplessness, of inarticulate anger tinged with vague but persistent guilt.”

Nov 29 (T) *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, pp. 117-222, until “I will never forget that glance on that day, and her so very thin small body, her narrow face and large eyes, like an owl’s, or an imp’s in some invented tale.”

Dec 1 (R) *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, pp. 222-283, until “From the widow I could see the snow-covered branches and the faded outlines of the mountains, barely discernible behind the haze.”

Dec 6 (T) *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, to the end of the book

Dec 8 (R) Review for the final. **Second paper (7-10 pages) is due. You have an option for turning in your paper on the day of the final (your grade will not be affected).**

Dec 16 (F) **8:00 am: Final Examination**

ⁱ The final is **not** cumulative and covers only the second part of the semester. I structure my midterms and finals so that it is easy to do well on them if you have read all the texts and paid attention in class. It is practically impossible to get a passing grade on the exam if you have not read the required materials.

Here is an excerpt from one of my last year’s midterms, which should give you a fair idea of what your exams will be like.

- Identify the passages below (i.e., title and author): **2 points**. If your identification is correct (**and only then**), you can get more points for the following:
- Explain how what is happening in the passage is important for the development of the plot or the development of the character. **5 points**
- Analyze the passage’s imagery. **3 points**. Note that paraphrasing the passage in your own words does not qualify as discussing its images.

1. “You mean you wanted to save me . . .” [First Character] said pensively.

“Whether I wanted to or not is my business, friend of my heart, cockroach-under-the-hearth. In any case I was accused of it—you know, informers are a young and hot-headed breed, so here I am: ‘here in rapture I’m standing before . . .’—remember the song? The principal evidence against me was some sketch of this fortress that supposedly had my marks on it. You see, I was supposed to have thought out every little detail of your escape, my little cockroach.”

ⁱⁱ **Plagiarism (passing somebody else’s work for your own, e.g., failing to document even a single phrase that you copied from the Internet) is a serious academic offence. I never settle plagiarism cases amicably and informally; instead I always prosecute the plagiarizers. Talk to me *before you turn in your essay* if you are not sure how to document your sources.**