

Erasure & Desire

Section 001—TR 9:30-10:50—LANG 309

Instructor: Raina Joines

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Office Hours: TR 11:00-

12:00 & by appointment

Required TextsCarson, *Eros the Bittersweet*Sappho, *If Not, Winter*Offill, *Department of Speculation*Nelson, *Bluets*Dickinson, *The Gorgeous Nothings*Ruefle, *A Little White Shadow*Bervin, *Nets*Lewis, *The Voyage of the Sable Venus*Tartt, *The Secret History*Oswald, *Memorial*Course Overview

"Whatever idea here rises from its knees
to turn and face you quicker than a kiss
or a hyphen or the very first moment you felt the breeze
of being a creature who will die—one day, not this—
will ask of you most of your cunning, and a deep blue release like a sigh
while using only two pronouns, *I* and *not-I*."—Carson

"It was Sappho who first called eros 'bittersweet.' No one who has been in love disputes her."—Carson

"The Greek word *eros* denotes 'want,' 'lack,' 'desire for that which is missing.'"—Carson

"Here erasure [...] illustrates the problematic existence of presence and the absence of meaning."—Venasco

"And I was happy in those first days as really I'd never been before, roaming like a sleepwalker, stunned and drunk with beauty [...]. And the nights, bigger than imagining: black and gusty and enormous, disordered and wild with stars."—Tartt

This course will trace themes of erasure and desire in poetry, essays, and fiction. We will also explore how techniques of erasure enhance our appreciation for how the notes of one literary text echo in another, how authors use intertextuality and polyphony to evoke longing and absence, and how such absences whet our desire to read.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance is required. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and it is your responsibility to make sure your name is on the sign in sheet. If it is not, you will be counted absent. If you are a few minutes late, ask to sign the roll at the end of class. University policies concerning attendance may be found at <http://www.unt.edu/catalog/enrollment.htm>.

Unexcused Absences

- An absence is unexcused unless it is explicitly excused by the University or the instructor within the designated time period. Only absences for university events, holy days, or hospitalization are eligible.
- You are allowed three “free” unexcused absences in the course with no penalty. They are granted as leeway for emergencies.
- Three tardies counts as an unexcused absence. Those excessively tardy (more than ten minutes) to one class may be counted absent for the class.
- Those who habitually come in late or are sleeping in class will be counted absent.
- Upon your fourth unexcused absence, ten points will be deducted from your participation grade.
- Upon your fifth unexcused absence, your grade for the semester will be an F or WF.

Excused Absences and Make-up Work

- An absence to be excused by the University must follow the procedure outlined in the *Undergraduate Catalog*: “Absences due to participation in sponsored activities must be approved in advance by the department chair and academic dean. Within three days of the absence, students must obtain authorized absence cards from the Dean of Students for presentation to their instructors.” Failure to follow this procedure will result in an unexcused absence.
- State law requires that students notify their teachers at the beginning of the semester (in the first 15 days) if they expect to miss class on a religious holiday.
- An absence for an emergency doctor’s visit or hospitalization may be excused at my discretion if an original, verifiable doctor’s note (with contact information) is presented to me on the first day back after the absence and we hold a brief conference on the absence.
- To make up course days missed for extended excused absences, make-up work on the reading must be handed in with your documentation. Failure to hand in make-up work on time will result in a 5 point deduction from your participation grade. If extreme circumstances prevent you from handing in make-up work on time, you should contact me before the due date to discuss the situation.
- Do not schedule appointments during class time and then request that such appointments be excused. I will not excuse them.
- Excused absences do not change essay or exam dates. Make arrangements accordingly.

Course Schedules and Drops

- Students should monitor their course schedule every day for the first two weeks of class in order to make sure that they have not been dropped from their courses by the registrar’s office.
- Students who are dropped from classes for nonpayment of financial aid or other reasons may not be readmitted to this section; it is the student’s responsibility to make sure that all of their financial records are in order so that they are not dropped.

Plagiarism

- Plagiarism is defined as the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement.
- All assignments should be original work written only for this particular class.
- UNT defines the use of materials prepared by another person or agency as plagiarism.
- Looking at a phone during an exam, quiz, or in-class writing will be construed as cheating.
- Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment will result in a zero on the assignment, and may lead to an F in the course and/or disciplinary procedures established by the Administrative Office such as loss of scholarships or expulsion.

Classroom Etiquette

- Please organize your seating as requested.
- Those disrupting class will be asked to leave. Actions considered misconduct by the University may be found in the UNT Student Code of Conduct. These include disruptions of teaching or research, acts of incivility, violence, harassment, repeatedly talking out of turn or monopolizing class discussion, and unauthorized use of electronic devices.
- Use of electronic devices are forbidden in this class. Shut off all phones, beepers, music players, laptops, etc. Remove all ear buds for the duration of the class. If electronic devices repeatedly disturb the class, you will be asked to leave and counted absent. Those texting or taking calls during class will be asked to leave and counted absent.
- Working on outside material during class will result in an unexcused absence for the day.

Required Materials

Everyone is expected to secure the course texts by the second day of the course. I require print, not electronic texts. If there is difficulty obtaining these, e-mail me prior to the next class so that I can advise you on how to get the readings in time for class. It is your responsibility to bring the texts under discussion to class each day and to do the required reading. This includes handouts or material online. I reserve the right to count you absent for class meetings if you repeatedly fail to bring required readings or writing materials to class.

Assignment Requirements

- All work must be titled, stapled, double-spaced, and typed on 8 ½ x 11" paper with 1" margins on all sides. Use black ink, white paper, 12 point Times New Roman or a similar professional font, and a properly functioning printer. Number your pages, staple, and include your name on each page.
- In addition to your hard copy, all work will be turned in to Turnitin by class time on the due date.
- Late work will lose 20% per calendar day.
- Do not turn anything in by putting it under my office door.
- Keep copies of everything you turn in throughout the semester. Save your work as you go.

Assignments

Response Paper	20 points
Erasures	25
Essay	30
<u>Participation</u>	<u>25</u>
Total	100

Final Grades

A = 90-100
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 60-69
F = 00-59

Response Paper (20 points)

You will write a response paper on two or more course texts from the first four weeks of class. Detailed written instructions will be provided and discussed for this and all assignments in the course.

Erasures (25 points)

For this assignment, you will create new pieces from existing texts.

Essay (30 points)

Your essay will discuss several course texts and will be modeled on the example provided by Nelson's *Bluets*.

Participation (25 points)

Active participation of all class members is essential to the success of this course. Factors affecting your participation grade include your contributions to class discussions and in-class activities, your level of preparedness for class (attentiveness to reading, useful questions, materials in hand, etc.), your helpfulness as a peer editor, the quality of your group presentations, and your attendance. In order to earn a superior participation grade, your contributions to class should be regular, well-informed, on topic, and insightful. Contributions that lead the class off topic or do not address course texts will not be rewarded. If you never speak in class or never speak on subjects relevant to the course you will receive a failing participation grade. If participation wanes, I will give quizzes on the primary texts, assign written discussion questions for the class, or require that you turn in your comments on workshop packets. Your participation grade will be determined at the end of the semester, but you are free to schedule a conference at any time to find out where you stand.

Questions about Grades or Attendance

If you have questions about papers, grades, or absences, you should discuss those with me during office hours, making sure to bring any papers in question. I will not discuss paper grades until 24 hours have passed after the papers have been returned. On the other hand, I will immediately help with any difficulties reading my comments on your work. Problems concerning attendance, participation, or grades must be resolved by Tuesday of Week 14.

Additional Requirements & Information

Reading Schedule—The reading schedule is tentative and, if necessary, it may be changed to meet the goals of the course. Readings are due on the day they are listed. You should be finished with each day's reading by the time you come to class.

Course Content—The reading for this course includes depictions of faith, love, seduction, Dionysian rituals, sex, betrayal, incest, rape, violence, murder, war, dead bodies, and ghosts. A few texts use vulgar language. If you do not wish to read or discuss such content, you should drop this course.

E-mail—The course enrollment list may be used to communicate with you outside of class. It is your responsibility to make sure your UNT e-mail is up and running and to check your e-mail regularly for schedule changes, course announcements, or supplementary materials for the class. When you ask questions about the course or send relevant information over e-mail, courtesy and care are recommended. Include your name on all e-mail messages. Polite e-mails will usually be answered within 24 hours during the work week.

Course Webpage—You should regularly check the course Blackboard where important announcements, course documents, schedule changes, reading notes, or discussion questions may be posted. I do not post grades on Blackboard.

Writing Help—If you need additional help with grammar, punctuation, or any other element of composition, the UNT Student Writing Lab may be of assistance. You may wish to take typed drafts to the Lab as part of your writing process. The tutors at the Lab can answer specific questions about the effectiveness of your essays and may help you polish your writing. Of course, I am happy to schedule a conference to assist with questions on papers or to help with brainstorming, organizing, or finalizing your material.

ADA / ODA Accommodations—The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323. If you are requesting ODA accommodations for this course, you should present your written requests by the fourth class day.

Senate Bill 11 (“Campus Carry”)—Students must read UNT’s policy on concealed handguns on campus. (See <http://campuscarry.unt.edu/untpolicy>.) Note that 1) only licensed persons may legally carry handguns on campus, and 2) this right only authorizes the licensed carrying of “handgun[s], the presence of which is not openly noticeable to the ordinary observation of a reasonable person.” If a gun is “partially or wholly visible, even if holstered,” it’s not legal under “campus carry” law and may be reported.

“Active Shooter” Situations. All students should be aware of UNT’s guidelines for responding to “active shooter situations” (see <http://emergency.unt.edu/get-prepared/Active-Shooter>).

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Visiting Writers Series

Melissa Kwasny, March 8

Jeffrey Eugenides, March 31

Rilke Prize Winner (TBA) April 12-13

Q & A at 4:30 in Terrill Hall 120—Reading at 8:00 in Sage Hall 11

Reading & Q & A at 2:00 in University Union 333

TBA

Course Schedule

Week 1 Jan. 17-20

T Introduction & Syllabus
R Carson, 3-45; Sappho, ix-xii, 1-77

Week 2 Jan. 23-27

T Carson, 46-90; Sappho, 79-177
R Carson, 91-129; Sappho, 179-255

Week 3 Jan. 30-Feb. 3

T Carson, 130-173; Sappho, 257-355
R Davis & Egan

Week 4 Feb. 6-10

T Offill, 3-65
R Offill, 66-177

Week 5 Feb. 13-17

T Nelson, 1-51
R Nelson, 52-95

Week 6 Feb. 20-24

T **Response Paper Due;** Chiasson & Ruefle
R Dickinson, 6-79

Week 7 Feb. 27-Mar. 3

T Dickinson, 80-161
R Dickinson, 162-219

Week 8 Mar. 6-10

T Venasco & Szybist
R Berry, Houghton, Powell, & TBA

Week 9 Mar. 13-16

Spring Break

Week 10 Mar. 20-24

T Ruefle & TBA
R Bervin, poems 2-55

Week 11 Mar. 27-31

T Bervin, poems 60-150
R Lewis, 1-39

Week 12 Apr. 3-7

T **Erasures Due;** Lewis, 40-93
R Lewis, 94-136

Week 13 Apr. 10--14

T Tartt, 1-103
R Tartt, 104-171

Week 14 Apr. 17-21

T Tartt, 172-269
R Tartt, 270-376

Week 15 Apr. 24-28

T Tartt, 377-467
R Tartt, 467-559

Week 16 May 1-4

T Oswald, ix-52
R **Essay Due;** Oswald, 52-90

Scheduled Exam Time

Thursday, May 11 at 8:00-10:00