Course Title: The Novel: An MLA-Style Course
Course Code: LIT 222
Instructor: Jeremy Sabol

Please note:
This course aims to introduce those who are strongly interested in pursuing a degree in the Master of Liberal Arts Program (MLA Program) to the kind of seminar they would likely encounter in the program. Students will face the same kind of intellectual challenges, the same kind of opportunities to engage in weekly discussion, and the same kind of stimulus to write persuasive research essays. Students are required to take this course for Credit, submit written work, and contribute to class discussions, as happens in all MLA seminars. However, this course may not be taken for a Letter Grade, though students’ written work will receive extensive feedback from the instructor.

The course is open to students who have not previously enrolled in an MLA-style course through Stanford Continuing Studies. (Previous MLA-style courses include PHI 200, LIT 200, LIT 223, LIT 225, LIT 226, CLS 83, and HIS 250).

For more information on the MLA Program, please visit:
Website: mla.stanford.edu
For interested students: The next MLA information sessions are on August 18 and/or October 6. If you’d like to attend, please RSVP here: mla.stanford.edu/information-session-rsvp

Course Summary & a Note from the Instructor:
LIT 222 is a course that focuses on the literary genre of the novel. We will attempt to make sense of the genre, and to determine if the genre has any coherence, by various definitional strategies; we will compare our tentative definitions with the novels that we read over the course of the quarter. We will also examine how the novel has developed over time as a historical process. The novels chosen span much of the period of the development of the modern novel, in several cultural, literary, and linguistic traditions; each novel chosen has either had significant cultural
impact on the evolution of the genre, or offers particular challenges to efforts at defining the novel. Finally, we will read short excerpts from influential theories and critiques of the novel to help us in our attempts to figure out what a novel is, and – perhaps – what a novel is not. Goals include: to gain exposure to a number of different kinds of novels from different linguistic and cultural traditions; to gain familiarity with critical discourse about literary genres; acquire critical thinking skills necessary for the production and revision of theoretical frameworks for evaluating literary texts.

Grade Options and Requirements:
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - A passing grade (for "Credit") = at least 70% of expectations accomplished

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week 1: September 27 – Cervantes, Don Quixote

Week 2: October 4 – Defoe, Robinson Crusoe

Week 3: October 11 – Diderot, Jacques the Fatalist

Week 4: October 18 – Brontë, Jane Eyre

Week 5: October 25 – Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground

Week 6: November 1 – Beckett, Molloy

Week 7: November 8 – Lispector, The Passion According to G.H.

Week 8: November 15 – Egan, A Visit from the Goon Squad

** THANKSGIVING BREAK: November 21-25**

Week 9: November 29 – Morrison, Song of Solomon

Week 10: December 6 – Knausgaard, My Struggle
Note on the Reading:

You will notice that many of the novels we will be reading are quite long, and that the course proceeds at an alarming rate: a novel each week, plus some short (but often difficult) critical texts. This course will demand a significant commitment of both time and effort simply to complete the weekly readings, without considering the extra effort of the final paper.

This said, for many weeks, we will not be reading the chosen novel in its entirety. Instead, we will be reading significant and representative sections of each, enough to gain a sense of what kind of novel it is and what are its structural, thematic, and stylistic features. This may be a relief: we will not be reading all of Don Quixote. This may also be a disappointment: we will not be reading all of Don Quixote.

The zealous among you are welcome (and encouraged!) to read every book in its entirety.