

First Year Seminar 116
Fall Term 2011
Tu Th 11:30-12:50
Webster 220

Andrew Parker
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Hours: W 2-4 & by appt.

BIG BOOKS

This seminar explores the particular pleasures and interpretive problems of reading and writing about three very long works of fiction—novels so large that any sure grasp of the relation between single part and mammoth whole may threaten to elude author and reader alike. How do we gauge, and thereby engage with, narratives of disproportionate scale and encyclopedic ambition? How do we lose, or find, our place in colossal fictional worlds?

As befits its interest in the losing and finding of place, the course introduces first-year students to college-level literary study. Short papers on different aspects of the novels will be assigned most weeks. Discussion in class will focus primarily on the novels themselves, though we will also consider (using our own and others' essays as examples) ways of writing about what we experience as readers.

Please be advised that the novels may include violent and/or sexually explicit material.

Course requirements include active participation in class and the timely completion of all assigned readings and written work. A few assignments will ask you to acquaint yourselves with the library's many resources, both physical and digital. Students will pair up to lead class discussion throughout the semester. Paper grades will not be assigned until midterm. Late papers will not be accepted.

Required Texts:

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, intro. Andrew Delbanco (Penguin rev. ed. 1992)
Christina Stead, *The Man Who Loved Children* (Picador)
Samuel R. Delany, *Dhalgren* (Vintage)

All texts are available at the Amherst Bookstore, 8 Main Street, Amherst (256-1547). Please buy the Penguin edition of *Moby-Dick* (ISBN 978-0-14-243724-7), whether you purchase it new or used.

Syllabus

09/06 Introduction: Size Matters—Aristotle and Félix Fénéon
09/08 *Moby-Dick*, "Etymology," "Extracts" and Chpts 1-17

- 09/13 *Moby-Dick*, Chpts 18-34
- 09/15 *Moby-Dick*, Chpts 35-51; see <http://www.powermobydick.com/>
- 09/20 *Moby-Dick*, Chpts 52-68 (class meets today in Special Collections, Frost Library)
- 09/22 *Moby-Dick*, Chpts 69-85
- 09/27 *Moby-Dick*, Chpts 86-102
- 09/29 *Moby-Dick*, Chpts 103-119
- 10/04 *Moby-Dick*, Chpts 120-135 and “Epilogue”
- 10/06 No reading assigned; class meets in Meade Art Museum to view Frank Stella’s *Moby-Dick* sculpture, *Of Whales in Paint, in Teeth, &c*:
http://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?t=objects&type=ext&f=&s=&record=1&id_number=ac&maker=stella
- 10/11 **Fall break**
- 10/13 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpt 1 (pp. 3-37)
- 10/18 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpts 2 & 3 (pp. 38-95)
- 10/20 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpts 4 & 5 (pp. 96-198)
- 10/25 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpt 6 (pp. 199-249)
- 10/27 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpt 7 (pp. 250-313)

11/01 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpt 8 (pp. 314-365)

11/03 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpt 9 (pp. 366-452)

11/08 *The Man Who Loved Children*, Chpt 10 (pp. 453-527)

11/10 *Dhalgren* pp. 1-107

11/15 *Dhalgren* pp. 109-241

11/17 *Dhalgren* pp. 241-344

11/22 **Thanksgiving**

11/24 **Thanksgiving**

11/29 *Dhalgren* pp. 344-448

12/01 *Dhalgren* pp. 448-526

12/06 *Dhalgren* pp. 526-649

12/08 *Dhalgren* pp. 651-721

12/13 *Dhalgren* pp. 721-801