English 117B Spring 2016 **Mini-Final Exam: Connecting Ideas**

The main goal of this assignment is to see how well we have met the first learning goal for this class as defined by the General Education committee:

“Students shall be able to **compare systematically** the **ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments,** or **attitudes** of **people from more than one culture** outside the U.S. through the media of film and literature.”

The questions will each focus on one idea that involves cultural values and attitudes, and your task is to discuss how people from more than one culture outside the US (or people from other cultures who now live in the US) feel about it. You will discuss this using at least two works of film and/or literature that we used in class. Below are questions to study from. I will probably offer two of these for you to choose from Friday, but you are NOT to prepare answers ahead of time. That would be cheating.

**Questions I will choose among:**

**Identity** (on the individual and/or community level):Several works we discussed this semester deal with identity issues, how individuals define their own identity, how their community defines them, and how groups define “others” coming from outside. Obviously this is a central concern in stories about expatriates and immigrants, whether they come to a new country in a group or as an individual.

Works of this kind usually explore these questions, among others: How does the majority community define whom it will let in and whom it will exclude? How does the individual immigrant determine which features of their original culture (attitudes, language, religious practices and beliefs, clothing, foods, etc.) to keep and which to let go of? How does the immigrant’s feelings about their original culture change once they’ve left it? What virtues or flaws of the new culture are revealed by its encounter with the “outsider(s)”?

If you choose this question, discuss two different stories, including both readings and films that explore this theme in a significant way. You can take one (but not too many!) of the questions outlined above as your thesis question, with your answer to it being your thesis. Suggestions of works to use: *Swades, The Beautiful Country,* Andrew Lam’s essays, *Sweet Land/ “Gravestones Made of Wheat”* (these are to be considered one story, not two)*, Desert Flower, The Motorcycle Diaries.*

**Inequality:** Many of the works we have discussed have examined how different societies divide their members into hierarchies based on economic status, lineage, gender, race, religion, or some other qualifier. Works of this kind usually explore these questions, among others: Who gets to hold the power and control the resources in a society, and why? How can unjust hierarchies be challenged and changed? Are there any advantages to these hierarchies that should be retained, even in a time of reform?

If you choose this question, discuss two different stories, including both readings and films that explore this theme in a significant way. You can take one (but not too many!) of the questions outlined above as your thesis question, with your answer to it being your thesis. Suggestions of works to use: *Swades, Ridicule, Man and Superman, Motorcycle Diaries*

**Love and/or Marriage**: Many of the works we’ve discussed explored the idea of love, especially what we tend to call “romantic” love—the kind that leads to lyric poetry and soulful gazes. We have also seen many couples in these stories contemplating marriage, whether for love, for pragmatic reasons, or both. Few things reveal the values of an individual or a society more starkly than this emotion and this institution. Discuss at least two works that have differing views on this and discuss what the stories show about both the societies involved and about the human experience more generally. Please try to go beyond the obvious here! Avoid clichés!

Works of this kind usually explore these questions, among others: Is “true love” (whatever that means in a given society) the best basis for a marriage, or are there better ways to pair up marriage partners? How should society regulate family life? How can an individual manage his or her emotions when love beckons, and how can professional aspirations be balanced with one’s emotional life?

If you choose this question, discuss two different stories, including both readings and films that explore this theme in a significant way. You can take one (but not too many!) of the questions outlined above as your thesis question, with your answer to it being your thesis. Suggestions of works to use: *Swades, Ridicule, Man and Superman, Sweet Land/ “Gravestones Made of Wheat”* (these are to be considered one story, not two)*, The Beautiful Country, Desert Flower, Testament of Youth*

**Technology**: Some of the stories we discussed explored attitudes about technology and showed how new technologies can have significant impacts—for both good and ill--on the individuals and societies that embrace them. Works of this kind usually explore these questions, among others: What are the benefits of technology, and its drawbacks? How does technology affect who controls power in any given society? How does technology affect traditions and customs in a society? What does a particular individual’s or society’s embrace or rejection of a particular technology say about their values?

If you choose this question, discuss two different stories, including both readings and films that explore this theme in a significant way. You can take one (but not too many!) of the questions outlined above as your thesis question, with your answer to it being your thesis. Suggestions of works to use: *Swades, Ridicule, Man and Superman, Sweet Land/ “Gravestones Made of Wheat”* (these are to be considered one story, not two)*, Desert Flower,* Poetry of WWI (selections we read with *Testament of Youth).*

**History, Memoir, Fiction and Iconography**: Several of the works we read were either memoirs or fiction based on a memoir, and a few of them featured people who became “icons” of one sort or another. Discuss what at least two of these works have to say about an important idea that reflects the values, attitudes, or beliefs of their societies. Some ideas to consider: war and peace, justice, gender, love, the call to public service, the challenge of writing memoir or history accurately and objectively.

If you choose this question, discuss two different stories, including both readings and films that explore this theme in a significant way. Your thesis should be an arguable claim about what the works show about their writers” times, the values and attitudes. Suggestions of works to use: *Desert Flower, Testament of Youth* and/or Poetry of WWI, *The Motorcycle Diaries*

**Grading criteria**:

Because this is an English class, your work will be judged partially on how well you express your ideas (grammar and such). For the official assessment, though, your work will be judged based primarily on content using the system below.

**4** Offers the reader a **well-developed and thoughtful understanding** of a particular **idea, attitude, or technology** as it exists (or once existed) in **at least two cultures** outside the US (or a culture originating outside the US but living here), basing the analysis on **evidence from at least two works** (film or literature) discussed in class.

**3** Offers the reader a **good understanding** of a particular **idea, attitude, or technology** as it exists (or once existed) in **at least two cultures** outside the US (or a culture originating outside the US but living here) ), basing the analysis on **evidence from at least two works** (film or literature) discussed in class.

**2**  Offers the reader an **adequate** **understanding** of a particular **idea, attitude, or technology** as it exists (or once existed) in **at least two cultures** outside the US (or a culture originating outside the US but living here), basing the analysis on **evidence from at least two works** (film or literature) discussed in class.

**1** **Misunderstands or misrepresents some aspects of the topic** examined and/or makes so **little reference to two works we discussed in class** that it is difficult for reader to tie the theme and the works together.

**0** Does not clearly define an issue, problem or concern, nor refer accurately to the text.