

## ENGL 285—Reading *Lolita* in Lexington

Professor Brodie  
Winter 2020

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Office Hours: Payne 203, MWF 11:00-12:15

**Overview:** This course will use Azar Nafisi's memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, as a lens for studying three novels, *The Great Gatsby*, *Lolita* and *Pride and Prejudice*. We will see how students in the Islamic Republic of Iran have responded to these novels, and how the works' major themes have been played out in Nafisi's life, and the lives of young Iranian women. Excerpts from Geraldine Brooks' *Nine Parts of Desire* will help to illuminate the lives of Muslim women, and a field trip to the National Islamic Center in Washington, DC will complement our study of Islam and the history of Iran. Students will also conduct a journalistic survey of attitudes toward Islam and Iran in the Washington and Lee community.

**Requirements:** A five-minute class presentation on an assigned topic on some part of the history of Iran, with one-page outline submitted to classmates (15%); one group poster presentation on perceptions of Islam and Iran at Washington and Lee (15%); one eight-page paper on *Reading Lolita in Tehran* in conjunction with *Pride and Prejudice* or *Lolita* (35%); and a take-home final exam (35%). The exam will be hand written; no laptops or books permitted. Class participation can raise or lower a final grade.

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed one absence which should be reserved for a day when you are sick or have a conflict with a team or other activity. All additional absences reduce the final grade by one notch, (i.e. B to B-). Speak to me about extended cases of family or medical emergencies. Arriving late for class (after discussion has started) counts as half an absence.

Papers must be typed and double-spaced, with an approximate minimum of 300 words per page. Papers are due in class. Late papers will be penalized by one-third of a grade (B to B-) with each additional class period that goes by. Turn off all cell phones and close all laptops/Ipads, etc. before class. Each three hour class will have a break in the middle; no one should leave the room at any other time.

### **Texts:**

Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Nabokov, *Lolita*

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire*

You may use library copies of these books, any edition.

## Calendar

- 4/27 Introduction—*Islam, Empire of Faith*
- 4/29 Student presentations of short papers on the history of Iran and Islam
- 5/1 *Nine Parts of Desire*, pages 1-55, 77-91, 201-213; *Persepolis* (film clips); group planning for interviews
- 5/4 *The Great Gatsby* (read the entire book), film clips
- 5/6 *The Great Gatsby*, cont'd and *Reading Lolita in Tehran/Gatsby*
- 5/8 *Lolita*, Part one, film clips, group poster work
- 5/11 *Lolita* Part two, and Nabokov's closing words (209-317)
- 5/13 **All-day field trip to Washington, DC**
- 5/15 *Reading Lolita in Tehran—Lolita*, **poster draft presentations**
- 5/18 Presentations contd., *Pride and Prejudice*, volume 1 (chapters 1-23)
- 5/20 *Pride and Prejudice*, volumes 2 and 3, film clips
- 5/22 **Spring Term Festival 12-2:00**, *Reading Lolita in Tehran--Pride and Prejudice*, **Final Paper Due**