

**ENGL 5993 MX 1: Moral Complexity in Recent British Literature** – an 8 Week course offered during the May-mini through Summer I terms (May 13 - July 5, 2024)

Everyone needs Mara E. Reisman's book *Moral Complexities in Turn of the Millennium British Literature*. ISBN 978-1-7936-4846-4

She has FIVE essays, each one devoted to a recent title in British Literature. You need to choose **THREE** of those books and read them for yourself. Here are your choices:

- Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*:
- Andrea Levy, *Small Island*.
- Jeanette Winterson, *The Daylight Gate*.
- Graham Swift, *The Light of Day*.
- Patrick McGrath, *Asylum*.

Andrea Levy's *Small Island* is longer than the other titles. It counts as TWO titles. If you opt for Levy, then you only need one other title.

Graham Swift's *The Light of Day* is a first-person story told by a proverbial "hard-boiled" detective about one of his clients who murders her cheating husband. Interestingly, this novel has a subtext of cooking. It would make a great companion to Levy's *Small Island*, which is about Jamaicans migrating to the mother island of Great Britain. Everyone in Levy's book relates to each other through food. It's priceless.

The shortest title—it's like a very adult children's book—is Jeanette Winterson's *The Daylight Gate*. It's about witchcraft. Dusk is the gate to other worlds.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* is also a well-known Merchant-Ivory movie starring Anthony Hopkins, who was born to play the role of the story's main character and first-person narrator, the head butler for a deeply-felt British lord who takes up the plight of Germany in the wake of the disastrous treaty that concluded WWI. The moral complexity is that the butler's well-meaning, naive lord becomes a Nazi pawn. I had to work hard NOT to finish reading the book in one sitting.

Patrick McGrath's *Asylum* is a page-turner about a woman falling in love with a mental patient who murdered his wife and cut off her head to better sculpt it. The point of view is that of the psychiatrist who is head director of the asylum. The woman is married to the asylum's deputy director.

Our sources and assignments:

For our course, you won't scour the internet for supporting sources. I will provide them as PDF's or links in D2L. These are sources referenced by Mara Reisman.

You will respond to three prompts. The second response is a modest literature review.

1. How does the narrator or main characters in a given title feel about the moral complexity at the heart of the story?
2. How does Mara Reisman assess the moral complexity in each title?
3. How do you personally feel about the moral complexity at stake in each title?

If you have questions about the course, please contact Dr. Peter Fields: [peter.fields@msutexas.edu](mailto:peter.fields@msutexas.edu)