

CORE 200: LIBERAL ARTS READING SALON

Dr. Trisha Tucker

Lecture T 4-5:50 pm 63577R

Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know: Reading Banned Books

*Censorship is the enemy of truth, even more than a lie.
A lie can be exposed; censorship can prevent us from knowing the difference.*
—Bill Moyers

What do *Harry Potter*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Captain Underpants*, and *Slaughterhouse-Five* all have in common? Believe it or not, they're each among the most-banned books of the twenty-first century. In fact, many of the books you cherished as a child or loved in AP Lit have been banned from classrooms and libraries across the country. Some people call such efforts censorship, but others feel it's imperative to protect young minds from works they call "profane," "vulgar," "indecent," and "pornographic."

What makes these books so dangerous, we might ask? How can a work like *To Kill a Mockingbird* be labeled both "a novel of great sweetness, humor, [and] compassion" (Harper's) and "a filthy, trashy novel" (NY School District)? And haven't parents and school boards ever considered that branding something "forbidden" is likely to make it twice as tantalizing to young readers?

This Reading Salon will explore these darkest and most dangerous of works. After surveying a selection of novels that have been banned on political, religious, and moral grounds in the first half of the semester, the class will collectively create a reading list for the second half of the course. Together we will revel in reading books that have been branded too obscene for the masses, asking what such labels can teach us about the texts themselves and the societies that have banned them.

CORE 200 lasts for twelve weeks (instead of the usual fifteen) and meets once each week for two hours in a seminar setting. The Salon encourages the sharing of ideas and thoughts, highlights common themes and interdisciplinary connections as they emerge from discussion. Discussions that grow out of reading groups can become the starting point for future research. The two-unit Salon is an integral part of the Thematic Approaches to Humanities and Society minor. A special feature of the Reading Salon is that some of the books to be read by the participants will be selected by the students. The course is graded Credit/No Credit.

Proposed Readings

Sherman Alexie. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.

George Orwell. *1984*.

Ann Patchett. *Truth & Beauty: A Friendship*.

Marjane Satrapi. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*.

Proposed Films

This Film Is Not Yet Rated. Dir. Kirby Dick.