

Contemporary Literature
English 4/6933, Fall 2017
Section 1, 10:00-10:50 MWF

Prof. Robert West
email: Robert.West@msstate.edu

BOOKS:

Atwood, Margaret. *Moral Disorder and Other Stories*. (ISBN-13: 978-0385721646)
Heaney, Seamus. *Selected Poems 1988-2013*. (ISBN-13: 978-0374535612)
Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*. (ISBN-13: 978-1400078776)
Merwin, W. S. *The Essential W. S. Merwin*. (ISBN-13: 978-1556595134)
Morrison, Toni. *A Mercy*. (ISBN-13: 978-0307276766)
Trethewey, Natasha. *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*.
(ISBN-13: 978-0-8203-4902-2)

We'll also read Beth Henley's 2013 play *The Jacksonian*, which is available to us through the MSU Libraries' electronic databases at no extra charge.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We'll examine work by several English-language authors active in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, focusing on these issues:

- Questions of value(s). Why is a given work worth reading? What behaviors and ways of thinking and feeling does it seem to espouse?
- Theory vs. practice. What aesthetic does an author articulate in essays, interviews, and elsewhere—and how does that relate to his or her artistic practice?
- Tradition vs. innovation. How does a contemporary literary work participate in the history of its form or genre?
- Questions of canonicity. How does a contemporary work (or a contemporary author) become widely regarded as “major”?

WRITTEN WORK:

There will be two exams, two papers, and a reading journal.

If you have any questions about the course, feel free to write me at Robert.West@msstate.edu.