**English 581, Representing the Poor**

**Spring 2021**

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Course Goals: The aim of the course is to try and understand when the poor arose as something worth representing in literature and the arts, and how that representation changed over time. When did the poor become a problem in need of a solution? A disease in need of cure? We will consider the problematics of how a group is represented without having been able to fully represent itself in the dominant culture. And of course the question of identity—can a group have a self-representation that is something other than an existence determined by external “experts.” Obviously intersections of race, gender, and disability will be important to trace and explain.

Requirements: Students will read all the assignments on time and submit a 15-20 page paper at the end of the course. Please hand in hard copy and deposit the paper in Safe Assign on Blackboard as well. In addition, a 15-minute in-class presentation on a supplementary text found in the Supplementary Reading list is required as well. Class participation is a must.

Grading:

40 per cent for discussion and in-class presentation. 60 per cent for the essay.

Absences:

No more than two absences without a medical excuse.

Late Papers: Please see me if you think you won’t get your paper in on time. Unexcused late papers will lose a half-grade point per day late.

Required Text: Additional texts will be provided on line at the course site on Blackboard as needed. [http:/blackboard.uic.edu](https://blackboard.uic.edu/webapps/login). The reading list and supplementary readings are permanently posted on Blackboard.

Academic Integrity: see <http://www.uic.edu/depts/dos/studentconduct.html>

Disability: Concerning disabled students, the University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that individuals with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for full access and participation in UIC Programs must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Please contact DRC at (312) 413-2183 (voice) or (312) 413- 0123 (TDD).

Required Texts:

Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Oxford)

Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (Broadview Press)

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Broadview Press)

Emile Zola, *Germinal* (Oxford)

George Gissing, *Demos* (Victorian Secrets)

Jack London, *People of the Abyss* in *Novels and Social Writing* (Library of America)

Mike Gold, *Jews Without Money* (Public Affairs)

Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep* (Farrar, Strauss)

Agnes Smedley, *Daughter of Earth* (Dover)

*Madeleine* (on line at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/madeleine/madeleine/madeleine.html>

John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath* (Penguin)

Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (Harper Perennial).

James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Houghton Mifflin)

The texts are available at the University Bookstore.

Classes

January 12 Introduction

January 19 Engels

January 26 Gaskell

February 2 Dickens

February 9 Zola

February 16 Gissing

February 23 London

March 2 Roth

March 9 Gold

March 18 Smedley

March 23 SPRING BREAK

March 30 Madeleine

April 6 Steinbeck

April 13 Wright

April 20 Agee

April 27 LAST CLASS—PAPERS DUE