

KEEPING GOING

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Given the unprecedented stresses brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us may want to echo the closing of Samuel Beckett's novel *The Unnamable*: "I can't go on, I'll go on." This summer session we'll read poems, short stories, two novels, and a memoir that depict life under different kinds of extended hardship—including clinical depression, the 1918 flu pandemic, Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, smallpox and slavery in colonial America, and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.

Among the issues we'll consider are these:

- 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 and interviews—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 will consist of short reading responses (some can be video responses), participation in online discussion, two exams, and one formal paper.

BOOKS

Either print or electronic editions are fine.

Moral Disorder and Other Stories, by Margaret Atwood (ISBN-13: 978-0385721646)

Selected Poems 1988-2013, by Seamus Heaney (ISBN-13: 978-0374535612)

Never Let Me Go, a novel by Kazuo Ishiguro (ISBN-13: 978-1400078776)

A Mercy, a novel by Toni Morrison (ISBN-13: 978-0307276766)

Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, a memoir by Natasha Trethewey (Tenth-anniversary edition, ISBN-13: 978-08203-4902-2)

Kyrie: Poems, by Ellen Bryant Voigt (ISBN-13: 978-0393315615)

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at the address above.