

## **IDH 2930: (Un)Common Read**

**Professor Jeanne Ewert**

**Spring 2024, Section 29631 (*The God of Small Things*)**

**Time: Tu, per. 3 (9:35–10:45)**

**Location: Little Hall 119**

office hours: Tu, 10:50–12:00 Library West 501; any time by appointment on Zoom

cell phone for emergency contact or illness: 352-213-8472

email: [jewert@ufl.edu](mailto:jewert@ufl.edu)

e-Learning (Canvas) site for IDH 2930 (*registered students only*): <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

### **Course Description**



Arundhati Roy's 1997 novel *The God of Small Things* was published to much critical acclaim and much controversy. It earned Roy a half million pound advance, the highest ever earned by a South Asian writer, and won the Booker Prize. Her critics said it was much ado about nothing, and she was prosecuted in India for obscenity. I have been teaching *The God of Small Things* since it was published, and I will argue that, politics aside, it is one of the most carefully constructed novels of the 20th century and richly rewards the reader willing to examine it closely. We will do that, together, over the course of the semester, and along the way consider why it so incensed its critics and whether there is merit to their objections. Short objective reading quizzes, a 5-7 page final paper.

This is a one credit enrichment class and so graded assignments are not onerous. There will be three in-class reading quizzes whose entire purpose is to prompt you to keep up with the reading. And there will be a short (5 page) final paper on a set topic (you may choose among several) that will allow you to reflect on the broader themes of the novel. If class discussion is robust and could profit by continuing outside of class I will use the Discussion options on Canvas. Please feel free to do so yourself if you think some aspect of the week's work should be carried forward.

### **Required Text to Purchase**

*The God of Small Things* is widely available at the UF Bookstore and from online vendors. I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy online, I recommend sources such as [Abebooks.com](http://Abebooks.com) and [Alibris.com](http://Alibris.com) that serve independent booksellers. A used copy is fine, and also more sustainable. You would be best served using the Random House trade paperback edition, ISBN below. That way our pagination will match, for purposes of close reading of key passages.

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Random House, 1997. ISBN 0-679-45731-3.

### **Course Calendar**

Tu, Jan 9	<i>Course introduction</i>
Tu, Jan 16	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 1-33
Tu, Jan 23	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 35-62
Tu, Jan 30	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 62-89
Tu, Feb 6	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 90-117
Tu, Feb 13	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 118-147
Tu, Feb 20	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 148-177
Tu, Feb 27	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 178-204
Tu, Mar 5	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 205-225
Tu, Mar 19	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 226-253

Tu, Mar 26	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 254-272
Tu, April 2	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 273-296
Tu, April 9	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , pp. 297-321
Tu, April 16	Synthesis
Tu, April 23	Synthesis

Final Paper due April 26, later with permission. My aim with the due date is to give you flexibility for your final exams. Talk to me about what works for you.

### Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by four assignments, each representing a portion of the grade:

Short quizzes on assigned reading ( × 3 @ 10%)	30%
Final paper	70%

**Grading scheme and graded assignments.** The evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF's policies on grading (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73	C–	67–69
D+	64–66	D	60–63	D–	57–59

A grade of 56 or below is a failing grade (E).

UF students may make up a missed assignment only if they have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family.

You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in the submission of graded work. Please, I beg of you, do not just disappear from my classroom, leaving me to wonder what has become of you. In addition to my email I have provided my cell phone number above; you may always text or call. Because I am the parent of a teenager I would be grateful if you did not call after 10 PM. Late calls put fear into our hearts.

**Attendance & lateness.** This book is complex and challenging, more so than appears on the surface. Class discussions will often include ideas and information not in the assigned reading. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. **I take attendance.** It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. As noted above, in the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

**Disabilities.** If you have special classroom needs because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) and provide me with appropriate documentation. If you need accommodations due to neurodiversity issues, please notify me as soon as possible so that I can suggest alternative learning situations. If you will be listening to a recording of the novel because of a learning disability, I strongly advise you to also purchase a print copy so that you may annotate in class as we engage in close reading of key passages.

**Religious Observances.** If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances you must notify me of this conflict in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

**Course evaluation.** All students are expected to provide professional and helpful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>. Lest you think no one reads these, I am required to submit them in my packet for tenure and promotion.

**Policy on academic honesty.** The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty,

are spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals, or entities such as ChatGPT.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. If you are found to have engaged in misconduct penalties may include a reduced or failing grade for the course or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

**Emergency services. U Matter, We Care** serves as the umbrella program for UF's caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor overnight and during weekends.

Note also these support services:

- The University Counseling Center – 301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575;  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>
- Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1171
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union – 352-392-1601
- Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1161
- University Police Department – 352-392-1111 (non-emergency); *call 9-1-1 for emergencies*

**Recordings of class meetings.** *In response to legislation recently signed by the Florida Governor (HB233), University policy requires me to add the following statement to my syllabus:*

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are

(1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

See this page for the University’s guidelines on recording class lectures:  
<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/code-change-faq/> .

***Policy on environmentally sustainable activity for this class.*** I encourage you to purchase used copies of the novel, and to return those to circulation if you choose not to keep them at the end of the course. (Donating your unwanted books to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale is a good way to get them into other readers’ hands and to help raise a bit of cash for our county’s excellent but underfunded public libraries.) This is not a class on the environmentally harmful habit of plastic bottle consumption, but I will think better of you if the one you bring to class is refillable.