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ENG 1002G-004: Composition and Literature

Robert Martinez
Eastern Illinois University

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**English 1002G (section 004): Composition and Literature:
Understanding Human Experience through Literature**

Instructor: Dr. Robert Martínez

Office: Coleman 3371

Office Hours Fall 2015: Mondays, 11-12 PM; Thursdays 12-2 PM; Fridays 2-3 PM; and by appt.

E-mail: rlmartinez@eiu.edu

Course Time & Location: MWF 10-10.50 AM, Coleman 3170, Fall 2015

Course Description

This course is “a writing course designed to improve skills in critical thinking and analytical expression based on the reading of literary texts (3-0-3, Graded A, B, C, N/C).” We will read a variety of short stories (fiction) and look at some plays, poetry, and film in order to ask ourselves some important questions: Why do we read literature, and how does it affect us? Can reading stories, poetry, and plays change our ideas of what it means to live? What about how we behave and what we think is good or bad? These questions deal with the ethics of literature, a topic that has concerned thinkers and writers since Plato’s time. Modern writers continue to make claims about the ethics of fiction:

- “Surely one of the novel’s habitual aims is to articulate morality, to sharpen the reader’s sense of vice and virtue.” – John Updike, 20th-century American writer
- “You write in order to change the world...and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way a person looks at reality, then you can change it.” – James Baldwin, 20th-century American writer
- “...a writer [is] as an architect of the soul.” – Doris Lessing, 20th-century British writer
- “Naturally you’re aware that bad art can finally cripple a man.” – Saul Bellow, 20th-century American writer

We will work on our thinking and writing skills by examining the ethical questions posed to us by the literary works we read. This course will teach you how to develop your ability to analyze carefully what you read (and watch, in the case of film), to construct written and oral interpretive arguments, and most importantly to develop the ability to express yourself with clarity and some sense of personal style. This process will also involve learning how to conduct research, to edit and rethink what you write, and to trouble shoot your writing and that of your peers.

This course is writing centered and requires not only a series of different writing assignments but also numerous class-oriented and group-oriented editing workshops and numerous opportunities for assignment revision. To facilitate the writing process, students will engage in frequent discussion of reading and visual assignments and collaborate on pre-writing strategies like brainstorming and scaffolding of essays. This course actively aims to prepare students to meet EIU’s university learning goals of critical thinking, writing and critical reading, speaking and listening, quantitative reasoning, and responsible citizenship.

Why English and Literature Matter to You

The key skills you will learn in this course—critical reading, critical thinking, and analytical and clear writing—are of paramount importance to your future success. Contrary to what you may think, English courses offer some of the most practical and necessary qualities that today’s employers are looking for. No matter what career you choose in the future, being able to demonstrate that you can think on your feet and smartly, and convey this intelligence in clear writing, will make you stand out among the competition. Studying literature not only sharpens

your reading and writing skills, but it enhances your cultural knowledge of the world—a skill of crucial importance in our workforce that is becoming ever more globalized.

Course Learning Goals

- Write expository and persuasive papers throughout the semester (a minimum of 5,000 words) in which paragraphs, sentences, and words develop a central idea (writing, speaking, critical thinking)
- Read poetry, fiction, and drama expressing a wide range of cultural perspectives and values and develop abilities to think critically and write analytically about them (writing, speaking, critical thinking)
- Engage in reading and writing experiences about literature in order to demonstrate an increased understanding of and appreciation for social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic ideas and their discovery (writing, critical thinking, citizenship)
- Develop research skills, including effective use of source materials and principles of documentation (writing, critical thinking)
- Develop skills in revising their own writing by participating in peer review workshops and by revising one of their essays for possible inclusion into their electronic writing portfolio (writing, critical thinking).

Classroom Expectations

The guiding principle of this course is **group work and class discussion**. You will be spending some time working in groups with your classmates to revise each other's work and to get down into the mechanics of solid writing—the organization of ideas, the structure of sentences, the methods of argumentation, and much more. By exchanging peer criticism with each other, you will learn the importance of revision in the writing process and, through your evaluation of others' writing, you will learn how to look at your own writing with a more critical eye. You will ideally discover more about yourself as a writer, and you will learn to become a confident participant in the professional community you choose to enter later in your university career.

In order One of the key life/job skills you will learn in this course is **critical reading**. Critical reading means reading so that you learn how to move beyond a mere *surface* understanding of language in order to think about and evaluate the *nuances and details* of language and meaning. To learn how to read critically, you will develop and practice the following method:

- In order to develop your critical reading skills you will need to READ SLOWLY.
- You may need to use bookmarks or Post-it® tabs to mark passages in your reading you find interesting or perplexing.
- You should develop a habit of JOTTING DOWN NOTES ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS on each reading or visual assignment. Even if a passage in a given reading assignment or moment of a film perplexes you, don't get frustrated—create a question that will help you understand it and bring that question to class to share for discussion.

These skills are crucial to your success not only at EIU but also in the professional world that awaits you.

Required Texts & Materials:

- *The Story and Its Writer* (8th ed., Charters)
- *Bedford Introduction to Drama* (6th ed., Jacobus)
- *Poetry* (6th Ed., ed. Meyer)
- *Brief Penguin Handbook* (5th ed., Faigley)

- Other stories/poems/readings posted in D2L
- Pen/pencil, pocket folder, notebook
- Laptop or iPad/Kindle/Nook

Note: You are required to do all assigned reading for this course. The four texts listed above are available from Textbook Rental (TRS). Other required readings will be available online via our course page on D2L. **Online readings must be brought to class on the day the material is to be discussed.** You must either print out the assigned reading and bring it to class, or you must use your laptop, iPad, Kindle, or Nook to access assigned readings. ***Using a Smartphone to view readings for class discussion is not acceptable.*** If you come to class without the appropriate hardcopy or electronic assigned reading, you will be considered absent.

Office Hours and Resources

I am dedicated to helping you succeed in this course and at EIU. I will hold weekly office hours and will be available by appointment, should office hours not meet your needs during a given time. *Please be aware that I do not conduct office hours over e-mail, unless I have made a special arrangement with you. Please do not wait until the last minute before an assignment is due to contact me, or e-mail me your work and expect a full response.*

EIU Writing Center: Lastly, there are great campus resources available to you to assist you in developing your writing skills. The Writing Center (<http://castle.eiu.edu/writing/students.php>) in Coleman 3110 is a great place to seek out additional help, and the librarians at Booth Library are there to assist you with your research needs (or dilemmas!).

Attendance Policy

Attendance is **mandatory**. Your success in the class (as well as your classmates' success) depends upon your active participation and attendance. Regardless of any absences, you will be held responsible for all work assigned.

Legitimate Absences:

- If you are significantly sick (i.e., you have a contagious cold/illness, you have a fever, you have vomiting/diarrhea, etc.), DO NOT come to class. Go to Student Health and seek help, and e-mail me to let me know that you are sick.
- If you experience a significant personal issue or family matter or car issues, etc., missing class might be unavoidable. Please e-mail me to let me know why you will be missing class.

In these cases, I will ask you for some kind of verification of your condition (e.g., doctor's note) or situation to make sure the absence was legitimate.

Attendance Penalties:

- Starting with your fourth (4th) absence from class, I will lower your final course grade by a "+" or "-", and your grade will continue to suffer this deduction for each absence you accumulated thereafter. (For example, your fourth absence would make a B+ go to a B; your fifth absence would automatically drop your B to a B-, and a sixth absence would quickly move you to a C+.) Ten (10) or more absences will most likely result in a failing grade for the course. Please do NOT interpret this rule to mean that you have any "free" classes to skip.
- Arriving late to class and being unprepared will also affect your grade negatively. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be considered absent.

- If you come to class without a draft of any required written assignment, you will be considered absent.
- If you come to class without assigned homework—including assigned readings that you will need to bring to class to participate in discussion—you will be considered absent.

Be on time and be prepared—this is a lesson that will serve you well in whatever profession or field you choose to pursue in life.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is absolutely **unacceptable**. Plagiarism is the presentation of another's words or ideas as your own. Usually plagiarism is intentional, but it can also occur when one fails to cite a source correctly. It violates the EIU honor system and robs the original author of due credit. As a student at Eastern Illinois University, you are responsible for abiding by the [EIU Student Conduct Code](http://www.eiu.edu/~judicial/studentconductcode.php#s1) (<http://www.eiu.edu/~judicial/studentconductcode.php#s1>). Should I determine that you have committed plagiarism in an assignment, I will not hesitate to penalize your work and to direct the case to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Assignments & Grading

In this course, we will most likely have four units consisting of drafting and revising four essays that display your critical analysis of literature. Work assigned in this course will receive letter grades, unless otherwise noted. The following list shows the breakdown of course assignments:

- Unit Paper #1 (4-5 pages/1050-1250 words): 5%
- Unit Paper #1 Rewrite (4-5 pages/1050-1250 words): 10%
- Unit Paper #2 (5 pages/1250 words): 10%
- Unit Paper #2 Rewrite (5 pages/1250 words): 15%
- Unit Paper #3 (5 pages/1250 words): 10%
- Unit Paper #3 Rewrite (5 pages/1250 words): 15%
- Unit Paper #4 (6-7 pages/1500-1750 words): 20%
- Annotated Bibliography of Research for Paper #4: 5%

Participation, in-class writing assignments, and reading quizzes: 10%

Grading Scale:

- A = 94-100
- A- = 90-93
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 84-86
- B- = 80-83
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 74-76
- C- = 70-73
- D = 64-69
- F = 63 and below

Student Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be

reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Disability Services:

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583.

Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.