

Spring 1-15-2008

ENG 1092G-093: Composition and Literature

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Eastern Illinois University

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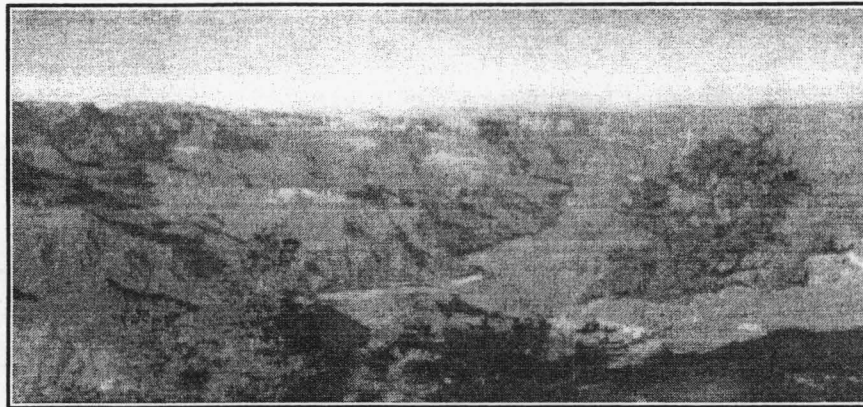
Recommended Citation

Kilgore, "ENG 1092G-093: Composition and Literature" (2008). *Spring 2008*. 47.
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Kilgore



Notes & Announcements

General Information

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An honors-level introductory literature course that samples the literary genres of poetry, fiction, and drama while requiring regular and extensive critical writing. After writing fairly short papers on each of the three genres, each student will submit a longer term paper for workshop discussion. A comprehensive final examination will test recall of course readings.

INSTRUCTOR: John Kilgore. Office: 3331 Coleman Hall. Hours: W 12-4; TTH 3:30-4:30; and by appointment. Also often here late Monday. Phone: (217) 581-6313 (office); (217) 345-7395 (home). Home page: <http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~jdkilgore>. Feel free to call me at home if you need to. I prefer that you **NOT** visit me with questions just before class begins; just after is fine. Feel free to email me at jdkilgore@eiu.edu; if I don't have time to reply, I will say so.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Attendance and participation (10%)
- Assigned readings.
- Poetry Paper (15%)
- Drama Paper (15%)
- Fiction Paper (15%)
- Term Paper (30%)

- Final Exam (15%)

I reserve the right to depart somewhat from these percentages.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Beatty, et al, *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, 8th ed.

Fulweiler, *The Blair Handbook*, 4th ed.

Voltaire, *Candide*, *Zadig*, and Selected Stories. (Signet)

William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*.

Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Gilbert.

ATTENDANCE. I will take attendance at each meeting by passing around a sign-up sheet which you must find and sign. The scale for your participation grade is as follows: 0-2 absences = A, 3= B, 4= C, 5= D, 6 = F, 7 or more -- continuing, proportional grade penalties (the attendance grade will become a negative number, averaged into your overall course grade). This grade will be adjusted somewhat for the quality of your class contributions.

Note that you have two allowed absences before the grade starts dropping. Use these as insurance to cover you in the case of illnesses and other unforeseen emergencies. I will listen sympathetically to excuses, **but will NOT award attendance credit for days when you have not actually been here.** Exceptions to this policy may be warranted in truly unusual circumstances, but substantial make-up work will be required, and you will need to show good reason *both* for having used the free days and for having missed any additional days you need excused. Note that, per University policy, you remain responsible for material covered on any day that you have missed, and that time constraints simply do not permit me to "catch you up" in any substantial way.

During the portions of the course dedicated to workshop discussion of your term papers, special rules will apply: Group 1 does not attend during Group 2's three workshop days, and vice versa.

Writing Assignments . Due dates for the four required papers are noted in the schedule below. Be alert for announcements of possible changes. Consult the general Writing Guidelines handout ASAP, to give yourself some time to absorb the gist of my approach and expectations. Then go to the Writing Prompts when you are ready to choose a particular topic.

Shoot for about 4 pages (plus the Works Cited) on each of the shorter papers, about double that on the term paper. By "page" I mean "about 350 words," but these are rough guidelines only. Never "pad," and don't worry much about absolute length if your paper seems to be accomplishing its objectives.

If you choose to rewrite your term paper after your turn in workshop, the new grade, if higher, will replace the old. But the grading will be tougher the second time around, and a higher grade will be awarded only for substantial improvements, not minor editing.

Manuscript format. Double-space all your papers and leave 1" or 1.25" margins all around. Use 12-point font and **number all your pages**. On the first page, put your name, the course number, the date, and the assignment ("Paper Number

1") in the top-left corner, using a smaller font for this heading if you like. Put your title, centered, about one third to one half the way down the page, and skip one extra line before beginning the text of your paper. Indent all paragraphs 5-8 spaces, and do not skip extra spaces between paragraphs, except, rarely, to mark a major transition between sections of your paper. Avoid subheadings and section numbers unless you feel you have exceptionally good reasons for using them. No cover pages please, and no report covers. Get your staple all the way up in the top-left corner of your pages. Avoid exotic fonts, ink in colors other than black, and paper in colors other than white.

All papers should include a Works Cited page (even if you use only the texts issued for the course). The term paper must cite a minimum of six sources, of which at least four must be print sources. Use MLA format, as explained in the *Blair Handbook*, and avoid vague attribution by directly engaging and discussing your sources. See below for further guidelines and topic suggestions; and take note of the section on research in the Writing Guidelines.

Note: I am happy to comment on drafts and fragments submitted by email (always as an attached file in Word or .rtf, please), **but only hard copy will be acceptable for work that is being handed in for credit and a grade.** Final decisions about format should express your authorial intentions, not the caprices of e-mail programs and printer technology.

Final Examination. Scheduled for Thursday, May 1, from 5:15-6:30, this will be a comprehensive, character-building ordeal designed to ensure that you have done all the reading with great care and have a good grasp of ideas developed in class discussion. Expect mainly identifications, short answers, quotations, and multiple choice questions, with an essay question at the end. Most likely the exam will be open-book, open-note.

MISCELLANEOUS. I will be more than happy to make reasonable accommodations for any student with a documented disability. Please contact me if you will need such an accommodation; or call the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services, 581-6583.

Please be aware that the penalty for deliberate plagiarism or for cheating on the exam will be automatic failure of the course. See me if you have any questions about this policy.

SCHEDULE

Note: Be on the alert for changes; check the "Notes and Announcements" board regularly. Please complete readings assigned for any session **before** the class meets, and read workshop essays very carefully in advance of the meeting. Make an early start on the novels we will be discussing late in the course.

Page numbers refer to the Norton anthology.

1) January 8, 10

Course Introduction. Choosing workshop groups. Preliminary

thoughts on research projects.

Thursday: Anon., "Western Wind," 1075. **Bradstreet**, "To My Dear and Loving Husband," 825. **Jonson**, "On My First Son," 818. **Donne**, "The Good-Morrow," 907. **Shakespeare**, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds," 826; "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments," 1136. **Marvell**, "To His Coy Mistress," 900. "Meter and Prosody" (handout).

2) January 15, 17

Blake, "The Lamb," 1132; "The Tyger," 1250; "The Sick Rose," 976; "London," 839. **Wordsworth**, "London, 1802," 1052. **Coleridge**, "Kubla Khan," 1252; **Keats**, "To Autumn," 1098. **Arnold**, "Dover Beach," 896.

Poetry paper assigned.

Frost, "The Road Not Taken," 1266; "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," 1267; "Design," 1080. **Pound**, "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter." **Snyder**, "A Mongoloid Child Handling Shells on the Beach," 900. **Sexton**, "The Fury of Overshoes," 822. **Musgrave**, "You Didn't Fit," 850. **Laux**, "The Laundromat," 915.

3) January 22, 24

Tuesday: Review and catch-up.

Thursday: Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1614.

Choose Term Paper Topic by Thursday.

4) January 29, 31

Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1614.

Poetry Paper due on Tuesday.

Drama Paper assigned.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1670

5) February 5, 7

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1670

Thursday: Term Paper Proposals Due.

6) February 12, 14

Voltaire, *Candide*

Drama Paper due on Thursday.

7) February 19, 21

Camus, *The Stranger*

8) February 26, 28

Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

9) March 4, 6

Fiction Paper due on Tuesday

Thursday: Optional Attendance. Conferences as needed.

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 10-14

10) March 18, 20

Miller, *The Good Mother*

Thursday: Term Papers Due, Group 1.

11) March 25, 27

Workshop, Group 1

12) April 1, 3

Tuesday: Workshop, Group 1.

Thursday: Term Papers Due, Group 2. Readings TBA.

13) April 8, 10

Workshop, Group 2.

14) April 15, 17

Tuesday: Optional Rewrites Due, Group 1.

Workshop, Group 2.

15) April 22, 24

Tuesday: Optional Rewrites Due, Group 2.

Review and Catch-up.

Final Examination: Th 5/1 @ 5:15



Term Paper

The term paper is the major assignment for the course, accounting for about 30% of the final grade. By the end of week 5, you must commit to

your topic, which you will NOT be allowed to change. Choose an option from the list below; or, after reading the list, invent a topic of your own that seems similar in spirit and design. You MUST obtain approval for your project in either case, as no more than 2-4 students will be allowed to work on any given topic. The idea here (in addition to averting conflicts over research materials) is to let everyone take off in a different direction from our common class discussions, becoming especially knowledgeable in some particular area we have touched upon together.

Though I will sometimes follow custom and refer to this as a “research paper,” it should essentially be a persuasive paper that *happens* to be researched and information-rich. The key is to focus, focus, focus, letting the argument drive the research rather than vice versa. Give information because it is directly relevant and necessary to your argument, not just because you happen to have found it. Imagine your classmates as your audience, and use that criterion, too, to make decisions about what to include or exclude. Connect your argument to our class discussions where possible, and to works on the syllabus.

Your Works Cited page must include a minimum of six sources, of which at least four must be print, i.e. not from the Internet. Wikipedia and Google are a great place to *start* your research; but push on to more credible, sophisticated, peer-reviewed sources as you pursue the particular questions that are intrinsic to your project. What’s crucial is not that the sources be numerous, but that they be credible and genuinely relevant to the paper, with at least a few of them quoted and discussed directly. Be careful with Internet sources; too much of what is out there is unreliable. You will need to use all your critical acumen to sift through the junk to what is useful and valid. Be sure to include date captured for online sources, and keep a hard copy in your notes for the paper.

I will be very impatient with “data dumps” of materials only loosely related; of long reviews of introductory material that ought to be assumed and omitted; of any vagueness in your thesis or argumentative position; of tangents; of impersonal, textbook-style prose that conveniently fudges the question of what thoughts are original with you; of “padding” by means of unnecessary or insufficiently edited quotes; and especially, always, of any failure to deal conscientiously with your sources.

Let me expand a little – well, rant a little – on that last point. The problem with research papers, by and large, is the name. It implies that students are being asked to do the impossible: to take just a few weeks and make an original contribution to some field that real scholars, many of them quite brilliant, have been working in all their lives. Faced with this impossible demand, students naturally learn to interpret “research” as, in fact, the fine art of pretending to know ten times more than they possibly could, while writing an abstract and cloudy prose that continually obscures the question of how the student or anyone else

could possibly know what is being claimed as truth. The typical paper contains plenty of citations, but most of these are the nearly useless kind that assert some kind of vague link between whatever has just been said (in the last phrase? the last sentence? the last paragraph? No one knows, or is meant to know) and an item in the Works Cited page. Direct discussion of sources – of what the student author found where, and what he thinks about it – are rare to nonexistent. At the end of the paper comes an impressive and very *long* bibliography, featuring many books which the student author cannot possibly have read, but which the instructor, as everyone knows, has no time to track down.

Such papers are a pain to write and a pain to read. Avoid the mode absolutely by adhering to the following guidelines of my No-Baloney Policy:

- Understand that no one is asking you to become an expert in the final sense. You are being asked only to become *more* expert than your classmates, within the particular area you have chosen for yourself. Research is unfinished business by its nature, because answers always lead to new questions. But as long as your paper is reasonably informative *to us*, with information clearly related to your thesis, you are as expert as you need to be.
- Write to us – to the class, or at most to the non-specialist public – not to an imagined audience of scholars and experts. Go ahead and be somewhat personal and informal. Try not to work the first-person (“I”) to death, but do use it judiciously, perhaps especially when confessing doubt over some issue you have not yet managed to settle for yourself.
- **Dramatize your relationship to your sources.** Within reason, discuss your own research process: let us see where and how you learned what you know. Where appropriate, briefly evaluate particular sources as more or less useful and accurate. Use all the various methods available for citing your sources: summary, paraphrase, short quotation, block quotation, and even the kind of quickie, blind citation I discourage above, though these should mainly be reserved for very minor information. The key is to bring the sources into the paper, letting us hear other voices along with yours, whether you agree or disagree with them.
- Propose your topic clearly, and keep your research well focused. Put great care into the research proposal, creating a clear map which will keep you from wandering off into tangential readings in the weeks to come. When you begin your research, ask yourself over and over again, “Why am I reading this? Is this what I need to be reading? How is this relevant to my thesis?” Put a lot of energy into finding the sources you need before you invest the time in reading them. The goal is to find, then thoroughly digest, the relatively few sources that really are helpful to the direction you have defined ahead of time; and then to integrate these thoroughly and clearly into your essay. Prefer recent sources to older ones, and articles to books. The recent articles will often

summarize, evaluate, and even correct earlier work, and you simply do not have the time to read whole books without stumbling into the "single source trap," discussed below. When you do consult books, turn to the index first; try to find what you really need, rather than just wading in. Prefer scholarly articles, by a long stretch, to pieces in mass circulation magazines.

Feel free to modify and customize the options given below, or to devise a different topic altogether. Remember that you will be proposing your paper in writing in Week 5. Note that topics will be approved on a first-come, first-served basis, and you might not get your first-choice topic if you do not sign up for it in time.

Topics

General Options

1) Choose any one work on our syllabus – probably it should be your favorite – for extended study and explication. Learn something of the biographical and critical background of the story. At what point in the author's career does it get written? What personal and artistic developments and forces does it appear to reflect? What interpretive and critical issues have emerged in commentary on the work? Then go on to offer your own interpretation of the work or some key issue in it, bringing in the work of other critics as you do. Use them both for contrast and for support, sometimes agreeing and sometimes disagreeing, weaving together an overall perspective that takes account of a range of opinion.

The key to success on this option is likely to be having a strong interpretive thesis to which everything is subordinated. Don't let this paper become a random tour of loosely interrelated facts and comments. Learn much more than you can really cover in 7-10 pages, but then select from your research only what is really relevant and necessary to your central thesis. See "Data Dump" under "Pitfalls."

I should note that "your interpretation" is a slightly dubious phrase. Clearly, you cannot expect to put together a reading comprised entirely of points no one has ever raised before. (If you did, your eccentric take on the work would likely be wrong and unconvincing.) It's nice if you can be at least a little original, but it is quite possible to write a successful paper in which your main points all come from your sources. In this case, the value of your paper consists of the energy and skill with which you integrate, adjudicate, and present arguments made by others, together with the clarity with which you supplement and qualify them. (Phrases such as "My own view" and "I think" and so on can be useful for marking the points at which you either depart from your sources, or adjudicate differences between them.) It's quite permissible to let your sources do much of the work of proving your thesis; on the other hand, do avoid the "Single Source Trap," discussed below under "Pitfalls."

Of course, it's not impossible that you will have a radically new interpretation – new, that is, in relation to your particular collection of sources. Let's say that you read six interpretive essays on the work you have chosen, and find that you strongly disagree with four of them, while the other two seem to address issues of no special significance to you. Well – great! Now you have your work cut out for you: Put together a strongly argued paper in which you explain why the four other critics are dead wrong, and then offer your own interpretation. Do additional reading as dictated by the logic of your argument, your need for evidence. Even if we are not all convinced, the resulting argument should be enlightening and fun.

2) The critical reception of X. Choose some work on the syllabus that you find especially interesting, and study the critical and public response to it following its first appearance. For a recent work such as *Lord of the Flies*, you might arbitrarily take 1-2 years as your time frame, tracking down and reading as many reviews as you can find that appeared in that period. For an older work like one of the Shakespeare plays, it might well be appropriate to take a much longer interval – one or two centuries, perhaps – over which to track the changing critical response.

Your goal in any case will be to present us with an informative, interesting, and clear narrative of the work's critical fortunes, packed with vivid and carefully chosen quotations, skillful paraphrases, and adroit summaries of your sources. How was the work seen by its first audience? How did reactions and opinions differ? What key interpretive controversies emerged? How did opinion change over time? If you can answer these questions, the results should be very interesting. Toward the end of the discussion you may want to advance some of your own opinions on the key issues you have defined, or you may want to stay neutral. The crux of this topic, more than many of the others, is resourceful research – finding an abundance of worthwhile sources – and skillful presentation of the views of others.

Special Projects

3) The poetry of X. Choose one of the poets whose work we have sampled in Weeks 1-3, and read much more extensively in his or her work. Learn something about the poet's biography as well, read some critical assessment, sample the letters if any are extant, and generally get to know the poet. Then formulate and develop a thesis based, perhaps, on the contrast between what we have seen in class and what your more extensive reading reveals. For example, "Beyond the Anthologies: Frost and Darkness" might explore the fact that the poet's life was difficult and unhappy, and that many of his lesser known works seem decidedly darker than the anthology favorites. "Blake's Visionary System" might trace some of the ways that his short and seemingly simple lyrics hold the seeds of ideas that are elaborated much more fully in his longer works. Your final draft should probably include an appendix containing complete copies of any works that you analyze in detail.

4) **Motifs of Transformation, Blinding, and Recognition in the Love Story; Or: Puck's Potion as the Ultimate Beer Goggles.** *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reminds us, in hilariously explicit and exaggerated terms, of what we all learn and re-learn about love: that it makes us see things no one else does, transforms us into people we have never been before, and leads us into dreadful mistakes about who and what we want. Start by noticing these lessons in the play itself; then set out on an adventurous comparison-and-contrast expedition, searching freely through fairy tales, novels, movies, myths, and rock 'n' roll songs for similar patterns: images of lovers transformed, mistaken, disguised and then recognized, mismatched, re-matched, blinded, and cured of blindness. Try to relate everything to the basic nature of romantic love, the way that desire transforms what we see in other people. You might especially look for instances of the "animal-groom" motif, in which a beautiful woman is paired with a bestial or monstrous man.

5) **Freud's Hamlet and Hamlet's Freud.** Learn everything you can about the famous Freud-Jones reading of *Hamlet*, consulting both recent summaries and critiques and Ernest Jones's original study (though you should probably read *in* it selectively rather than reading the whole thing). State your own opinion at the end: does it seem true that Hamlet "has an Oedipus complex," and how much does this seem to explain about the play? Is Hamlet himself an important source for Freud's famous theory of the Oedipus complex?

6) **Candide and the Archetype of the Naïf.** Candide, it is often said, is a recognizable comic "type": the incurably naive character whose wide-eyed innocence causes him to be imposed on again and again, but furnishes an ideal foil to the folly and corruption of society. Explore this idea by finding and reading a number of literary works which feature similar characters in the hero's role. You don't have time to read many full-length plays or novels, so you will have to choose these other works with great care, no doubt consulting summaries before you commit to reading them in their entirety. You might begin your search by trying to discover what works Voltaire was (supposedly) using as his model in *Candide*. Is there another literary figure on whom Candide is based? Read it first if so. Then find and read some other works in the genre, together with a sampling of interpretive writing, and report back to us on what you have found. Remember that we will not have read these works, so you will need to brief us on the basics of plot, situation, character, and so forth before venturing into close reading and analytical discussion. NB: If you're inclined to read some soft-core pornography, Terry Southern's best-selling sixties novel *Candy* could quite appropriately be brought into this discussion, since it was directly based on Voltaire's classic.

7) **The historical context of *Lord of the Flies*.** Relate the novel in detail to its historical moment and situation. Begin by becoming steeped in the history of 1940-1955, getting clear in particular about the extent of the carnage in World War II and the state of the nuclear arms race as Golding was writing the book. (Had the H-bomb been invented yet? Find

out.) Then sift through newspaper and magazine writings of the period to find analogies to Golding's bleak Cold War pessimism. Why was it so easy, in 1954, to believe that human nature was rotten and that humanity was doomed? Explain with a range of vivid illustrations, noting particular connections, if you can find them, between moments in the book and the history outside.

8) **The Impossibility of Meursault.** On the face of it, Meursault is the least believable of characters: a man who seems to have no past to speak of and no real concern for his own future, who becomes the lover of a woman he doesn't especially want or care about, then throws away his life, and that of another man, for no certain reason beyond the fact that the sun is hurting his eyes. People just aren't like this: they care about their lives, and act rationally to protect themselves.

Why, then, is Camus' "stranger" such a compelling literary invention? In what sense if any is he "true" without being realistic? What is it about him that has captured the imaginations of so many people? In seeking your answer, read up a bit on Existentialism and on Camus' life, then read as much commentary on the novel itself as you have time for. Also, make time for a short essay by Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus." Finally, though, what you will want to offer here is your own, very deeply considered reading of the novel.

9) The historical context of *The Good Mother*. Relate the novel in detail to its historical moment and situation. Start by trying to get a distanced, objective, historically accurate view of the Woman's Movement during the sixties, seventies, and eighties. Then try to relate Anna's personal quest for personal and sexual fulfillment to the political debate over women's rights. Try to draw specific connections or comparisons between feminist writings and the novel itself. To what extent is it a political novel? Does the political context help explain and justify the book's graphic sexuality? Does it help explain why Anna's ability to achieve orgasm (or not) receives such emphasis? Was it perhaps easier to sympathize with Anna's choices in 1987 than it is now, twenty years later?

Pitfalls

Do your best to avoid the following common problems:

- **The Scrapbook Approach (or "Data Dump").** The paper is so full of quotes and paraphrases, many of them poorly assimilated to the thesis, that overall coherence and interest are lacking. The paper feels padded and directionless. The reader falls asleep. Avoid by cultivating a firm, definite sense of your own purpose and thesis.
- **The Single-Source Trap.** Halfway through the project, you discover an article that says everything you wanted to say. Abashed and intimidated, you quote this source thirteen times in your own essay, making the

reader wish he could be reading it instead of your paper, which seems to have no ideas of its own. Avoid by finishing your research early on, defining your topic clearly, digesting your sources completely, and citing a wide variety of sources.

- **The "All About" Paper.** The essay has no real focus and consists mainly of background information that is readily available from many sources. Rather than pursuing a thesis, it seems to drift and free-associate. Avoid by focusing on your thesis and argument, declining all tangents.

- **Vague Attribution.** The paper is full of information whose nature, origin, and credibility are unclear. Though citations occur with some regularity, they tend to be vague, and the paper shows an enormous preference for paraphrase over direct quotation and explicit summary. As a result the reader can't tell, from one sentence to the next, whether he is reading your opinions, someone else's, or common background knowledge. Only the most meticulous reader can tell whether the paper is a mechanical paraphrase of two or three sources, or a decent job of research poorly presented. Instructors sometimes give students the benefit of such doubt. Not me. I don't believe that doing so is really a favor to the student, who learns to write horribly tedious, murky prose, or to anyone who must read her work in the future.

Avoid by talking directly about your sources, using various methods of citation as appropriate (short quote, long quote, summary, etc.), and by taking a more personal tone, explicitly distinguishing your own conclusions, opinions, doubts, and confusions.



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