

Spring 1-15-2010

ENG 1092G-099: Composition and Literature

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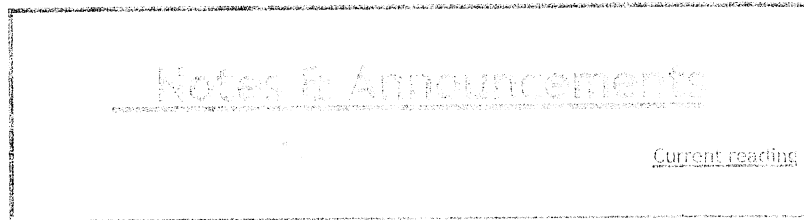
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English 1092G-099
Composition and Literature
Spring, 2010
T TH 8-9:15, CH 2120



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 present a longer term paper to the class. Mid-term and final examinations will test recall of course readings.

INSTRUCTOR: John Kilgore. Office: 3331 Coleman Hall. Hours: TTH 3:30-5:00; W 1-3; and by appointment. 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 (10%)
- Drama Paper (10%)
- Fiction Paper (15%)
- Term Paper (30%)
- Mid-term Exam (10%)
- 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.

The Little, Brown Handbook, 11th ed.
Voltaire, *Candide*, Zadig, and Selected Stories. (Signet)
Miller, Sue, *The Good Mother*.
Orwell, George, 1984.
Shaara, Michael, *The Killer Angels*.

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 according to 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.

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.

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 print sources, plus as many internet sources as you like. Use MLA format, as explained in the *Little, Brown 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), insofar as my time permits; **but only hard copy will be acceptable for work that is being handed in for credit and a grade.**

EXAMINATIONS. Scheduled for Week 8 and for Tuesday of Finals week, these will be 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 a mix of identifications, short answers, quotations, and short essays. Both exams 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 exams will be automatic failure of the course. See me if you have any questions about this policy.

SCHEDULE

Note: Please complete readings assigned for any session **before** the class meets. Make an early start on the novels we will be discussing late in the course.

Page numbers refer to the Norton anthology.

1) January 11-15

Note: Read poems intensively -- two or three times -- as you prepare for class.

Course Introduction. Preliminary thoughts on research projects.

Thursday: Anon., "Western Wind," 1075. **Jonson,** "On My First Son," 818. **Donne,** "The Good-Morrow," 907.

Shakespeare, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds," 826; "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun," 1057; "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments," 1136.

Waller, "Song," 974

Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress," 900

"Meter and Prosody" (handout)

2) January 19-22

Blake, "The Lamb," 1132; "The Tyger," 1250; "The Sick Rose," 976; "London," 839.

Coleridge, "Kubla Khan," 1252

Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," 1096; "To Autumn," 1098.

Arnold, "Dover Beach," 896

Poetry paper assigned.

Frost, "The Road Not Taken," 1266

Browning, "How Do I Love Thee?" 811

Pound, "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter," 815

Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving Husband," 825

Hunt, "Rondeau," 826
Bold, "A Special Theory of Relativity," 826
"Millay, "What lips my lips have kissed," 827
Rosenberg, "Married Love," 828
Chudleigh, "To the Ladies," 829
Wayman, "Wayman in Love," 831
Kinnell, "After Making Love, We Hear Footsteps," 844
Burns, "A Red, Red Rose," 962
Rich, "Two Songs," 963
Dickey, "Cherrylog Road," 886

3) January 25-29

Tuesday: Yeats, "A Last Confession," 830; "Easter, 1916," 1323; "The Second Coming," 1325; "Sailing to Byzantium," 1326; "Byzantium," 1330.
Thursday: Plath, "Mirror," 882; "Point Shirley," 894; "Morning Song," 908; "Daddy," 1205; "Barren Woman," 1291; "Lady Lazarus," 1293.

4) February 1-5

Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1614
Poetry Paper due on Thursday.
Drama Paper assigned.

5) February 8-12

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1670

6) February 15-19

Tuesday: Term Paper Proposals Due.
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1670

7) February 22-26

Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1819
Drama Paper due on Thursday.
Fiction Paper assigned.

8) March 1-5

T: Review & Catch-up
TH: Mid-Term Exam

9) March 8-12

Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado," 70
Crane, "The Open Boat," 320
Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," 484
Joyce, "Araby," 462

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 15-19

10) March 22-26

Voltaire, *Candide*

11) March 29-April 2

Orwell, 1984

Fiction Paper Due on Tuesday.

12) April 5-9

Shaara, *The Killer Angels*

13) April 12-16

Miller, *The Good Mother*

14) April 19-23

Presentation of Term Papers

15) April 26-30

Presentation of Term Papers

Review and catch-up

Final Examination: Monday, May 3 @ 8:00



Term Paper

The term paper is the major assignment for the course, an essay of 10 pages or so, accounting for about 30% of the final grade. By the beginning of week 6, you must commit to your topic in a formal statement of about 300 words which proposes your topic, tentative thesis, and, importantly, your specific research goals: information which you don't know at the time of writing, but which you plan to find out. **You will not be allowed to change your topic, so make your initial decision carefully.** 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.

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 let the argument drive the research rather than vice versa. Don't let your sources overwhelm you; your research need not be extensive if it is clearly focused. Give information because it is directly relevant and necessary to your argument, not just because you happen to have found it. Propose definite questions and give informed and focused answers -- not a random rehearsal of what you managed to turn up at the library. Imagine your classmates as your audience, and use that criterion, too, to make decisions about what to include or exclude.

Your Works Cited page must include a minimum of six print sources, with as many additional internet sources as you like. Wikipedia and Google are a great place to *start* your research; but push on from the internet to print sources, then from brief timely articles in dailies and weeklies 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. Again, think hard about what is really worth quoting before deciding to include a quotation in your paper; nothing is more irritating than a paper that is padded with time-wasting quotes that add no real substance to the discussion.

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. For online sources, please print a copies and keep them in your notes for the paper.

Let me expand a little -- well, rant a little -- on the key challenge I am laying before you in this assignment: that of being both personal *and* objective; of writing with wit, personality, and candor even as you integrate facts and opinions from outside sources into your discussion. The problem with research paper assignments, by and large, is the name, “research paper.” It implies that students are being asked to do the impossible: 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 an item in the Works Cited page and something that has just been said (in the last phrase? the last sentence? the last paragraph? No one knows, or is meant to know). Direct discussion of sources -- of what the author found where, and what he thinks about it -- are rare to nonexistent.

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, 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 (rarely, when appropriate) the kind of quickie, blind citation I complain about above. 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. Note that the topics below 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) **Exegesis.** 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 or poem or play. 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 other essays 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, most likely, will 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" below.

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 and 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 *The Good Mother*, 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.

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) **Puck's Potion as the Ultimate Beer Goggles: Motifs of Transformation, Blinding, and Recognition in the Love Story.** *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) **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 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?

7) **The Shaara Trilogy.** Read *The Last Full Measure*, Jeff Shaara's excellent sequel to his father's novel. Do a little bit of background reading to learn how this novel (together with *Gods and Generals*) came to be written so long after *The Killer Angels*. Then (your main task), compare and contrast the visions of war in the two novels. Is Michael's vision of combat more heroic than Jeff's? Does he believe in glory, sacrifice, triumph, and other martial values more fully than his son? Or is this impression more a function of the sharply different designs of the two books, the one concentrating on just the four days of Gettysburg, the other detailing the nearly two-year time span from Gettysburg to Appomattox? Give carefully chosen comparisons and contrasts in support of your argument. Remember that you are writing for an audience that has read the one book but not the other.

8) **Shaara and Military History.** Read a number of non-fictional accounts of the Battle of Gettysburg, then appraise Shaara's interpretation of strategy and tactics in *The Killer Angels*. Do military historians agree with the main points of his account, or do important differences emerge from a close reading? Do some historians give a less critical account of Lee's choices than Shaara does? You might want to focus specifically either on the assault on Little Round Top on Day 2, or on "Pickett's Charge" on Day 3.

8) **Orwell, Language, and Linguists.** Linguists are generally critical of Orwell's take on language. Find out why, explain, and then give your own view. If you agree in finding his views on language mistaken and somewhat incoherent, try to explain why, then, they have had such a hold on the popular imagination. Start your research by reading Orwell's "Politics and the English Language." Then read the brief passages in Steven Pinker's *The Language Instinct* that deal with Orwell. Go on from there to discover other linguists who agree with Pinker.

9) **The Historical Context of 1984.** Orwell wrote the novel in 1948, and could rely on his audience to know many things about the history of the first half of the twentieth century, and about the regimes of Stalin and Hitler in particular, that are now less well remembered. Write a brief guide for the modern reader (perhaps imagined as a high school student), explaining some of the chief parallels between that real-world history and Orwell's enduring dystopian fantasy. What sorts of connections would the books' first readers have made to the overall vision of an England ruled by a Party which has extinguished all liberty? To such particular details as Hate Week, the thought police,

telesccreens, rocket bombs, etc.? For this topic it may actually be appropriate to begin your research (but not to end it!) by looking for a footnoted edition of the novel, or even by consulting *Cliff's Notes*. By the time you write, though, make very sure you are not merely parroting your sources, but really do understand the basics of the historical moment in which Orwell was writing.

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 bringing in 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 she 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 his 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, and doubts.

