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# ENG 5000Z-001: Introduction to Methods and Issues in English Studies

Randy Beebe  
*Eastern Illinois University*

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INTRODUCTION TO  
METHODS & ISSUES IN  
ENGLISH STUDIES

Prof. R. Beebe  
rlbeebe@eiu.edu  
Wed 7-9:30 p.m.  
Coleman Hall 3120 & Online



### Description.

This seminar provides a foundation for the M.A. in English, serving as an intensive introduction to the methods and issues of advanced-level research and scholarship in English studies. Through our reading and discussions, we will examine the field of English Studies, discuss assumptions and challenges in the field, and develop a strong understanding of what professionals do. This will involve becoming aware of discourse practices, methods of research, and the writing genres that we use.

### TEXTS

- R. Sloan, *Mr. Penumbra* (2012)  
M. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818/1831)  
A. Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013)  
J. Culler, *Literary Theory* (1997)

### REQUIREMENTS

- Short Writing/Research Projects (including Discussion Posts/Response Papers) 30%
- Final Project (includes smaller writing projects, drafts, & presentation) 50%
- Final Exam 10%
- Writing Groups (participation, feedback in support of final project) 10%

### Course Goals.

- understand expectations of graduate-level work;
- explore critical and theoretical issues in English studies;
- get extensive practice in completing graduate-level research;
- become familiar with professional conversations in English studies, including controversies, current trends, and career preparation

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"Why do science? Why do art? . . . The things that seem like the least important for our survival are the very things that make us human."

Savas Dimopoulos, theoretical physicist

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## Assignments

The heart of this course is helping you develop and complete a final project. We will begin thinking about this project right away through a series of steps, which will be somewhat in the background during the first part of the course.

During the second part of the course, your project will begin to take center stage, and again you will be asked to complete a series of steps to help you shape your project and place it in a professional conversation.

You will also complete smaller research and writing projects (during the first 8 weeks), which are designed to introduce you to professional research and sharpen your writing skills. One of these projects—a Research Puzzle—you will complete in a group and present your findings to the class.

### Writing Groups

You will be assigned into writing groups, which you will use to complete your final project. In order to remain productive, even during busy times, professionals often work in pairs or small writing groups. These groups serve as sounding boards, editors, and sometimes offer much-needed encouragement, but most importantly, they can help keep you accountable and on task when you are tempted to put off your work on your final project.

You will have conferences with me throughout the process as well, but you will be working and talking with your groups much more extensively—especially in the second part of the course.

I will provide some activities and guideposts for each group (some assigned; others encouraged), and will observe the work and interactions of all work groups. Collaborate. Explore. Learn from each other.

### Online Etiquette (Netiquette)

EIU is committed to open, frank, and insightful dialogue in all of its courses. Diversity has many manifestations, including diversity of thought, opinion, and values. EIU encourages all learners to be respectful of that diversity and to refrain from inappropriate commentary. This is especially important for online courses, and EIU asks that all students observe the following policies:

1. Be considerate of other discussion participants when interacting via the discussion board or any other electronic form for the duration of this course. Remember that often a writer's intention and tone can be lost in electronic formats. Err on the side of too much courtesy rather than too little.
2. Dismissive, malicious, or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.
3. You are *absolutely* welcome to express your own ideas and opinion *and* to agree *or* disagree with your peers, I ask only that you do so courteously.
4. If you do not respect your classmates or your tone is inappropriate, you may be asked to redo an assignment and/or lose credit for the assignment entirely. In particularly severe cases, you may fail or be dismissed from the course at my discretion.
5. Read all feedback you receive from me and discuss any questions you have about your feedback. If you are ever in doubt about whether a post violates course netiquette, please email me *before* you post it.

### **Course Format**

We will be blending online students and in-residence students into a single course. We will conduct much of our work online (working individually and in groups) but will meet each week for a live session (Wednesday evenings, 7-9:30 pm).

This format impacts the pedagogy and how we discuss and interact. Hopefully, the adjustments will be minimal (even fun), and then we can forget about it and focus on our content. At the same time, I don't want to minimize this format either. And so I'll be taking steps to ensure that all content (requirements and expectations) will be available online. You will not be at a disadvantage however you complete the course.

Given the nature of this "new" format for all of us, it's important that you check into D2L daily.

### **Live Sessions**

We will use Blackboard's Collaborate Ultra (CU) for our live sessions. All students—even those in residence (in the physical classroom)—will log into CU for each session. This is important to do to keep parity with each other and to become more adept at using CU.

Virtual attendees have the option of visiting the physical classroom for any session. We will also be recording these sessions for your later review.

You will be provided an outline of activities prior to each live session in order to help you prepare your material and make sure it's ready to present. Such preparation is vital in any teleconferencing event, and I will provide any assistance you need.

### **Course Structure**

As an introduction to methods and issues in English Studies at the graduate level, English 5000 has a vast array of topics it can cover. We will be looking at the kinds of activities that professionals do and we'll practice writing in some of the genres in order to give you a strong understanding of guiding questions, assumptions, and challenges in our field. The most important goal of the course is to help you become more sophisticated in research and writing; more precise and articulate in how you define your area of expertise.

More practically, this course will be divided into two parts, comprising approximately eight weeks each. In Part 1, we will be reading three novels together and using these as a common point of reference to begin looking at the field of English Studies. You will be completing some short writing and research papers, and you will also be encouraged to begin developing your final project.

In Part 2 (beginning around Week 9), we will focus the course almost exclusively on your project. We will continue to work and discuss together, but the priority will be on helping develop and draft your project, and you will be asked to do this in very specific ways. What you actually focus on for your topic will be largely determined by you and your career goals. Writing the typical "seminar paper" is one option but by no means the only one.