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ENG 2205-003: Introduction To Literary Studies

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Introduction to Literary Studies

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and by appointment

Why This Course?

You've studied literature before, of course. Why, then, does the English Department require English majors to take "Introduction to Literary Studies"?

The study of literature in the English major is not just more of what you've already had in high school or freshman year.

Literary study in high school or in the general education program should enrich people's lives in many ways, but what it generally does not try to do is to turn people into professional scholars of literature, people who have specialized knowledge about how to read literary works and how to produce new knowledge about literary works.

The goal of this course is to introduce you to the most important skills required for professional literary studies and to give you practice in those skills. Specifically, this course will focus on

- a set of interpretive practices that go by the name "close reading"
- interpreting literary texts in historical and cultural context
- situating your own interpretation of a literary text as part of a larger conversation

Coordination with Other Sections

Our class will be coordinated this semester with the two other sections of English 2205 being offered by Professors Randall Beebe and Christopher Hanlon. Professors Beebe, Hanlon, and I have spent many hours consulting one another and planning for this semester because we regard this course as the one with the most potential to determine your success as an English major. Although Professors Beebe, Hanlon, and I will lead our sections in somewhat different ways, we share a set of foundational attitudes about professional literary study, and these attitudes are the basis for this syllabus.

Plenary Sessions: Frequently throughout the semester, our class will meet in joint sessions with the other two sections and their instructors in Doudna Lecture Hall (Room 1210 Doudna Fine Arts Center).

The Close Reading Cooperative: In addition to our required reading, we will have some required viewing. The Close Reading Cooperative is a video podcast in literary studies produced here at Eastern in order to help you stay in practice with some of the nuts-and-bolts skills we'll build this semester. You should subscribe to the podcast, and I will also show you how to find many of the podcast segments on YouTube. Instructions for subscribing to the Close Reading Cooperative appear on the English Department's website:
<http://www.eiu.edu/~english/>

Information for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Required Texts (from TRS)

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*. 1908.

Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*. 1905.

Mikics, *A New Handbook of Literary Terms*. 2007.

The MLA Handbook For Writers of Research Papers, 7th edition. 2009.

WebCT

Course handouts and other materials will be saved in our WebCT space, along with other materials that you might need. I will also make your grades available in WebCT.

The Electronic Writing Portfolio: If you wish, you may use either of the two formal essays from this class to submit to the Electronic Writing Portfolio. Submissions must be made no later than the end of finals week. *If you use Essay 2, do not forget that the list of works cited must be in the same word processing file as the essay; I will rate essays submitted to me for EWP that cite sources but do not include bibliographies as “unacceptable.”*

For students in the English Language Arts with Teacher Certification major: Each semester, you should provide all your instructors in English classes with a yellow “Recommendation for Student Teaching” form (available from Dr. Donna Binns outside her office door, 3851 Coleman Hall). All your English instructors except me, that is—my policy is that I complete these forms for all students who need them at the same time, usually during the last 3 weeks of the semester.

The English Department’s Statement on Plagiarism: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards.”

My Statement on Plagiarism: When no sources are required (as in most homework assignments), you can stay safe by not using any sources. Before you complete each major essay, we will discuss acceptable uses of sources. If you have any doubts about your use of sources, I am always happy to speak with you. Most anxiety about plagiarism among honest students is unfounded. Obvious plagiarism, however, is inexcusable in English majors, who ought to have great respect for the work of other writers. *I promise to fail anyone who plagiarizes in this course and to report the guilty student to the Office of Student Standards. For students in the English Language Arts with Teacher Certification major, I will also submit a yellow “recommendation for student teaching” form describing the student’s ethical lapse and recommending that the department not grant approval to student teach.* (Seem harsh? Plagiarism is both cheating and theft, and I would be failing my responsibility as an educator if I did not do everything in my power to discourage it among my students.)

Projects	Grade Distribution	Final Grading Scale	
Quizzes	10%	93-100	A
Homework	10%	85-92	B
Participation	10%	77-84	C
Essay 1	15%	69-76	D
Essay 2	20%	68 and below	F
Mid-Term Exam	10%		
Ringuette Cup	10%		
Final Exam	15%		

Quizzes: Quizzes are designed to give you credit for careful and complete reading and to check your understanding of key concepts. When a quiz reveals that a particular concept is difficult for a sizable number of students, that concept is likely to reappear on later quizzes.

Homework: In addition to careful reading, other kinds of homework, especially in the early part of the semester when we are reading poetry and short fiction, will be fairly frequent. Homework assignments will always be posted on WebCT after class, so if you miss class you should be sure to check for an assignment.

Essay 1: Essay 1 will allow you to flex the interpretive muscles you've built during the first half of the semester, demonstrating what you can do with just a text, the techniques of close reading, and your brain.

Essay 2: Essay 2 will ask you to do original research to help you situate a literary text in historical and cultural context. During this project, you will experience first-hand one of the most astounding changes in literary criticism, which has occurred during your lifetime: the development of the digital archive.

Exams: Both the mid-term and the final exams will be composed of sections written by each of the three instructors; all sections will take the same exams, and the instructors will each grade the sections we wrote.

Ringuette Cup: We'll explain this end-of-semester project in our plenary session on November 18 (yes, that's the Friday before Thanksgiving). You will definitely want to be in class.

Late Work: Meeting deadlines is an essential writing skill. In the real world, writing that is late is often a complete failure. I'm nicer than that. Work that is late (without a pre-approved extension) loses 10% of its total value for each *calendar* day it is late. This policy covers all assignments in this class. Extensions will only be granted if they are requested in person or by phone call (no emails, no text messages), and must be requested no later than the day before the due date.

Participation: Participation means being *prepared*, *focused* and *forthcoming* during class.

For each class session or required conference, you can earn between 0 and 10 points for participation. At the end of the semester, participation grades and quiz grades are averaged together and multiplied by 10 to make up 100 points in the final grading scale. Here's how I assign daily points:

- Come prepared, give our class activities your full attention, speak up *in a productive way* at least once during large group discussion, and stay on-task throughout class, and you will earn 10 points.
- Do all of the above except speaking during class discussion, and you will earn 8-9 points.
- When students break the rules of classroom etiquette, participation points will be deducted at my discretion, down to and including a grade of 1. (Poor classroom etiquette includes text messaging, coming in late, wasting class time, rudeness to instructor or classmates, sleeping, no book, etc.)
- When you miss class, your participation grade is 0, but if you miss a quiz you may make it up.

Please be prepared for lively discussion that may include disagreements—even very strong disagreements. As Drs. Beebe, Hanlon, and I (and everyone else in the English Department) can tell you from experience, it is quite possible to disagree with others about interpretive matters and still respect them—heck, you might even consider those people among your closest friends. In fact, many people who live a life engaged with ideas find these kinds of passionate disagreements to be among life's greatest pleasures. In order to learn to enjoy this particular pleasure, though, we first must agree on the ground rules: (1) all parties have a responsibility to explain, as clearly as they can, the reasons for their own positions (not "I just feel that way," for example); (2) all parties have a responsibility to listen carefully to others and try to understand (which might involve asking questions); and (3) it's *really okay* to disagree, and it does not necessarily mean that anyone is angry.

Attendance: If you want to do well in the class, you should plan to attend every class session.

However, I don't think it's my business to evaluate your reasons for missing class when you do. In *most* cases,** I do not need documentation of your reasons for missing class. Quizzes may be made up in office hours or by appointment; arrangements must be made no later than the day you return to class.

When you miss class, for good reasons or bad, you lose participation points. Missing a few days shouldn't hurt you much in that way, but missing weeks will—just as missing weeks will hurt you in your essays and exams, because you won't learn very much if you only take part of the course.

In cases of major illness, it is essential that you contact all of your instructors as soon as you know you will miss more than a day or two of class. *Don't wait until you're better to get in touch.*

** Should a student miss the mid-term or final exam, I will require documentation of a serious, unforeseeable, and unavoidable illness, injury, or emergency before I will allow that student to take an altered version of the exam.

Contacting Me: If you want to speak with me outside of class, please use office hours as your first choice and a call on my cell phone as your second. (Please don't call after 10 p.m.) If you are unable to speak due to illness or you simply must leave me a message in the middle of the night, please feel free to text message me or to leave a message in our WebCT space. No email, please.

Reading Schedule (under construction)

A finalized reading schedule will be distributed on Monday, August 29.

Quizzes may be given on any day, and will usually be given without advance notice. Homework assignments will be made in class and posted on WebCT; you are responsible for all homework assignments, whether or not you were present in class when the assignment was made.

M Aug 22	Introduction to course
W Aug 24	Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken" and Richard Wilbur, "Praise in Summer"; in Mikics, <i>affective fallacy, intentional fallacy, metaphor, and paraphrase</i>
F Aug 26	Introductory plenary session, Doudna Lecture Hall (1210 DFAC)
M Aug 29 W Aug 31	Poetry, poetics, and close reading: Readings TBA
F Sept 2	Plenary: Poems by Emily Dickinson (Doudna Lecture Hall)
M Sept 5	<i>Labor Day—No Class</i>
W Sept 7	Plenary: Dickinson Revisited (Doudna Lecture Hall)
F Sept 9 M Sept 12 W Sept 14 F Sept 16	Close reading: Poetry and short fiction, readings TBA
M Sept 19	Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Wakefield" and "Young Goodman Brown"
W Sept 21	Sigmund Freud, "The Method of Dream Interpretation"
F Sept 23	Plenary: Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (Doudna)
M Sept 26 W Sept 28	Close reading: Short fiction, readings TBA
F Sept 30	Plenary: Hilary Mantel, "The Heart Fails Without Warning" (Doudna)
M Oct 3	Henry James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i>
W Oct 5	Henry James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i>
F Oct 7	Plenary: <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> (Doudna)

M Oct 10	Essay 1 draft workshop
W Oct 12	Essay 1 due
F Oct 14	<i>Fall Break—No Class</i>
M Oct 17	Mid-term Exam
W Oct 19	<i>The House of Mirth</i>
F Oct 21	Plenary: Databases and historicism (Doudna Lecture Hall)
M Oct 24 W Oct 26 F Oct 28	<i>The House of Mirth</i> and Essay 2
M Oct 31	Plenary: <i>The House of Mirth</i> (Doudna Lecture Hall)
W Nov 2	Plenary: <i>The House of Mirth</i> (Doudna Lecture Hall)
F Nov 4	<i>No class—instructor at a professional conference</i>
M Nov 7 W Nov 9	<i>The House of Mirth</i> and Essay 2
F Nov 11	Plenary: Essay 2 workshop (Doudna Lecture Hall)
M Nov 14	Individual conferences on Essay 2; conferences count as class (3345 Coleman)
W Nov 16	Essay 2 due
F Nov 18	Plenary: Announcing the Ringuette Cup (Doudna Lecture Hall)
Nov 21-25	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>
M Nov 28 W Nov 30 F Dec 2 M Dec 5	Ringuette Cup & review for final exam
W Dec 7	Course evaluation & last day to review for final exam
F Dec 9	Final Plenary and Course Conclusion (Doudna Lecture Hall)
Tuesday, Dec 13, 10:15-12:15	Final Exam