

Fall 8-15-2009

ENG 2205-002: Introduction to Literary Studies

Christopher Hanlon
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2009



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

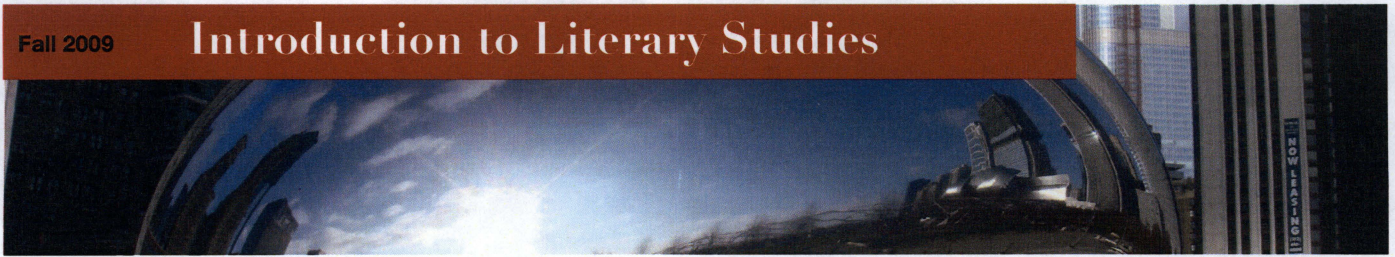
Recommended Citation

Hanlon, Christopher, "ENG 2205-002: Introduction to Literary Studies" (2009). *Fall 2009*. 74.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2009/74

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2009 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2009 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

Fall 2009

Introduction to Literary Studies



Professor Christopher Hanlon
3811 Coleman Hall

Department of English
Office Hours: T, R, 2-3 pm

Introduction to Literary Studies is a course designed to help you learn how to think and read like an English major. English majors read a lot, and they read in frames of mind that are very different from the way in which others read. This is so because, among other reasons, English majors are part of the reading profession. In other words, by deciding to become an English major, you've decided to make reading a full-time job. Hence, it stands to reason that you will need special training.

This semester I'm going to give you that training. You're going to learn how to identify meaningful problems in the literature you read, and you're going to learn how to use a series of specialized tools (conceptual, methodological, and technological) in order to deal with those problems. You're also going to learn about some of the intellectual styles that make up the professional of literary scholarship, and how to find in the constellation of those styles your own identity as a reader and a writer. In these ways and others, this course will engage you in an ongoing discussion, to use Harold Bloom's phrase, over why we read and how.

Course Requirements and Policies

Our class will be coordinated this semester with the two other sections of Introduction to Literary Studies being offered by Professors Randall Beebe and Angela Vietto. Incidentally, this is the first time ENG 2205 has been offered in this way. Professors Beebe, Vietto, 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, the course most equipped to offer you the chance to transform yourself intellectually so that you may bring specialized skills to bear upon the work you'll undertake next year, as juniors, when you study various historical periods of literary production. As three different scholars and teachers with three different sets of ideas about literature, Professors Beebe, Vietto, and I will naturally lead our courses in somewhat different ways, reflective of our somewhat different critical and pedagogical commitments. (The other two, naturally, will have much to learn from me.)

One reason this is important is that in addition to our regular class meetings, Professors Beebe, Vietto, and I have scheduled five Thursday evening sessions that bring together all three sections of ENG 2205 (evening sessions will take place in Coleman Lecture Hall—CH 1255—at 7:30 pm on September 10, October 1 and 15, November 5 and 12). Short writing assignments in response to each evening session will be required. Please put these dates on your calendar now. If you have a Thursday evening class or anticipate another unavoidable conflict with any of these sessions, please let me know so we can arrange for alternative assignments.

One hope we bring to these plenary sessions is that they will also help you to form a community among your fellow beginning English majors, one based upon constant exchange, vigorous, friendly

debate, and most of all a sense of shared endeavor. These are the people by whose side you are going to undertake a degree in English. Building a community on that basis means getting to know not only other people's faces and names, but also how they think, how they read, and how these will change over the next three years.

Grading

Final Grades this semester will be determined in accordance with this formula:

Essay #1	20%
Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	20%
Essay #2	20%
Blog entries.....	10%
Participation	10%
	100%

Two major essays, the first approximately four pages or 1000 words in length and the second approximately eight pages or 2000 words in length. The first paper is due on February 23 and requires you to write an historical analysis of some aspect of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. The final essay is due on April 30 and requires you to develop your own critically-informed argument on Nella Larsen's novel *Passing*. Both papers must exhibit your ability to put the ideas we study to work—that is, to use the critical skills we study and practice as a way to leverage meaning from literary texts in persuasive and sophisticated ways.

Two examinations to be held on October 27 and during finals week (date and time to be announced). Each of these exams will consist of a "short answer" objective section along with an essay section requiring you to write extended, well-crafted answers to pointed questions concerning the materials and methodologies we study in class. The final exam will be cumulative.

Blogging: I've set up a blog for our course, to which students are required to contribute prior to each class meeting. The url for our blog is <http://christopherhanlon1.wordpress.com/>. There are two kinds of entries you'll be making here in order to fulfill the blogging requirement of the course. (1) Prior to each class meeting, you'll log onto the blog site and share some thoughts about one or more of the texts assigned for that meeting. You can write as much as you'd like, but you have to write at least a well-developed paragraph. (2) As you do so, you're going to also look back over the comments from the *prior* class and then respond—again, in at least a paragraph—to one of the comments left by a classmate. For both of these types of blog entries, you should think hard about what you write. I want to see you not only pushing yourself on what kinds of problems, challenges, connections, or ideas the

text(s) provoke for you, but I also want to see evidence that you're putting effort into stating yourself extremely well. English majors are *always* the best writers on campus, because it's something we work at religiously.

Participation in discussion: I expect students to model strong class citizenship in this course, working hard to make our discussion run well. To make the discussion run well: (1) you should read, and as you read you should take notes, record questions, and generally *fight* to understand what you read; (2) you should plan on participating—at least making a comment or asking a question—every day; (3) you should be careful not to dominate discussion (i.e., those of you who are not shy should give other students an opening to participate), and you should participate with tact and civility (take other people's remarks and questions seriously, don't interrupt, respond courteously, etc.). The grade for participation will depend upon meeting all these criteria. I will tend to lavish encouragement on students who engage as strong class citizens. I will tend to become annoyed with students who never have anything to offer or who seem feckless.

If given, occasional reading quizzes will be brief, designed to encourage everyone to keep up with the reading, and will also help me to determine participation grades.

One last note on participation: Participating well doesn't simply mean talking a lot—it means frequently making comments, and responding to the comments of others, showing that you are engaged in a process of careful, close reading. *Idle talk—the kind that simply does not indicate close engagement with the materials we'll be studying—does not help move the conversation forward, and hence does not qualify as participation.*

I'm going on a bit now, but I want to be utterly clear about this: Good participation does *not* require you to come to class knowing all the “answers,” but it *does* require you to understand certain things about the texts under discussion. For instance, one cannot participate competently if one does not understand the events that make up the plot of a work of fiction, or the literal argument of an essay. Many of the readings we will take on this semester will be the most difficult you have ever encountered, and I will not expect you to understand every nuance of every text or argument. But I *will* expect you to come to class after having *fought* to understand as much as possible. If I ask you a question that concerns simply “what happened” in a text—for instance, some element of plot that everyone should know after they've read the text, even if they've read it badly—and you don't know the answer, from that moment on I'm going to regard you as someone who does not take themselves seriously, and I'm also going to take your cue. But knowing literally “what happened” in the text is only the beginning, because much of the reading we'll undertake is going to demand much more from you than that. The key to success in this class will lie in your refusal to become frustrated when faced with difficult concepts—instead, become challenged.

Other Policies

The Close Reading Cooperative: Every English major at Eastern should subscribe to the Close Reading Cooperative, a 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. Practice makes perfect, and the CRC is intended to keep you in practice by pushing to your iPod, laptop, phone, or other

iTunes-equipped device a weekly lesson in literary analysis. Instructions for subscribing to the Close Reading Cooperative appear on the English Department's website: <http://www.eiu.edu/~english/>

Attendance will be taken for each class. With three absences, students will be considered overcut. Overcutting may result in the reduction of the final course grade by a grade or more, depending upon frequency. In the case of an excused absence (as defined by EIU university-wide policy), your excuse must be made in writing, accompanied by the appropriate documentation, and given to me no later than the first class meeting following the absence. In no case may a student accumulate more than six absences, either excused or unexcused, and still pass the course—if illness or other extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than six classes, you should petition for a withdrawal.

One last word related to attendance: I ask that students who have not read the text on the day it is to be discussed not bother coming. Such students cannot contribute anything valuable to the discussion, and in any case it is dishonest for them to benefit from the efforts of others by listening in on their conversations. Always read the assigned materials carefully, but if for some reason you have not, don't bother showing up.

Students who habitually show up for class a few minutes in should find a professor who's into that and take their course instead. This professor is insulted by it and reacts badly.

Late papers will be penalized for their lateness. If they are very late, they may not be accepted at all. I am not unbending in this policy in the case of extreme circumstances, but in order to be granted an extension, students must contact me, with a compelling case to make, at least two days before the paper's due date.

Academic honesty: Students are of course responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism, even if unknowing or accidental, can result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Please note 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 own 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 Judicial Affairs Office.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me to clarify. Also, please make a point of noting the following: I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this course. If I come to suspect misconduct of any kind, I will become dogged about rooting it out, and if my suspicions are confirmed, I will dispense appropriate penalties including, at a minimum, a failing course grade.

Students are responsible for reading all of the material on this syllabus on the date assigned whether or not the work is actually discussed on that date. Students are cautioned that many of the readings are lengthy. I urge you to begin these readings as soon as possible. Occasionally, I will pass out brief, photocopied materials not represented on the syllabus; these are to be read by the next class.

Lastly: You are not welcome to e-mail me while you are a student in this course. When you have a question, problem, or concern, I want to sit down with you and talk at length. That's why I keep office hours. I also want to talk with you about interesting ideas you have this semester, just as I want to talk with you—personally—about the readings we take on and the ways they challenge you. But too many students these days use e-mail as a way to avoid their professors, and that's no way to build that community I mention. When you need to communicate with me, attend my office hours, call me at my office (581.6302), or if it's very important and the other avenues have not worked, call me at home (348.6144). We'll talk.

Required Texts:

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*. 1898.
Nella Larsen, *Passing*. 1929.
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. 1623.
Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*. 1905.

Additional readings available through Booth Library electronic reserve:
<http://www.library.eiu.edu/ereserves/ereserves.asp>
password: ch2205

Reading Schedule:

Why We Read And How: Close Reading	Tue Aug 25	Introduction, course overview
	Thur Aug 27	Eric Clapton, "Wonderful Tonight" Lee Greenwood, "Proud to Be an American"
	Tue Sep 1	Cleanth Brooks, from <i>The Well-Wrought Urn</i> e. e. cummings, "l(a)"
	Thur Sep 3	Shakespeare passages on electronic reserve
	Tue Sep 8	Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique"
	Thur Sep 10	Emily Dickinson, poems on electronic reserve First Plenary, 7:30 pm Coleman Auditorium
The Text as Symptom: Psychoanalytic Reading	Tue Sep 15	Sigmund Freud, "The Method of Dream-Interpretation"
	Thur Sep 17	Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-Stage"
	Tue Sep 22	Lacan, "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty"
	Thur Sep 24	Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"

**"Always
Historicize"**

Tue Sep 29	Henry James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> , 22-59
Thur Oct 1	James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> , 59-120 Second Plenary, 7:30 pm Coleman Hall Auditorium
Tue Oct 6	Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" John Donne, "Elegy XIX"
Thur Oct 8	Edith Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i> , 25-107
Tue Oct 13	Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i> , 107-189 Thorstein Veblen, from <i>The Theory of Economics</i>
Thur Oct 15	Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i> , 189-284 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, from <i>Women and Economics</i> Third Plenary, 7:30 pm Coleman Auditorium
Tue Oct 20	Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i> , 284-305
Thur Oct 22	First Essay due
Tue Oct 27	Midterm exam
Thur Oct 29	William Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i> , Act I
Tue Nov 3	Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i> , Acts II-III
Thur Nov 5	Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i> , Acts IV-V Fourth Plenary, 7:30 pm Coleman Auditorium

**All
Together
Now**

Tue Nov 10	Catch-up day
Thur Nov 12	Tim O'Brien, "How to Tell a War Story"; "The Things They Carried" Fifth Plenary, 7:30 pm Coleman Auditorium
	Friday, Nov 13: Reading by Tim O'Brien
Tue Nov 17	Nella Larsen, <i>Passing</i> , pp. 143-202
Thu Nov 19	Larsen, <i>Passing</i> , pp. 203-242

Tue Dec 1	Peter Rabinowitz, "Betraying the Sender': The Rhetoric and Ethics of Fragile Texts" Students should locate this article, read it, and bring a copy to class. Students should also locate, read, and print one other peer-reviewed article on <i>Passing</i>
Thu Dec 3	Workshop on quoting and citing secondary sources
Tue Dec 8,	No class meeting—conferences in my office
Thu Dec 10	Richard Rorty, "The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature" Final essay due
TBA	Final Examination