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ENG 2205-003: Introduction to Literary Studies

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Introduction to Literary Studies

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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 those 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. So 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 form the profession of literary scholarship, and you're going to begin the process of finding in that constellation 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. 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. More specifically, ENG 2205 is the course best positioned to help you 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 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.) But we share a set of foundational attitudes about literary study, and these attitudes have cohered in the syllabus you hold.

One reason this is important is that five times this semester, all three sections will hold class together in plenary session in Doudna Lecture Hall. One hope we bring to these plenary sessions is that, in addition to providing a forum for the lively exchange of ideas, they will also help you to form a community along with 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, read, and develop 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	<u>10%</u>
	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 October 12 and requires you to write an historically-informed analysis of some aspect of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. The final essay is due on December 9 and requires you to develop your own critically-informed argument on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Both papers must exhibit your ability to put the ideas we study to work—that is, to use the critical skills we practice in order to leverage meaning from literary texts in persuasive and sophisticated ways.

Two examinations to be held on October 14 and during finals week (Wednesday, 18 December). Each of these exams will require 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: Professors Beebe, Vietto, and I have set up blogs for each section of ENG 2205 this semester. In our section, students will be required to contribute to this blog one hour prior to each class meeting. The url for our blog is <http://christopherhanlon2.wordpress.com/>, and you should visit the site as soon as possible in order to post your first entry, due prior to our our second class meeting on Thursday. Now there are three kinds of entries you'll be making here in order to fulfill the blogging requirement of the course. (1) On certain days designated on our reading schedule, you'll be asked to serve as a "first responder," which means that you will contribute a well-developed paragraph or so developing a compelling close reading of a moment from the day's assigned text. (2) On other days, also indicated on the reading schedule, you will be asked to contribute a critique of someone else's first response; that is, you will comment on the close reading developed by one other student in either Professor Beebe's or Vietto's section of ENG 2205. On such days, you'll post your commentary directly to the first response you've chosen (on the other section's class blog) and then copy your entry to our blog as well. (3) On all other days, when you are not either serving as a first responder or critiquing someone else's first response, you'll be writing on your own, developing an insight about whatever text is on the schedule for that day. Often, I will post particular problems I'd like you to engage. Aside from keeping you intellectually limber, I hope the blog will serve as a place for you to try out ideas, take some risks, and work up ideas that could form the germ of a more sustained treatment, perhaps in your midterm or final essay.

But for all types of blog entries, you should think hard about what you write, and not only because you are writing for an audience of about eighty people. I want to see you not only pushing yourself on what kinds of problems, challenges, connections, or ideas the texts 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. The blog is going to help you with that by keeping you to a regular schedule of working on your criticism skills.

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 since I want to be utterly clear about this I'll continue: 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, or what is literally stated in a poem. 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. (Notice that that's the second time I've said that? It's a mantra with me.) 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, I'm going to take that as a clear advertisement that you are not doing the reading, not fighting, and—hence—are not to be taken too very seriously. 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.

The Close Reading Cooperative: Every student enrolled in ENG 2205 must 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, iPad, laptop, or other iTunes-equipped device a weekly lesson in literary analysis. You should watch, practice, and understand that I'm going to hold you responsible for knowing the content of those podcasts, starting now. 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 four absences, either excused or unexcused, and still pass the course—if illness or other extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than four 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 crib 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 irritated 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 above. 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 my mobile phone (549.0130). We'll talk.

Required Texts:

Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*. 1798.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*. 1818

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

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

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 and Form	Tue Aug 24	Introduction, course overview
	Thur Aug 26	Eric Clapton, "Wonderful Tonight" Lee Greenwood, "Proud to Be an American"
	Tue Aug 31	Cleanth Brooks, from <i>The Well-Wrought Urn</i> e. e. cummings, "l(a)"
	Thur Sep 2	First Plenary, class meets in Doudna Lecture Hall Emily Dickinson, poems on electronic reserve
	Tue Sep 7	Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Wakefield" Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" Critique of Vietto's class' first response due one hour prior to class (Vietto's blog; copy to ours)
The Text as Symptom: Psychoanalytic Reading	Thur Sep 9	Sigmund Freud, "The Method of Dream Interpretation"
	Tue Sep 14	Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-Stage"
	Thur Sep 16	Second Plenary in Doudna Lecture Hall Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"

**"Always
Historicize"**

- Tue Sep 21 Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact"
John Donne, "Elegy XIX"
- Thur Sep 23 Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, 25-107

First response on this section of *HOM* due one hour prior to class
(our blog)
- Tue Sep 28 Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, 107-189
Thorstein Veblen, from *The Theory of Economics*
- Thur Sep 30 Third Plenary, Doudna Lecture Hall
Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, 189-284

Critique of Beebe's students' first response due one hour prior to
class (Beebe's blog; copy to ours)
- Tue Oct 5 Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, 284-305
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, from *Women and Economics*

Critique of Vietto's students' first response due one hour prior to
class (Vietto's blog; copy to ours)
First response on this section of *House of Mirth* due one hour prior to
class (our blog)
- Thur Oct 7 In-class writing workshop
- Tue Oct 12 First Essay due beginning of class
- Thur Oct 14 Midterm examination

Wieland

- Tue Oct 19 Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*, pp. 3-69
- Thur Oct 21 Brown, *Wieland*, pp. 70-136

Critique of Beebe's students' first response due one hour prior to
class (Beebe's blog; copy to ours)
- Tue Oct 26 Brown, *Wieland*, pp. 137-197

Critique of Vietto's students' first response due one hour prior
to class (Vietto's blog; copy to ours)
First response to this section of *Wieland* due one hour prior to
class(our blog)
- Thur Oct 28 Fourth Plenary, Doudna Lecture Hall
Brown, *Wieland*, pp. 198-278
- Tue Nov 2 *The Federalist* #10
Edmund Burke, from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
Thomas Paine, from *The Rights of Man*

Critique of Beebe's students' first response due one hour prior to class (Beebe's blog; copy to ours)

Frankenstein

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Thur Nov 4 | Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , pp. 19-71 |
| Tue Nov 9 | Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , pp. 71-128

Critique of Vietto's students' first response due one hour prior to class (Vietto's blog; copy to ours)
First response to this section of <i>Frankenstein</i> (our blog) |
| Thur Nov 11 | Fifth Plenary, Doudna Lecture Hall
Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , pp. 128-159 |
| Tue Nov 16 | Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , pp. 159-189

Critique of Beebe's students' first response due one hour prior to class (Beebe's blog; copy to ours) |
| Thu Nov 18 | Bring to class two printed sources, published between 1810 and 1818, and be prepared to discuss how the sources help us to historicize some aspect of <i>Frankenstein</i> .

Critique of Vietto's students' first response due one hour prior to class (Vietto's blog; copy to ours) |
| Fall Break | Write first draft of Final Essay. |
| Tue Nov 30 | Paul Youngquist, "Frankenstein: the Mother, the Daughter, and the Monster." Locate article in Booth Library, read, and bring to class.

Crisillia Benford, "'Listen to my tale': Multilevel Structure, Narrative Sense Making, and the Inassimilable in Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> ." Locate article using Project Muse, print, read, and bring to class.

Students should also locate, read, and bring to class one other peer-reviewed article on <i>Frankenstein</i> . |
| Thu Dec 2 | Workshop on quoting and citing secondary sources |
| Tue Dec 7 | No class meeting—conferences in my office |
| Thu Dec 9 | Richard Rorty, "The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature."
Final essay due |

Final examination is on Wednesday, 18 December, 8:00 am to 10:00 am, in Coleman 3691.