ENG 2205-001: Introduction to Literary Studies

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**ENG 2205: Introduction to Literary Studies**  
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Spring 2003  
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**Required Texts:**
- Frank Norris, *McTeague*
- Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*
- The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism
- Introduction to Literary Studies (coursepack available at Copy Center in MLK Student Union)

**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. It therefore stands to reason that you will need special training, and that's what this course is meant to provide.

The larger culture, sad to say, is becoming more and more literal-minded, less and less able to read between the lines—to put it simply, the culture is becoming more and more illiterate. It's anyone's guess why this is the case—maybe television's to blame, or the Internet, or instant messaging—but in any case that's not our concern. What is important is to make sure you aren't much like them. Let me be blunt: the way in which non-readers view the world is not simply "different" from the way a reader views it; the reader's way of perceiving is always the better way. The difference between us and them is that we see texts—and therefore almost everything else—more fully, more accurately, with greater understanding and savvy. So let this be the first principle from which we start this course: it is better to be a reader than a non-reader, and it is better to read like a professional than as an amateur. In declaring yourself an English major, you've decided to become a professional reader. And this semester, I'm going to help you realize that goal.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES:**

Final Grades will be determined in accordance with one of these formulae:

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**OR**

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Your choice of either one or two major essays, the first approximately four pages or 1000 words in length and the second either six pages or 1500 words in length, OR one final essay approximately ten pages or 2500 words in length. The first paper is due on February 21 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 May 1 and requires you to develop your own critically-informed argument on Frank Norris' *McTeague*. Both papers will exhibit an ability to put the ideas we study to work—that is, to use critical theory as a way to leverage meaning from the literary texts in persuasive and sophisticated ways.
Three examinations to be held on February 10, March 31, and during Finals Week (date and time to be announced). Each of these exams will consist of an objective section designed to assess the closeness of your reading, along with an essay section requiring you to write extended, well-crafted answers to pointed questions about concerning the materials and methodologies we study in class. The final exam will be cumulative.

Participation in discussion: The course will be conducted primarily as a discussion course (supplemented with short lectures from me). Courses such as this are only truly successful if a high percentage of students participate; it can be unappealing if the discussion turns into a dialogue between the professor and a small handful of students. To make the discussion run well: 1) you should plan on participating—at least making a comment or asking a question—every day; 2) 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); 3) 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. 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 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 help one to gain a high score for participation.*

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 argument. But I will expect you to come to class after having fought to understand as much as possible. The key to success in this class is to refuse to become frustrated—instead, become challenged and diligent.

I will not take attendance in this class. Students who decide not to attend class place themselves at all kinds of disadvantage. But the decision to attend or not rests with you—I will not deduct points from your average at the end of the course if you have not attended consistently, though it will certainly affect your ability to learn the material and to earn participation points.

One last word related to attendance: I would ask that students who have not read the text on the day it is to be discussed absent themselves from class. 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.

Late papers will be penalized one half letter grade for each day they are late. 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 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.

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; these are marked by asterisks in the left margin. 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.

READING SCHEDULE
(items may be added or amended)

I: Close Reading: New Criticism and Russian Formalism

MONDAY 1/13: Introductions, Course Overview
WEDNESDAY 1/15: Eric Clapton, "Wonderful Tonight" (coursepack)
                      Lee Greenwood, “Proud to Be an American” (coursepack)
FRIDAY 1/17: Cleanth Brooks, from The Well-Wrought Urn, pp. 1353-1365
MONDAY 1/20: Martin Luther King Holiday—no class meeting
                    Emily Dickinson, “Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—” (coursepack)
                    John Donne, “The Flea” (coursepack)
                    Donne, “Elegy XIX” (coursepack)
FRIDAY 1/24: Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique” (coursepack)
MONDAY 1/27: Dickinson, “A Route of Evanescence” (coursepack)
                  Dickinson, “Essential Oils—are wrung—” (coursepack)
II: The Historicity of Texts and the Textuality of the Past

WEDNESDAY 1/29:  Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," pp. 1721-1729
FRIDAY 1/31:     Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth, pp. 25-96
MONDAY 2/3:      Wharton, HOM, pp. 96-211
WEDNESDAY 2/5:   Thorstein Veblen, from The Theory of the Leisure Class (coursepack)
                 Wharton, HOM, pp. 211-284
FRIDAY 2/7:       Charlotte Perkins Gilman, from Women and Economics (coursepack)
                 Wharton, HOM, pp. 284-305
MONDAY 2/10:     First in-class examination
WEDNESDAY 2/12:  Foucault, from Truth and Power, pp. 1667-1670
                 Discussion of archive work
FRIDAY 2/14:     Lincoln’s Birthday—no class meeting
MONDAY 2/17:     Reports on archive research
WEDNESDAY 2/19:  Reports on archive research
FRIDAY 2/21:     First Papers due beginning of class

III: Every Text Has an Unconscious and Every Unconscious is a Text: Psychoanalysis and Semiotics

MONDAY 2/24:     Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 919-929
WEDNESDAY 2/26:  Freud, "The Method of Dream-Interpretation" (coursepack)
FRIDAY 2/28:     Ferdinand de Saussure, from Course in General Linguistics, pp. 960-977
MONDAY 3/10 –    Spring Break—no class meetings
FRIDAY 3/14:
MONDAY 3/17: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter" (coursepack)
FRIDAY 3/21: Catch-up day; questions on Lacan
MONDAY 3/24: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (coursepack)
WEDNESDAY 3/26: Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" (coursepack)
Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" pp.1622-1636
MONDAY 3/31: Second in-class examination

IV: Hermeneutics of Suspicion: Feminist Theory & Criticism

WEDNESDAY 4/2: Judith Fetterly, from The Resisting Reader (coursepack)
MONDAY 4/7: Judith Butler, from Gender Trouble, pp. 2488-2501
WEDNESDAY 4/9: Louis Althusser, from Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, pp. 1483-1509
FRIDAY 4/11: Eve Kosofsky Sedwick, From Between Men, pp. 2434-2438
Sedgwick, from Epistemology of the Closet, pp. 2438-2445

V: Case Study: Frank Norris’ McTeague

MONDAY 4/14: Frank Norris, McTeague, pp. 1-96
WEDNESDAY 4/16: Norris, McTeague, pp. 96-175
FRIDAY 4/18: Norris, McTeague, pp. 175-242
MONDAY 4/21: Norris, McTeague, pp. 242-324
WEDNESDAY 4/23: Conferences in my office—no class meeting
FRIDAY 4/25: Conferences in my office—no class meeting
MONDAY 4/28: Research presentations
WEDNESDAY 4/30: Research presentations
FRIDAY 5/1: Final papers due beginning of class
Wrap-up, open discussion, etc.