ENG 3002-002: Research Writing for Literary Studies

Christopher Hanlon
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2007

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2007/97

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2007 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2007 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
ENGLISH 3002: RESEARCH WRITING FOR LITERARY STUDY

Dr. Christopher Hanlon
Office: Coleman Hall 3820
Office Hours: Tu, Th 11-12 & by appointment

Fall 2007
Office Phone: 581.6302

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

TEXTS:  
The Norton Anthology of Critical Theory
The MLA Guide For Writers of Research Papers
Emily Dickinson, Complete Poems.
Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (1855 version).

OTHER:  
Electronic media to preserve your drafts (e.g., flash drive)
An EIU e-mail address; the ability to send and receive Microsoft Word attachments; the ability to download, read, and print PDF files.

ENG 3002 is a course designed to help you write 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. The same is true for the way English majors write, or ought to. In deciding to become an English major, you’ve decided to make reading and writing about reading a full-time job. It therefore stands to reason that you will need special training.

The larger culture, sad to say, is becoming more and more literal-minded, less and less able to read between the lines, to draw fine points of distinction, or to even see the value in doing so—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 readers view 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, nuance, and savvy. Ours is the more fulfilling experience. 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 express the insights that come out of that vocation in ways that befit the undertaking.

One of the ways English majors read—in fact, one of the styles of thinking that separates us from non-readers—is that we like to read with a sense of historical knowingness. That is, we understand that understanding anything usually requires us to understand something about historical context. So we’re going to spend a significant amount of time this semester working on skills related to cultivating historical knowingness, to reading outside the historical vacuum that encloses so much of our intellectual culture, to learning how to become historically-informed readers who can arrive at historically-informed judgments. Some of these skills will involve learning to operate powerful online tools, such as the text-searchable literary and historical archive, in order to learn about the history behind the texts we study today. You will also learn how to use such tools in order to spearhead research projects, to write better, smarter texts.
about the texts you read, and to use such tools—in conjunction with what many prominent
critical theorists have to teach us about the nature of language and of literary texts—to develop
and convey original insights to others (whether through teaching, presentation, or publication).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation: Everyone in this course is an honors student; therefore, in addition to keeping
pace with the assigned readings, homework exercises, and writing projects, students should
come to class prepared to participate. This means that you should come to class with questions
to ask each other, ideas to present, texts to read aloud, and observations to make, and it also
means that you should be courteous to every other member of the class as they offer their own
ideas and questions. It also means that when we workshop each other’s writing, you must be an
active, courteous, and helpful reader and editor.

Note, however, that “participation” does not mean merely talking a lot. In order to participate,
you do have to speak frequently (say, at least once every class meeting), but you also have to
do so in a way that demonstrates active and creative engagement with the course materials
Idle talk—the kind of talk that simply does not indicate such engagement—does not help move
our discussions forward and hence does not qualify as participation.

This is a writing-centered course. While much of our activity in this course will involve reading
and then trading ideas concerning those readings, our primary activity this semester will be
writing. Outside of class, you will be asked to complete drafts of your essay projects for other
class members to read and then (constructively) critique, and our time in class will sometimes be
conducted as writing workshops. I will only sometimes lecture, though I will often promote
discussion. This is because as a professional writer, I believe that writers develop their craft by
writing. The more time we commit to actually writing, and the more time we commit to
discussing that writing with other writers, the more we will develop and hone our individual
talents and perspectives.

Four major assignments will determine the bulk of your grade this semester. The due dates for
the final drafts of three essay assignments appear on the course syllabus, as do the due dates for
preliminary drafts. An in-class presentation will also factor into your grade, which I will determine
at the end of the semester using this formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay #1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay #3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-class presentations will focus upon an historical context that may prove useful as we attempt
to unpack meaning from primary texts. These presentations should strive to do two things: (1)
they should educate the class about the issues, events, and ideas connected with the
presentation topic, and (2) they should hazard some hypothesis or set of hypotheses concerning
the connection between the literary work at hand and the presentation’s subject matter.
Handouts with bibliographies should accompany these presentations, so that class members
can leave with useful notes and a guide for further research. Presentations should last about
twenty minutes.
Our three essays will connect the texts we read with the historical circumstances of their production in order to forward a thesis-driven argument about those texts. The first essay will be approximately six pages long, will focus upon Edith Wharton and is due on October 4. The second essay will be about eight pages long, will focus upon Walt Whitman, and will be due on November 1. The last essay will ask you to develop a statement about both poets, and to call upon secondary scholarship as you do so. That essay will be due on the last day of class, December 6, and will be about eight-ten pages long.

COURSE POLICIES:

Academic Honesty: Please note the English Department’s statement on plagiarism (that is, the intentional or unintentional use of another writer’s intellectual property without proper acknowledgment):

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. 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. That said, let’s not allow this to become an issue for any members of our class.

Attendance: I’ll be taking it for each class, and 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 five absences, either excused or unexcused, and still pass the course – if illness or other extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than five classes, you should petition for a withdrawal.

Another word related to attendance: I ask that students who have not read assigned materials on the day they are 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 after it’s started should find a professor who’s into that and take their course instead. This professor is insulted by it and reacts badly.

Due Dates: Papers and drafts are due on the dates indicated in the course schedule included below. I am sometimes willing to grant extensions if (1) students provide a persuasive reason for me to do so, and (2) the request is submitted in writing at least two class meetings in advance of the paper’s due date.
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 for as long as you need. 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 research we do. But too many students these days use e-mail as a way to avoid their professors, a practice I resist obstinately. When you need to communicate with me, attend my office hours, make an appointment for an alternative time, 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Prelude: Why We Read And How

Week 1
August 21: Introductions; course overview
August 23: Eric Clapton, "Wonderful Tonight" (e-reserves)
Lee Greenwood, "Proud to be an American" (e-reserves)

I: Close Reading, Historical Reading, and The House of Mirth

Week 2
August 28: Cleanth Brooks, from The Well-Wrought Urn (Norton Anthology pp. 1353-1365)
e. e. cummings, "l(a" (e-reserves)
August 30: Kenneth Burke, "Kinds of Criticism" (NA pp. 1272-1278)
Week 3

September 4: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (e-reserves)
September 6: Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique" (e-reserves)
Emily Dickinson, "A Route of Evanescence"

Week 4

September 11: Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" (NA pp. 1721-1729)
John Donne, "Elegy XIX" (e-reserves)
September 13: John Donne, "The Flea" (e-reserves)

Week 5

September 18: Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth, pp. 1-95
September 20: Wharton, HOM, pp. 96-211

Week 6

September 25: Wharton, HOM, pp. 211-284
September 27: Wharton, HOM, pp. 285-305
Thorstein Veblen, from The Theory of the Leisure Class (e-reserves)

Week 7

October 2: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, from Women and Economics (e-reserves)
October 4: First paper due, beginning of class