

# English 181: Introduction to Writing about Literature

TTh 12:30-1:45

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OFFICE HOURS: T 10:30-12:00, Th 2:00-3:30  
and by appointment

INSTRUCTOR: Jason B. Jones

OFFICE: Language 102A

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## Required Texts

- Beaty, Jerome, and Paul Hunter, Eds. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Norton, 1998.
- Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights* (1847). New York: Norton, 1990.
- Hale, Constance. *Sin and Syntax: How to Craft Wickedly Effective Prose*. New York: Broadway, 1999.

It is customary to require a dictionary in English 181; however, Emory pays a considerable site license for you to be able to use the *Oxford English Dictionary* online. This is the finest English-language dictionary available, so purchasing another is superfluous.

Additional readings may occasionally be available on reserve or distributed in class.

## Course Description

This course aims to provide an overview of the techniques of literary analysis and an introduction to collegiate expository writing. To that end, we shall study a variety of formal elements in two of the three major genres of literature: poetry and prose fiction (drama is the third). At the end of the semester, we will test our knowledge on an exemplary nineteenth-century novel, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

The workload will be fairly intense: you can expect to read at least 25-50 pages per day, which you will likely need to read more than once in order to be adequately prepared for class. Also, there will be writing nearly every day.

## Particulars

- Learnlink posts (5%)
- Explication papers (10%)
- Presentations (5%)
- Analytic essays (30%)
- Comparative essay (20%)
- Research paper (30%)

I will provide additional information later about the analytic and comparative essays and the research paper. For now, here are some details about the Learnlink posts, explication papers, and presentations.

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### *Learnlink Posts*

Many times during the semester, you will be required to post a message to the class Learnlink forum on the day before a particular class. These messages are always due by about 6:00 PM on the specified day (thus, for Tuesday, September 5, you should have posted your message on the reading by 6:00 PM on Monday, September 4 at the latest). The deadline is the *last* time at which you can post and receive credit for the assignment; you are obviously encouraged to post both earlier and more frequently.

For further instructions, see the Learnlink forum.

### *Explication Papers*

From time to time, you will be required to write a one to two page explication paper. An explication paper differs from a LearnLink post in that it focuses on only one or two passages in the text and analyzes them closely. You should set aside for a moment your own personal reaction to the text (as in, "I liked/disliked this or that") to the text, and instead analyze the formal qualities of specific passages in a way that supports your own interpretation of the text's meaning.

### *Presentations*

Two presentations are required in this class. In the first presentation, you should give a 20 minute introduction to the reading for the day, raising interesting questions and provoking discussion. Outside research is not required for this presentation. You should, however, be prepared to focus the class on particularly interesting passages in the texts under consideration.

In the other presentation, you must recite a poem from memory. The poem must be at least 30 lines long, and I must approve the choice in advance. These recitations will take place in my office, not during class time. The poem need not be from the *Norton Introduction to Literature*. The recitation should take place before we finish the poetry unit.

## **Course Policies**

1. *Attendance*. Come to class. All situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but chronic absenteeism hurts everyone in the class, most especially you. After two absences (a full week of the semester!), I reserve the right to penalize your grade. I will distribute an attendance sheet for you to sign at the beginning of every class period, so make sure you have signed it before you leave.
2. *Honor*. My minimum response to plagiarism will be to assign an "F" to the assignment in question. In addition, you could very well fail the class, and could even be expelled from Oxford. The risks aren't worth it.
3. *Assignments*.
  - All assignments must be completed to pass the course. This includes Learnlink posts. All assignments must be submitted on time; late work will result in a lowered grade at my discretion.
  - Out of class writing assignments must be turned in word processed (or typed) with lines double-spaced, 1" margins, and in a 12 point proportional font. (For example, Times New Roman in Word.) They also must include your name, the date, the course, a title, and, if applicable, page numbers.

- I hold office hours for your benefit: Please come and talk to me about any concerns you have about the reading, your writing, the class, etc. I am also available outside of office hours by appointment, and I will respond to email within 24 hours (more or less).
4. *Preparation.* Be prepared for class. This means somewhat more than cursorily skimming the pages assigned for a particular day. Preparation means that you have read all of the assigned texts—and in the case of the poetry, that you have read the “focus” texts with particular care, and that you know at least one of the poems intimately. I reserve the right to give quizzes about the content and formal properties of the reading—including the definitions of unfamiliar words. In addition, for every class you should bring a set of questions, concerns, or problems that you would like to raise in class discussion. (These will not generally be turned in, but I will call on people to offer a question at the start of classes.)

## Grading Policy

I grade on a standard A to F scale, and will weigh the various assignments according the formula provided above. Here is a description of what I consider those grades to mean:

### Grading Expectations

- A** The A is reserved for enlightened work that consistently demonstrates evidence of a mind at work. Thus, there must be a striking thesis, there must be multiple reasons supporting your thesis, and there must be evidence (including quoted, interpreted text). Additionally, the paper must meet all of the following criteria:
- A-/B+** Awarded for careful, engaged work combining concise and accurate argumentation with line-by-line analysis. Individual insights must develop coherently and point logically to a conclusion. Your central thesis should be apparent throughout the essay, not just at the beginning and/or the end. You should also explain and “unpack” each insight by referring to supporting evidence in the text and by pointing out the repercussions of each claim. The essay must also be written with clarity, style, and grace. Finally, to receive one of these grades, your essay must conform to the formatting requirements given.
- B** A competent essay meets the basic requirements of an assignment and establishes a viable, if preliminary, response. If its thesis is undeveloped, however, or if its claims and ideas are not supported by evidence, explained coherently, or properly “unpacked,” I assign it this grade. I also give this grade to promising work that lacks the depth or clarity of a B+ or A paper.
- B-:** This is the *highest* grade you can receive for competent work relying largely on plot summary, paraphrasing, or lengthy quotations. It is also the highest grade you can receive for a paper that relies exclusively on the material from the class sessions. Your work will also receive this grade if grammatical or spelling mistakes, lapses in logic, and other signs of poor preparation and haste mar it.

**C+/D:** I assign these grades when work contains many errors, weak analysis, careless or nonexistent argumentation, and signs of poor preparation.

**F:** Students at Oxford are unlikely to receive an F for individual writing assignments. This grade will be assigned at the end of the semester, however, if you consistently receive Ds on assignments, miss class sessions without explanation, or fail to complete assignments.

(Adapted from the grading criteria developed by Christopher Lane, Associate Professor of English, Emory University.)

## Course Schedule

(subject to revision as events warrant)

Th August 31	First day of class Aims of the course; distribution and clarification of the syllabus; first four lines of “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.”	Before the weekend, please post a one-paragraph introduction of yourself to the Learnlink session.  Write: Post Learnlink message by Monday afternoon (9/4).
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### Poetry

“Literature includes the whole Kingdom of Poetry, which is indeed the soul and essence of what is common speech. . . . So that Literature, if it be not Thought, is the Music of Thought; which indeed does not plead to us by logical demonstration and computation, yet awakens mysterious and far more potent impulses than these: the deep tones of Imagination, the deep tones of Fancy, which sound or slumber in every bosom; and once awakened, lead not to this action or that, but to all Action; thenceforward moulding our whole life and mind.” ---Thomas Carlyle.

T	Sept 5	Read: “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister” and “Porphyria’s Lover” (distributed in class 8/31, also widely available online).  Read: Hale xiv-xviii, 1-54	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Wednesday afternoon (9/6); continue to discuss “Soliloquy” and “Porphyria’s Lover” online
W	September 6	Last day to change courses	
Th	Sept 7	Read: “Poetry: Reading, Responding, Writing” in the <i>Norton</i>	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Monday afternoon (9/11); continue previous discussions online.
T	Sept 12	Read: “Understanding the Text: Tone” in the <i>Norton</i> .	Explication papers due next time—bring any questions you have to class.

Th	Sept 14	<p>Read: "Understanding the Text: Tone" in the <i>Norton</i>.</p> <p>Read: Hale 55-74, 257-64.</p> <p>Write: Explication paper on one of the poems from "Some Poems about Love" in the <i>Norton</i>.</p>	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Monday afternoon (9/18).
T	Sept 19	Read: "Understanding the Text: Speaker" in the <i>Norton</i> .	Assignment for Analytic Paper #1 distributed.
Th	Sept 21	Read: "Understanding the Text: Speaker" in the <i>Norton</i> .	<p>In class: Discuss explication papers.</p> <p>Write: Continue discussing poems on Learnlink.</p>
T	Sept. 26	Read: "Understanding the Text: Situation and Setting" in the <i>Norton</i> .	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Monday.
Th	Sept 28	<p>Write: Analytic Paper #1 due.</p> <p>In class: Workshop papers.</p>	Bring 2 copies to class!
T	Oct 3	<p>Read: "Understanding the Text: Situation and Setting" in the <i>Norton</i>.</p> <p>Write: Revision of Analytic Paper #1 due. Bring all materials in a folder.</p>	Have you recited your poem yet?
W	October 4	Last day to drop without penalty	
Th	Oct 5	<p>Read: "Understanding the Text: Language: Precision and Ambiguity" in the <i>Norton</i>.</p> <p>Write: No required Learnlink message.</p>	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Monday (10/9).

T	Oct 10	Read: "Understanding the Text: Language: Metaphor and Simile" in the <i>Norton</i> .	
Th	Oct 12	Read: "Understanding the Text: Language: Metaphor and Simile" in the <i>Norton</i> .  Write: Explication paper on any poem in the "Understanding the Text: Language: Symbol" section of the <i>Norton</i> .	
T	Oct 17	FALL BREAK: NO CLASS	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Wednesday (10/18).
Th	Oct 19	Read: "Understanding the Text: The Sounds of Poetry" in the <i>Norton</i> .  Read: Hale 229-55.	In class: Discuss explication papers.  Assignment for Comparative Paper distributed.  Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Monday (10/23).
T	Oct 24	Read: "Understanding the Text: Internal Structure" in the <i>Norton</i> .	Write: 2 poems and abstract due by Wednesday 10/25.
Th	Oct 26	Read: "Understanding the Text: External Form" in the <i>Norton</i> .	
T	Oct 31	Write: Comparative Paper due.  In-class: Workshop papers.	Bring 2 copies to class.

Th	Nov 2	Read: Hale 183-95.  Write: Revision of Comparative Paper due. Bring all materials to class in a folder.	
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### Fiction

T	Nov 7	Read: "Understanding the Text: Plot" and "Understanding the Text: Point of View" in the <i>Norton</i> : James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado".  Write: No required Learnlink message.	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Wednesday (11/8).
Th	Nov 9	Read: "Understanding the Text: Characterization" in the <i>Norton</i> : Henry James's "The Real Thing."	Assignment for Analytic Paper #2 distributed  Write: TBA.
T	Nov 14	Read: "Understanding the Text: Symbols" in the <i>Norton</i> : Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown."	
Th	Nov 16	Write: Analytic Paper #2 due.  In class: Workshop papers.	Bring 2 copies.
T	Nov. 21	Read: <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , chapters I-IX.  Write: Revisions of Analytic Paper #2 due. Bring all materials to class in a folder.	
Th	Nov 23	THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Monday (11/27).



T	Nov 28	Read: <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , chapters X-XVI.	Research Paper assignment distributed.  Write: TBA.
Th	Nov 30	Read: <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , chapters XVII-XXIV.	
T	Dec 5	Read: Finish <i>Wuthering Heights</i> .  Write: Annotated bibliography due.	Write: Post Learnlink message on new material by Wednesday (12/6)
Th	Dec 7	Read: Essays by Armstrong and Miller in Norton edition of <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	
T	December 12	Last day of class.	
Date TBA		Research Paper due.	