

English 389R: Thirteen Ways of Reading A Good Book: An Inquiry-driven Guide Through Literary Criticism  
Spring 2010  
MWF 12:50-1:40; Humanities 201

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### **Required Texts**

Halpern, Daniel, ed. *The Art of the Story* (anthology)  
Shakespeare. *King Lear*. Norton Critical Edition, 2008.  
Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*.

Multiple online articles on the literary schools and interpretive strategies from such websites as <http://42explore.com/litcrit.htm> and <http://vos.ucsb.edu/browse.asp?id=2718>, among others.

### **Course Description**

This special topics course focuses on the plethora of means we have to interpret literature and any texts for that matter. Readings and interpretations vary according to the particular concepts we apply to them. Often when we read, we inquire into the meaning of a story by applying concepts to that reading without being aware the lens through which we are viewing the story. Literary interpretation calls for us to make a more conscious, deliberate effort to identify and describe the what, the how, and the why of reading and interpretation. In brief, the course involves critical theory as it applies to literature. Three primary literary texts will provide the basic readings of the course, and students will study these selections through the lens of key conceptual models—the psychological, sociological, historical, archetypal, structuralist, post-structuralist, Marxist, and reader response, to mention only a few of the interpretive lenses that may be used.

We will begin with a few short readings of fables, tales, fairytales because they can be read in one quick sitting, yet also call upon interpretation and reflection. The fable is often seen as a story that illustrates a given truth (e.g., *Aesop's Fables*). The tale and fairy tale are stories that illustrate a number of possible truths that may not be given as the moral of the fable was given. Then with the short story, we find ourselves in a fictional (yet palpably real) world in a story conducive to many possible interpretations. Once we move beyond the short story to the world of drama (with the Shakespeare play and the Stoppard play), we have added other levels of possible interpretation to the mix with performance and audience, among other features.

### **Course Objectives/Outcomes**

1. Students will gain knowledge of critical schools, terminology, and interpretive strategies.
2. Students will increase their skill and sophistication of reading with attention to meanings, interpretations, and significances.
3. Students will further develop their writing on and about literature.

## Assignments and Percentage of Final Grade

1. Three essays. (15% x 3 = 45%)
2. A formal paper. (15%)
3. Brief 1-pg response papers, terms notebook, short assignments. (15%)
4. Facilitation/leading class discussion. (15%)
5. A final. (10%)

Brief 1-pg responses. These assignments are the daily/weekly work of the course which emphasize exploration, inquiry, discovery, and application. Each due date will be determined by the class discussion.

The 3 essays: These assignments involve the application of a critical interpretive approach to one (or more) of the readings of the course.

The formal paper. This assignment is similar to the essays except several outside sources can be incorporated into the paper.

Facilitation. In class each day after the first two weeks, one or more of the class will lead class discussion of the reading for the day. There are many ways to do this, and we can prepare together to get each of you underway in this.

Final. An in-class written final exam.

## Readings and Assignments

\*DUE: The 1-pg brief responses and facilitating class discussion assignments cannot be placed on the calendar since they will be decided in class. (30% of grade)

	<u>READINGS</u>	<u>DUE *</u>
January 13, 15:	Selected fables, tales	
January 18	<i>Martin Luther King Holiday</i>	
January 20, 22	Selected fables, tales	
January 25, 27, 29	Halpern, 5 short stories; selected lit crit articles	
February 1, 3, 5	Halpern, 5 short stories; selected lit crit articles	
February 8, 10, 12	Halpern, 5 short stories; selected lit crit articles	Essay 1
February 15, 17, 19	Halpern, 5 short stories; selected lit crit articles	
February 22, 24, 26	Halpern, 5 short stories; selected lit crit articles	
March 1, 3, 5	<i>Lear</i> ; selected lit crit articles	
March 8-12	<i>Spring recess</i>	
March 15, 17, 19	<i>Lear</i> ; selected lit crit articles	Essay 2
March 22, 24, 26	<i>Lear</i> ; selected lit crit articles	
March 29, 31, April 2	<i>Arcadia</i> ; selected lit crit articles	
April 5, 7, 9	<i>Arcadia</i> ; selected lit crit articles	
April 12, 14, 16	Research; selected lit crit articles	Essay 3
April 19, 21, 23	Research; selected lit crit articles	
April 26	Last day of class for MWF classes	Formal paper

April 28                      Reading Day  
April 29 – May 5        Final Exams Week

Exam

### Other Responsibilities and Related Matters

1. Attendance. Be present and on time. I take roll the first thing as class begins, and always mark as absent those who are not in the room. You may miss three class meetings, but I will deduct points (5 pts per absence) from your class participation grade after the third absence. Students who are late must assume responsibility to be certain the attendance record is changed to reflect their attendance.
2. Honor Code. We will discuss this important issue in class, and we will cover plagiarism at that time. But please be aware that your writing is to be your own, and any other person's writing must be acknowledged through citations in the proper form. Please consult the Oxford College Handbook if you have any questions regarding the Code or the Honors Council.
3. Late essays and other work. Work should be turned in on time so that I will be able to give you feedback on that assignment when the class is discussing the assignment. The longer period of time after we discuss an item that goes by, the less relevance and usefulness that assignment will have. For every day that an essay (or other work) is late, I will deduct 5 points (the +, -) from that paper.
4. ***King Lear* will be performed at the Shakespeare Tavern in March, and seeing the play will make writing about it so much more rich and good. So . . . let's talk!**
5. If I have to go to a conference to make a presentation, there will be online blended learning assignments in Blackboard. We will stay in touch through Blackboard/email.