

ENGL-UA 101.001

# Introduction to the Study of Literature

<http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/english-101-2017>

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Spring 2017. ARC LLo3

MW 15:30–16:45

Office hours: 244 Greene, 506, T 15:00–16:30

## Course description

Designed for English majors and minors, this course examines three intertwined questions: What is literature? Why do we read it? and How do we read it? As we will see, any attempt to answer these three questions will take us through various historical, spatial, political, and cultural fields. More precisely, the course will follow a path of engaging with primarily American, English-language aesthetic objects (poems, plays, novels, short stories, essays) alongside a wider scholarly apparatus that has tried to codify, restrict, (de)politicize, champion, demystify, appropriate, critique, quantify, or simply complicate those objects. In so doing, we will see how the study of literature has several histories, geographies, and politics in its relationship with various cultures.

## Goals of the course

- to make you better readers and writers by
  - introducing you to
    - \* the history of literature as an object of study;
    - \* tools and resources provided by the university for literary study;
  - developing your skills in
    - \* reading literary texts carefully and analytically;
    - \* summarizing and presenting analytical texts in class;
    - \* engaging with opinions in academic writing;
    - \* writing short analytical essays about literary texts;
    - \* revising writing; and
    - \* writing analyses that are cogent and syncretic, making use of the various methods on hand.

## Books

- Coovadia, Imraan. *Green-Eyed Thieves* (2006)
- Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *“They Say / I Say”: the Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (2014)

- Johnson, James Weldon. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) (Norton critical edition)
- Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c. 1440)
- Moraga, Cherrié. *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (1983)
- Patel, Shailja. *Migritude* (2010)
- Rankine, Claudia. *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* (2004)
- Roy, Arundhati. *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014)
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest* (c. 1611) (Arden edition)

## Course requirements & policies

### Assessment

#### Plenary sessions

English 101 features four plenary sessions led by four faculty members in the English department. With these sessions, the faculty will give you the opportunity to be exposed both to the diverse set of interests that occupy our department as well as the diverse faculty itself. Each faculty member will be presenting on work that we will have read in class. The plenaries are scheduled for Thursdays and Fridays, as noted below.

#### Participation

**25%** The success of any course is directly related to the levels of engagement brought both by the instructor and the students. As such, class participation is vitally important. Similarly, though attendance is logically required for class participation, it is not sufficient. This class requires active participation both inside the classroom and outside.

You can miss up to three meetings without penalty, and you can use these opportunities tactically, to provide space and time to either fulfill other obligations or recuperate from the previous night. I don't care why you didn't come. I start to care with the fourth absence, and I start to require documentation. Repeated unexcused absence quickly gobbles up the class participation component of the grade and begins to threaten your ability to even *pass* the course.

Plenaries *cannot be missed*.

In a discussion-oriented class, "active participation" involves the following components. All of these are necessary to receive maximum points for participation:

- being in class on time,
- arriving having done the reading for that day,
- having considered the reading and found points of entry into class discussion via questions about specific passages,
- participating in class discussion in ways that build upon contributions from others, and
- refraining from the use of electronic devices.

#### First essay

**15%** The first essay will be in response to a prompt. It should be 900–1200 words long.

#### Second essay

**10%** The second essay features a reading of a passage from a work we have read for class. You should show the passage's importance to the text as a whole. This essay should also be 900–1200 words long. It should also include, marked on the page, the various "templates" (in the Graff and Birkenstein sense) you make use of.

## **Second essay rewrite**

**10%** The rewrite of the second essay is an opportunity to build upon the second essay by incorporating some of the additional texts you have been exposed to in the presentations. This rewrite should be 1200–1500 words long, and it should also feature the aforementioned templates.

## **Presentation**

**20%** Throughout the semester, secondary texts have been paired with with primary reading for that day. At the beginning of the semester, you will choose a secondary text and present on it later in the semester. The presentation should be 10–15 minutes long. It should provide context for the secondary text itself, a summary of the secondary text, and close with suggestions towards how the secondary text enhances our understanding of that day's primary text. Slides, etc., are not necessary. The presentation will be accompanied by a short document (800 words) laying out the same information as the presentation did to be turned in at the same time as the presentation.

## **Final essay**

**20%** The final essay is a critical work on one of the primary texts we have read. It should build on the reading techniques from the first two essays as well as make use of one of the secondary texts from the course. A short précis of the essay (up to 600 words) is due two weeks earlier. It should be the essay in miniature—a prose outline, illustrating the essay's structure, context, and argument.

Because of the expanded context and argument, the essay will include some added research, aided by the skills learned at the library. The strategies Graff and Birkenstein provide will help frame this context and build the argument. The final version of the essay should be 1800–2200 words long.

## **Policies**

### **Assignments**

The assignment instructions, though detailed in the syllabus, may be enhanced or supplemented during the course. If you have any questions about an assignment, you should ask for clarification early. The assignments are due on the dates noted in the syllabus.

The writing can be submitted electronically, *except* for the second essay and its rewrite, which must be submitted in paper form. I prefer 2up (two pages per sheet), two-sided printing. Documents should be formatted sanely: 12pt type and double-spaced.

Late assignments jeopardize both your and my rhythms in the class, so they will be penalized. I will give you feedback and will happily discuss any work with you, but grades should be considered final.

### **Attendance**

As indicated above, attendance is required. Three absences will be excused without supplemental documentation, and I encourage you to use these tactically. Catching up is your responsibility.

Subsequent absence requires formal documentation. Otherwise it begins to harm your final grade. Though class participation is only part of the final grade, extreme absenteeism (more than six meetings missed) will put your ability to pass the course at risk.

Please show up on time to class, as well.

### **Electronics**

Our time in class is meant as a sanctuary from the distractions of the rest of the world. Additionally, our class relies on discussion and engagement, and the front of a laptop screen is a brilliant shield behind which a student can hide, even unintentionally. During our meetings, then, there can be no use of electronic devices. Please also set whatever devices you have but aren't using to silent mode.

## Communication

Communication is vitally important to the pedagogical process, and this course depends on clear communication in both directions. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, the best course of action is to come visit me during my office hours as noted at the top of this page. If your questions, etc., cannot wait until then, then clearly you can also email me. I should respond within 48 hours, but please write again if I do not.

This is a new course, meaning that there will be even more unfinished edges ready to scratch someone than in a typical course. We have a collective goal of learning, however, so if the unfinished edges get to be overwhelming, I'll adjust the parameters of the course appropriately. I'm not out to catch you, nor is this course a process of grotesque punishment. Please don't treat it as such.

Once more, with feeling: *communication is vitally important to the pedagogical process*. If you have concerns or worries, please let me know about them sooner rather than later.

## Disabilities

If you have a disability, you should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities ([mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu); 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, 212.998.4980), which can arrange for things like extra time for assignments. Please inform me *at the beginning of the semester* if you need any special accommodations regarding the assignments.

## Academic integrity

Please look at NYU's full statement on academic integrity<sup>1</sup>. Any instance of academic dishonesty will result in an F and will be reported to the relevant dean for disciplinary action. Remember that plagiarism is a matter of fact, not intention. Know what it is, and don't do it.

## Syllabus

This syllabus is available at the course webpage<sup>2</sup>. A pdf version is also available<sup>3</sup>. The source code and documentation for this document is available at its Github repository<sup>4</sup>. The syllabus is ©2017, Moacir P. de Sá Pereira. It is licensed as Creative Commons 3.0 by-nc-sa, giving you permission to share and alter it in any way, as long as it is for non-commercial purposes, maintains the license, and gives proper attribution. Further information regarding the license, the history of the document, and influences can be viewed at the Github repository.

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<sup>1</sup><http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>

<sup>2</sup><http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/english-101-2017>

<sup>3</sup><http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/english-101-2017/syllabus.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><http://github.com/muziejus/english-101-2017>

## Schedule

Required readings indicated with quotation marks (“”) will be available as pdfs. *The should be printed out for use in class.* The texts for presentations, save the Du Bois, are also available as pdfs.

The list of references at the end of the pdf version of the syllabus provides bibliographic details for all the texts for the course.

### 1. Who is it?

In the first section of this course, we begin by thinking about how literature can describe a person in the world and how that has changed over time.

- Monday, 23 Jan: Introductions
- Wednesday, 25 Jan: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* through ch. 6.
- Monday, 30 Jan: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* to end. Presentation: Du Bois, “Of our Spiritual Strivings” and “The Sorrow Songs.”
- Wednesday, 1 Feb: From S/Z: “Evaluation,” “Interpretation,” “Reading, Forgetting,” “Step by Step,” “The Starred Text,” “The Broken Text,” “How Many Readings?,” “(1),” “(2),” “(3),” and “The Five Codes”; *The Book of Margery Kempe* through ch. 25.
- Monday, 6 Feb: *The Book of Margery Kempe* through ch. 77. Presentation: White, “Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality.”
- Wednesday, 8 Feb: *The Book of Margery Kempe* to end.
- Thursday, 9 Feb; Friday, 10 Feb: Carolyn Dinshaw **plenary**.
- Monday, 13 Feb: **Library visit**; *They Say / I Say* to p. 105.
- Wednesday, 15 Feb: *The Tempest* through Act III. Presentation: Foucault, “Preface” and “Las Meninas.” **First essay due.**
- Monday, 20 Feb: **No class**
- Wednesday, 22 Feb: *The Tempest* to end. Presentation: “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”

### 2. Life during wartime

Next, we look to the role literature plays in the scope of war.

- Monday, 27 Feb: “You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming;” *They Say / I Say* to p. 144.
- Wednesday, 1 Mar: “Prayer in the Furnace” & “War Stories.”
- Thursday, 2 Mar; Friday 3 Mar: Patrick Deer **plenary**.
- Monday, 6 Mar: From *U. S. A.*: “Newsreel XIV,” “Emperor of the Caribbean,” “The Camera Eye (20),” “Newsreel XXII,” “The Camera Eye (30),” “Randolph Bourne,” “Newsreel XXIII,” “Newsreel XXIX,” “The Camera Eye (36),” “Meester Veelson,” “Newsreel XXX,” “Newsreel XXIV,” “The House of Morgan,” “Newsreel XXXV,” “The Camera Eye (39),” “Newsreel XLIII,” “The Body of an American,” “Newsreel LXVIII,” “The Camera Eye (51).” Presentation: Martí, “Our America.”
- Wednesday, 8 Mar: *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*.
- Friday, 10 Mar: **Second essay due.**
- Monday, 13 Mar: **Spring Break**

### 3. Around the world

What does it even mean to speak of “English” literature? Is this distinction important?

- Monday, 20 Mar: *Green-Eyed Thieves* through p. 125. Presentation: Dimock, “Genre as World System: Epic and Novel on Four Continents.”
- Wednesday, 22 Mar: *Green-Eyed Thieves* to end. Presentation: Cheah, “Missed Encounters: Cosmopolitanism, World Literature, and Postcoloniality.”
- Monday, 27 Mar: *Migritude* through p. 72.
- Wednesday, 29 Mar: *Migritude* to end.
- Thursday, 30 Mar; Friday, 31 Mar: Jini Kim Watson **plenary. Second essay rewrite due.**

### 4. Who will survive in America?

Finally, how does the world reconstruct itself in an American milieu?

- Monday, 3 Apr: “The White House,” “A Capitalist at Dinner,” “The Tropics in New York,” “If We Must Die,” “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “The Weary Blues,” “White Man,” and “Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria.” Presentation: Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism.”
- Wednesday, 5 Apr: “kitchenette building,” “obituary for a living lady,” “the mother,” “the soft man,” “when Mrs. Martin’s Booker T.,” and *Riot*. Presentation: Baldwin, “The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American.”
- Monday, 10 Apr: *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (selections).
- Wednesday, 12 Apr: *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (selections). Presentation: Anzaldúa, “La Prieta.”
- Monday, 17 Apr: *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* through p. 59. Presentation: Cheng, “The Melancholy of Race.”
- Wednesday, 19 Apr: *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* to end. Presentation: Berlant “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency).”
- Monday, 24 Apr: “Native Sons” & “A Confession.”
- Wednesday, 26 Apr: “Waterfalls” & “The Call of Blood”
- Thursday, 27 Apr; Friday 28 Apr: Jess Row **plenary. Final précis due.**
- Monday, 1 May: Debrief.
- Wednesday, 3 May: **No class.**
- Wednesday, 10 May: **Final essay due.**

## Calendar

Thursday plenaries are 18:25–19:40 in the Event Space, 244 Greene. Friday plenaries are 11:00–12:15 in the Event Space, 244 Greene. “P:” is the secondary text for which a student will be presenting that day.

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<i>Who Is It?</i>				
23 Jan	Introductions	Johnson		
30 Jan	Johnson; P: Du Bois	Barthes & Kempe;		
6 Feb	Kempe; P: White	Kempe	Dinshaw plenary	Dinshaw plenary
13 Feb	Library visit; Graff & Birkenstein	Shakespeare; P: Foucault;	<b>1st essay due</b>	
20 Feb	<b>No class</b>	Shakespeare; P: Benjamin		
<i>Life during Wartime</i>				
27 Feb	Fallon; Graff & Birkenstein	Klay	Deer plenary	Deer plenary
6 Mar	Dos Passos; P: Martí	Roy		<b>2nd essay due</b>
13 Mar	<b>Spring Break</b>			
<i>Around the World</i>				
20 Mar	Coovadia; P: Dimock	Coovadia; P: Cheah		
27 Mar	Patel	Patel	Watson plenary	Watson plenary; <b>2nd essay rewrite due</b>
<i>Who Will Survive in America?</i>				
3 Apr	Hughes & McKay; P: Césaire	Brooks; P: Baldwin		
10 Apr	Moraga	Moraga; P: Anzaldúa		
17 Apr	Rankine; P: Cheng	Rankine; P: Berlant		
24 Apr	Row	Row	Row plenary	Row plenary; <b>Final précis due</b>
1 May	Debrief	<b>No class</b>		
8 May		<b>Final essay due</b>		

## References

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "La Prieta." In *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2nd ed., edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 198–209. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983.
- Baldwin, James. "The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American." In *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son*. 1961. New York: Vintage Books, 2013.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Translated by Richard Miller. 1970. New York: Hill / Wang, 1974.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, 253–264. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Berlant, Lauren. "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)." *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (2007): 754–780. doi:10.1086/521568.
- Brooks, Gwendolyn. *Blacks*. Chicago: Third World Press, 1987.
- . "kitchenette building." In *Blacks*, 20.
- . "obituary for a living lady." In *Blacks*, 34–35.
- . "Riot." In *Blacks*, 469–480.
- . "the mother." In *Blacks*, 21–22.
- . "the soft man." In *Blacks*, 25.
- . "when Mrs. Martin's Booker T." In *Blacks*, 24.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. 1955. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Cheah, Pheng. "Missed Encounters: Cosmopolitanism, World Literature, and Postcoloniality." In *What Is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*, 1–22. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Cheng, Anne Anlin. "The Melancholy of Race." *The Kenyon Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 49–61.
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- . "The Sorrow Songs." In Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 187–196.
- Fallon, Siobhan. "You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming." In *You Know When the Men Are Gone*, 189–207. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2011.
- Foucault, Michel. "Las Meninas." In *Order of Things*, 3–16.
- . "Preface." In *Order of Things*, xv–xxiv.
- . *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. 1966. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *"They Say/I Say": The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. 3rd ed. 2006. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014.
- Hughes, Langston. "Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria." In *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 143–146.
- . *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, edited by Arnold Rampersad and David E Roessel. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- . "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." In *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 23.



- Hughes, Langston. "The Weary Blues." In *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 50.
- . "White Man." In *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 194–195.
- Johnson, James Weldon. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*, edited by Jacqueline Denise Goldsby. Norton Critical Edition. 1912. New York: W. W. Norton, 2015.
- Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Translated by Anthony Bale. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Klay, Phil. "Prayer in the Furnace." In *Redeployment*, 129–167.
- . *Redeployment*. New York: Penguin Books, 2014.
- . "War Stories." In *Redeployment*, 213–236.
- Martí, José. "Our America." In *José Martí: Selected Writings*, edited and translated by Esther Allen, 288–296. 1891. New York: Penguin Books, 2002.
- McKay, Claude. "A Capitalist at Dinner." In *Complete poems*, 136.
- . *Complete Poems*, edited by William J. Maxwell. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
- . "If We Must Die." In *Complete poems*, 177–178.
- . "The Tropics in New York." In *Complete poems*, 154.
- . "The White House." In *Complete poems*, 148–149.
- Moraga, Cherríe. *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*. Expanded 2nd ed. 1983. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.
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- . "The Call of Blood." *Harvard Review*, no. 38 (2010): 122–149.
- . "Waterfalls." *Conjunctions*, no. 54 (2010): 306–318.
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