

**English 1102.090: Reading Literature and Culture (Online)**  
**Digital Culture - Winter 2017 - Douglas College**  
**David N. Wright / wrightd@douglascollege.ca**  
**Course Conduct and Expectations**

---

**General Guidelines: Discussion Threads and Online Course Sequencing**

A fully online course is a funny beast. We lose a lot of face-to-face interaction that we might get if we were in a room together. We need to recreate that interaction as best we can and provide space for everyone to chime in with what they think about the texts and themes under discussion in the course.

To this end, much of the course's interaction will be conducted through discussion threads. Organized around the fifteen weeks of the semester, these threads will represent our discussion of the text or theme due for the week. Generally, I will lead the thread by asking a question, or giving you a task—"prompting" you to do something and talk back. As we build up steam moving through the course, the threads will be a valuable space to track your learning, ask questions, and generally take stock of what the course is, or has been, about.

To help orient ourselves in the online space, it's helpful to impose a rubric—or set of expectations—to help us keep track of when we should be contributing and what stage the class discussion is at for that week. Here's a rubric for this course:

--	--	--	--

Day of the Week	What happens?	Where are we at? What stage is the discussion?	How should students be involved? (My expectations for your involvement)
Monday, anytime before 5pm	DNW posts a prompt on the comment thread for that week, usually indicated by the name of the text or the theme we're interested in for that week.	Early stages, feeling our way, making basic connections.	Ask questions about comprehension, basic concepts, check your learning.
Monday 5:01pm - Wednesday 5:00pm	Discussion continues amongst those in the class. People dive in, dive out, at different times ask questions, make comments, reflect.	Getting more complicated, making connections, using literary terminology; we've left basic stuff behind, conversation is richer, more precise.	Fewer responses, but more robust ones. Give time for people to come in and make comments.
	The Reader	We're making	You're making sure

<p>Wednesday 5:01pm - Friday 5:00pm</p>	<p>Responses are up so conversation in the comment threads shifts to those responses, but some threads are still active, depending on what people need or want to talk about.</p>	<p>connections between the Reader Responses and the earlier threads, thinking more robustly, winding down and checking our learning.</p>	<p>to ask questions if there are things unresolved before we turn to the next subject, thinking about what we've been discussing in the course, responding to your classmates.</p>
<p>Friday  5:01pm - Monday 5:00pm</p>	<p>Less activity as we wait for the next module to start, but people might still want to reflect on the upcoming reading, issues they're having, or thoughts that occurred out of sequence.</p>	<p>Late stages, merging together with upcoming texts / themes; anticipating discussion to come.</p>	<p>Chime in as you wish, discuss complexities, connections, upcoming reading, problems you might be having with the text.</p>

In every instance, I will monitor the conversation threads and will be present in them. Generally, I will be present in threads on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, at some point during the day. I will usually announce my presence through a Blackboard announcement. You shouldn't expect me in there all the time, nor do I expect you in there all the time. In an online course, conversations evolve and emerge sometimes quickly and sometimes over long periods of time. Make sure you read the threads before you chime in so that you do not repeat on-going or resolved conversations. Taking that into account, you can post to a thread or complete most other aspects of this course at your leisure. If 3am works for you, then fine; but don't expect everyone else in the course to be present at that time—give others the space to work at their own leisure.

**Important:**

Generally, the comment threads are designed to encourage discussion. You need to be able to discuss your thinking and the outcomes you arrived at—even if those outcomes are total failure. The point of the comment thread is to create a space where we can discuss your learning as it evolves. It is not a space to present perfected thoughts—leave that for essays and exams. It should go without saying, but you need to have done the reading. **All of it.** Carefully. Before you go into the comment threads. You should arrive in the thread ready to play. Nothing is more annoying than people asking about plot events or content, who have clearly not read the book and are looking to the threads for a shortcut. If you are not prepared, I reserve the right to block you from the thread until you are prepared because you cannot possibly contribute without having done any preparatory work.

## **Discussion Thread Participation:**

Since conversations are essential to the quality of this class, we will work together to create an atmosphere premised on difference. College-level discourse does not shy away from sensitive issues, including questions of race, gender, class, sexuality, politics, and religion, and neither will we. There are going to be differences in opinions, beliefs, and interpretations when we read literature, question it, and engage history and culture. You need not agree with the arguments presented in discussion threads or with what your peers or I have to say. In fact, it is important to think critically and question course material. But please do so intelligently, without the assumption that everyone agrees with you or shares your experiences. Difference is central to creating a discussion in which a variety of ideas can be exchanged and points of view can be explored. Ultimately, what is crucial to this course is that you are comfortable expressing yourself and your ideas. If, for whatever reason, you are not, then you should notify me immediately. I understand that some people are more comfortable discussing ideas, concepts, or what they have learned, than others. That said, participation augments learning. If you are not comfortable in discussion threads, as written statements that reflect your level of knowledge and comprehension, you will have difficulty getting anything out of this course. You cannot “troll” discussion threads, contributing nothing, and expect to be successful in the course learning objectives. As with many other things, you will get out of discussion what you put into it.

## **Expectations for Discussion Threads:**

I expect that you will be spending anywhere from 6–8 hours each week working

on the materials for the course, either through reading, the discussion threads, the Reader Responses, or essay drafting (or all four). If you are doing less than that, you're not meeting the expectations for the class and can expect the results that come with lack of effort and engagement.

How much time should you spend in the discussion threads? That's up to you. You'll have no doubt noticed by now that the comment threads are not a graded aspect of this course. Suffice to say, you should spend at minimum two hours a week, especially if you do not have a Reader Response due, discussing the course in discussion threads. In general, the time you spend contributing to the discussion threads is the same as time you would be physically present in the classroom.

---

### **Discussion Climate:**

Douglas College is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe working and learning environment for all its members. Students and faculty members are expected to adhere to the [User Conduct Policy](#). Students should alert me immediately if they have any questions about this policy and its application, or if they have concerns about course proceedings or participants. I reserve the right to exclude individuals from discussions if their conduct does not reflect the above.

---

**Trigger Warning:**

In this course, we will encounter descriptive scenes that some might find unsettling—drug abuse, murder, poverty, child abuse. If at any point you feel uncomfortable being present while the material is being discussed, please feel free to remove yourself from that discussion, either before that discussion happens or, if you are caught unaware, in real time. No explanation is needed. However, if the analysis of the course texts will be difficult enough to prevent your success in the course, please contact me by Email; discussions between you and I through Email remain private. Plot synopses of all the texts we will encounter are readily available on Wikipedia, feel free to consult the synopsis beforehand and decide if the content of this course is the right fit for you.