

English 300: Introduction to the Study of Literature

- MWF HPAC 134, 1:00-1:50am
- Dr. Williams
- 201 HPAC
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- Office Hours: Wed 10-11 & 12-1; Thur 11-2

Required Texts

- Hamilton. *Essential Literary Terms*. (Norton) ISBN: 978-0-393928-37-2
- Pollak. *Getting from College to Career*. (Harper Collins) ISBN: 978-0-062069-27-6
- Burney. *Evelina*. (Norton) ISBN: 978-0-393971-58-3
- King. *Carrie*. (Anchor) ISBN 0-345-80681-6
- Walker. *The Color Purple*. (Mariner) ISBN 0-15-602835-2
- Additional readings assigned by instructor available electronically or as print handouts.

Course Description

From the academic catalog: *Terminology and methods for the study of literature and criticism, involving the scrutiny of primary and secondary text as well as independent research. Required for English majors. Students who wish to major in English should complete this course before enrolling in English courses above 301.*

While we all begin our relationship with literature as children, reading literature for pleasure and studying literature as an academic discipline are as different as watching the history channel and taking a history exam. Professional literary scholars go far beyond identifying with characters and being emotionally engaged with the plot of literary texts.

This course provides an introduction to advanced study of literature and a taste of what professional literary scholars do. Students in this class will establish a foundation in understanding the genres, canons, literary terms, critical approaches, and research methods used in English studies.

As a student in a 300-level course, you are expected to be able to read the literary texts and understand the basics of plot, characters, or argument on your own. Class discussion will be used to go beyond the basics. Every student is expected to complete each day's reading assignment in time for class, to take notes on the reading, and to participate in the discussion taking place that day concerning the reading.

Course Objectives

Students will

Understand and practice disciplinary terms, divisions, theories, and methodologies of literary studies.

Practice close reading and critical analysis of literature.

Practice locating, synthesizing, and integrating information and ideas from secondary sources and literary texts into oral academic arguments and formal academic essays.

Explore the role and applications of literary studies within the university and beyond.

Final Grade Percentage

A = 90-100; B+ = 87-89.99 B = 80-86.99; C+ = 77-79.99 C = 70-76.99; D+ = 67-69.99 D = 60-66.99; F = 0-59.99

Paper Grading Criteria

Articulates a clear argument for literary analysis (good arguments are original, significant, and ambitious)

Demonstrates adequate preparation (shows understanding of previous scholarly work, theoretical concepts, contextual information, and/or textual details relevant to the argument)

Supports all claims by skillful and thorough textual citation and analysis.

Uses appropriate research methods (finding, citing, and integrating research and evidence from literary and/or critical texts)

Shares outstanding results (original, relevant, and significant conclusions based on the paper's argument)

Presents ideas effectively (organized, articulate, stylistically engaging, grammatically correct, and well-supported with evidence)

Uses an appropriate form for communicating to the intended audience (academic voice)

Description of different grades for papers

- A. These papers are brilliant, original, insightful, and articulate, surpassing all of the above criteria and doing particularly well in four or more areas; such papers are a rich pleasure to read and instruct even experts about their subject matter.
- B. These papers are very good, meeting all of the criteria and exceeding basic requirements in two or more areas.
- C. These papers meet all of the basic criteria or, if they are deficient in one area, compensate for it in another; these are satisfactory papers that meet the needs of the assignment. There may be a lack of specific textual analysis, or there may be a lot of unnecessary reference to textual details and quotations which are not clearly linked to the argument of the paper, including frequent instances of "unattached quotations."

- D. These papers fail to meet some of the criteria, but most of the pieces are in place. Using inappropriate sources without violating the rules for citation falls into this category. These papers present a poorly defined thesis claim, little or no interpretive/critical context, or inconsistently addresses several ideas that are only loosely related, and treats its subject matter with little insight or development.
- F. These papers do not meet the requirements of the assignment, often lacking a clear thesis claim or restricting themselves to plot summary or summary of previous research, or they indulge in plagiarism (either intentionally or due to carelessness). Any plagiarism in a paper (from a single line to full paragraphs) is *unacceptable* and will result in an "F." If even one sentence of your paper contains words, phrases, and/or ideas from an uncited outside source, you fail the assignment; with more excessive plagiarism, you fail the course and earn an X grade on your transcript. If you use a source and do not cite it for any reason (forgot, fell and hit your head, fingers refused to type, or purposely tried to use others' work as your own), this is plagiarism.

Writing Requirements

General Rules: Many of these assignments require incorporating scholarly sources. Here, a "scholarly source" refers to something you've found via the *MLA Bibliography* database: typically this means books, chapters in book-length collections of essays, or articles in peer-reviewed journals. All sources should be relatively recent, published within the last 10 years or so. Book reviews or short notes will not count for this assignment ("Notes" would include, for instance, items in the *Explicator*, *Notes and Queries*, and *American Notes and Queries* [ANQ]).

All papers must be original and cannot do double-duty for two classes or stem from earlier work you have done. Papers must be handed in during class on time. Use at least 11-point font for grownups. Double-space with one-inch margins.

Follow the checklist on the Writing about Literature link on the English Dept. webpage for reminders about formatting. As standard practice, every formal essay should have

- a title,
- an introduction,
- a powerful and original thesis or claim,
- well-developed and focused paragraphs that support and develop your thesis with carefully analyzed evidence (topic sentences will help you achieve this goal),
- strong transitions that help guide your readers through the logic of your ideas, and
- a conclusion that points to the significance or implications of your argument.

When you use any primary or secondary sources, cite them appropriately using MLA style, including in-text citations and a Works Cited page.

Assignments

As due dates for assignments approach, students will be given specific handouts, and we will discuss requirements and criteria.

Assessment item	Percentage of final grade
Participation	15
Resumé and cover letter	5
Essay 1	10
Presentation on literary period	2.5
Essay 2	10
Presentation on literary term	2.5
Essay 3	10
Presentation on literary theory	10
Annotated bibliography	5
Critical perspectives essay	15
Literary or career-related review	5
Final examination	10

Descriptions of Major Assignments

Participation

Maintain active class participation, including in-class and daily reading and/or writing assignments, worth 15% of your grade. Active participation includes contributing thoughtfully, enthusiastically, and consistently to daily class discussions and activities, preparing for those discussions by completing all assigned readings and homework, and attending all class meetings. (See Participation Grading Criteria.) For instance, if you come to class regularly and make a short comment every once in a while, the grade falls roughly in the C category.

Literary or career-related review

Complete a literary or career-related event review worth 5% of your grade—one or two double-spaced pages with a title.

Write a one- or two-page review of a literary or career-related event which you attend outside of class. Events could include a play, poetry reading, visit from a contemporary writer, interview with a former English major who is now working in a field you find interesting or attending a graduate school, participation in the literary magazine or a literary club special event, etc.

Your response paper must evaluate the impact of the event you attended on your understanding of the role of English outside of the university. First, briefly summarize the event, then explain how the event helped you to see how aspects of English studies apply in the professional world. Provide evidence and details from the event to illustrate your points. It's not just a report: have a point to make about it.

Presentations

Complete separate, individual presentations: on a literary period and on a literary term. 2.5% each

Complete a small-group presentation worth 10% of your grade. Students will focus on a theory. Theory: In a 15- to 20-minute presentation, explain the major principles of a literary theory and show how that theory can be applied to an outside text of your choice. You may choose from one of these five theories: cultural studies, deconstruction, feminist/gender criticism, New Criticism/Formalism, or Postcolonial Studies.

Essays

Complete three Essays, worth a total of 30% of your grade. You will have a choice from among four options; you may do all four and I will count only the best three grades. I will give prompts.

Annotated Bibliography

Complete an annotated bibliography worth 5% of your grade. The subject of your bibliography will be the text and research question you have chosen for your final research paper. As you prepare for the research paper, compile an annotated bibliography of six secondary, scholarly sources (books, articles, or chapters from an edited anthology) from the *MLA Bibliography* (search MLA first, then find full-text in *Project Muse*, *JSTOR*, and *Academic Search Complete*). Remember to read articles that discuss your text but approach it in ways you had not considered before. Your goal is to learn more about your topic, not merely confirm what you already believe.

An annotated bibliography includes full citation information in MLA style for each source as well as a paragraph that summarizes the argument of the text in your own words (i.e., not just the topic and what the critic “talks about”), identifies the critical perspective of the author(s) and the type of evidence used to support the text’s point, and evaluates the strengths and/or weaknesses of the argument. You may occasionally integrate BRIEF quotes, but in general you should summarize or analyze in your own words.

Critical Perspectives Paper

Write a 5-7 page Critical Perspectives paper that defines the issues and debates in the critical writing about your text and author, and suggests areas of further research. Worth 15% of your grade. You will probably use language from your Annotated Bibliography, but in this paper you closely relate all of the critics to one another, finding the points on which they disagree or overlap, and evaluating their arguments and evidence. As a scholar now familiar with the critical material surrounding your author, you then compose your own research question—one that would advance or contribute to the current writing on your topic. On what issue do critics disagree? What is the debate among scholars? What remains unsolved? What has been overlooked? What assumptions have gone untested? This final assignment is meant to demonstrate the truism that we do research not so much to answer questions about literature, but to find out what questions are worth asking.