English 2140 Sample syllabus 3

ENGLISH 2140
Introduction to Literary Studies
Class Schedule | Classroom | Computer #
<course website>

Instructor
Office:
Phone # | email address
Office Hours:

English 2140 introduces English majors to the reading methods and critical approaches that characterize the discipline of literary studies. In this class we will read a wide range of literary texts in the genres of poetry, drama, and fiction. We will direct our attention to developing and honing skills in close reading—the rigorous examination and interpretation of literary texts. At the same time, we will also explore some of the key movements and methods of literary and cultural interpretation since the mid-twentieth century: the New Criticism, feminist criticism, Marxist analysis, psychoanalytic criticism, reader-response criticism, queer theory, new historicism, postcolonial criticism, and cultural studies.

This will be a writing intensive course, meaning, in practical terms, that a large portion of the final grade is determined by grades on written assignments and that you will get feedback on your writing and you will have the opportunity to further develop your ideas and your skill in communicating them through substantial revisions of your work. You will complete a variety of writing assignments—from short, informal exercises to a lengthy formal, critical paper. These assignments will help you in developing skills in critical reading and thinking which will be crucial to your success as an English major.

Whatever your level of knowledge and skill coming into the course, I hope that this semester will be one of great growth for you as a reader, critic, and scholar of literature.

Goals for the Course

At the end of this class, you will be able to
- discuss the complexity of the concept of “literature”
- identify and explain the fundamental features of the genres of poetry, fiction, and drama
- analyze literature and explain how various components of literature work together to create meaning.
- define key literary, critical, and theoretical terms/concepts and implement these in oral/written discussion as well as in literary interpretation
- recognize, compare, and evaluate major critical theories and apply them to works of literature
- perform basic research using various research tools and bibliographies
- analyze critical secondary sources on literature
- critique literature using both primary and secondary sources
- describe, examine, and evaluate your own reading practices and oral/written critical analyses
- apply writing and revision as tools for understanding literature and its interpretation

Prerequisite: ENGL 1102 or equivalent, passed with a grade of “C” or higher.

TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Required:
3. ENGL 2140 Course Packet (available at the Campus book store.)

Strongly Recommended (for this class and beyond):
- college-level dictionary
- guide to literary/critical terms

Also needed:
- a single-subject spiral notebook (150 pages at least) to serve as a double-entry notebook (see assignment sheet)
- a 3.5 diskette or CD-ROM(s) for turning in electronic copies of your papers

Please note: This syllabus, especially the calendar, may be altered as the semester develops. I will provide ample notification of any such changes in class. It will be your responsibility to keep up with any alterations by attending class and, in the event you are not able to attend, getting notes from another student. You may also check the course website (address at the head of this document) for announcements and other information, but you should rely first and foremost on announcements made in class.

ASSIGNMENTS

Critical Paper (40% of final grade): After the mid-term, you will write a 7-page formal interpretation of one or more of the literary texts read in the class. The paper will make use of outside research. A formal proposal will be required, as will a draft, which I will read and comment on. This formal assignment will give you valuable experience in developing and writing a rigorous literary interpretation. A detailed assignment sheet, which will lay out the specifics of the paper, is forthcoming (after the midterm).
Short Writing Assignments (20% of final grade): Throughout the course, I will assign a number of short writing tasks (“how to” papers, microthemes, reflection pieces, and so forth). Generally speaking, these will be informal pieces designed to help you master particular blocks of course material or practice crucial skills, such as particular types of interpretation. Your performance on these assignments will be evaluated on the basis of quality, but will not be evaluated for style, grammar/syntax, and the like.

Explication Paper (10% of final grade): Early in the semester, you will develop and write a short paper (3-5 pages) establishing the particular relationship(s) between an overarching theme in a single poem and the poem’s constituent parts. The explication paper will give you concentrated practice in the technique of close reading, an essential skill for English majors. There will be a required draft.

Double-entry notebook (15% of final grade): Throughout the semester, you will keep a journal in which you will record copious notes on class discussions, lectures, and your readings for the course. The distinguishing feature of the double-entry notebook is the requirement that after writing an initial entry, you return a few days later and review it, writing responses on the facing page. This notebook will be evaluated periodically over the course of the semester, with an eye toward the depth of thinking and engagement with the subject that the entries demonstrate. See the assignment sheet (handed out in the first couple days of class) for details.

Class Participation (5% of final grade): Group discussion is a very important segment of this class. Your thoughtful and informed participation demonstrates that you feel you have a stake in the class and in the intellectual community that the class develops into through our discussions. I therefore strongly encourage you to become an active member of the class community as it forms over the course of the semester.

Accordingly, at the end of the semester, I will reward thoughtful participation in the class with a strong class participation grade, tepid participation with a so-so participation grade, and frequent absences and/or hindrance to class discussions with a “zero” for class participation.

PROJECTED SCHEDULE

Week 1

Week 2
Due: Required revision of “how to” paper—instructions for reading a poem.
Week 3
**Poetry continued** (Poems TBA) **Due:** Paraphrase of a poem **Due:** Explanation of how a metaphor or other figure operates in a poem

Week 4
What is theory and what does it do? “Why Theory?” (*Toolbox* ch. 1)
**Author/ Authority:** “Author/ity” (*Toolbox* ch. 2) Poetry TBA **Due:** Explication paper
draft 1 **Due:** Microtheme – What is your theory of Literature? **Due:** “How to” paper — Instructions for reading a piece of fiction.

Week 5
**Fiction:** “Elements of Fiction” (Lit), Atwood, “Happy Endings” (Lit), Louise Erdrich, “The Red Convertible” (Lit) **Reading:** “Reading” (*Toolbox* chap. 3) Morrison, “Recitatif” (packet) **Due:** Required revision of “how to” paper — instructions for reading a piece of fiction.

Week 6
**Subjectivity:** “Subjectivity” (*Toolbox* chap. 4), Franz Kafka, “Before the Law” (*Toolbox* 48-49), Hughes, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (Lit), **Drama:** “Elements of Drama” (Lit), Glaspell, *Trifles* (Lit) **Due:** Revised Explication paper **Due:** “How to” paper — instructions for reading a dramatic work.

Week 7
**Drama:** continued, Glaspell, continued, **Culture:** “Culture” (*Toolbox* chap. 5) Arnold, selections from *Culture and Anarchy* (packet) **Due:** Required revision of “how to” paper—instructions for reading a dramatic work.

Week 8
**Culture continued:** Discussion of a popular film (film TBA) **Due:** Reflection paper on the first half of the semester

Week 9
**Ideology:** “Ideology” (*Toolbox* chap. 6), Hemingway, “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” (Lit), Literary Research Methods **Due:** Proposal for final paper – first draft

Week 10
**History:** “History” (*Toolbox* chap. 7), Morrison, *Beloved* **Due:** Microtheme—Does *Beloved* develop a theory of history? How would you characterize it? **Due:** Revised proposal for final paper.

Week 11
Morrison, *Beloved*, continued, **Space/Time:** “Space/Time” (*Toolbox* chap. 8), Posts, “Posts” (*Toolbox* chap. 9) **Due:** Microtheme—Characterize the mapping of space and time in *Beloved*. Does the mapping differ for different characters? What effects does the mapping have?
Week 12
Morrison, *Beloved*, continued, Posts continued, Achebe, “Civil Peace”, Differences, “Differences” (*Toolbox* chap. 10), TV ads screened in class, Hayden, “Those Winter Sundays” (Lit), **Due:** Final paper – first draft, **Due:** Microtheme—Is Achebe’s “Civil Peace” an example of “posts” as *Toolbox* describes them? Which posts? Why?, **Due:** Microtheme—What kinds of differences are deployed in Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays”? 

Week 13
**Differences continued:** Discussion of scenes from *Lone Star*, Churchill, *Top Girls* (Lit)
**Due:** Microtheme—What kinds of differences are deployed in Sayles’s *Lone Star*?

Week 14
**Agency:** “Agency” (*Toolbox* chap. 11), **Peer review of final paper drafts**, **Due:** Final paper – second draft

Week 15
Semester wrap-up: What have we learned about literature and its study? **Due:** Microtheme—What is your theory of literature?, Reflection paper on the second half of the semester

Week 16
**Due:** Final paper

ENGLISH MAJOR PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:
Please be aware that as part of your graduation requirement, you will be asked to submit, during your senior year, a portfolio of your work as an English major. You should collect several assignments each term to prepare your portfolio. To find the specific requirements for your concentration, contact the main office of the Department of English. Please feel free to ask one of your instructors or your advisor for advice about your portfolio.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
Georgia State University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek academic accommodations must first take appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services (http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwods/) located in Suite 230 of the New Student Center. See me if you need more information.