

English 200: Foundations of Literary Study
or, How to Read Like an English Major and Why
Fall 2015 // MWF 10:30-11:20 and 12:30-1:20

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126D Honors Hall
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Office Hours: F 2:30-4:30 or by appointment

Description:

Our English department at WVU has three components to the major—Literature, Creative Writing, and Professional Writing and Editing. While these concentrations vary in methodology, what they share is the careful and precise study of language, for reading and writing. As you begin this process of in-depth study of language and literature, you will find that the tools you need to unfold a text are not necessarily the ones you’ve used in the past, and so this course is designed as your basic toolbox, one to equip you with the reading skills and many of the writing skills that you’ll call upon often in your course of study.

While the basis of the course is rooted in literary studies, we will use both creative and practical writing methodologies to significantly supplement the more traditional “English” approaches. We’ll discuss the core genres of poetry, narrative prose (usually fiction), and drama, and we’ll develop a basic vocabulary to use for each of these as a way of reading closely, thoughtfully, carefully, and flexibly. At the same time, we’ll discuss ways to incorporate those skills into your own writing, so that once you’ve reached that next level of understanding about a text, you can communicate your understanding to other readers who might just be illuminated by your conclusions. There will be opportunities to write interpretively, creatively, and practically (and you’ll get to decide which is when!)

This course is a cornerstone (literally: “*Foundations* of Literary Study”) to the English major, but those considering an English minor or just a cluster of English courses in your curriculum are also welcome. While our objectives primarily regard those tools for reading and writing about literary and cultural texts that you’ll use in the courses that will follow, we will take time to talk about the major itself, and the education that you are planning for yourself. Consider this a “welcome” not only to the study of the major, but also to the community of the English department as well.

Objectives:

I have many objectives for the course, outcomes I hope that you will achieve by the end. Some are set by the department, some are additions that I particularly emphasize:

- Identify and analyze conventions of literary discourse, structure, and style as they occur in different literary genres, utilizing relevant vocabulary and skills.
- Utilize tools of close reading and thick description in order to summarize, paraphrase, analyze, and cite literary and cultural texts.
- Analyze how texts function in light of author, audience, and historical contexts.
- Using processes specific to the discipline, perform research to generate relevant evidence.
- Plan, organize, and write thesis-driven arguments that interpret literary and cultural texts.
- Ask probing questions about texts, and move beyond simply reading the surfaces.
- Take risks with your arguments, understanding that the safest interpretations of a text are often the most obvious and therefore the least interesting ones.
- Remember that literary study is driven by curiosity, intellectual interest, and the simple power of ideas—above all, this should be interesting, engaging, and even (gasp!) fun.

Required Texts

(L2G) xxx. *Literature To Go*. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2010.

(Atwood) Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. New York: Anchor Books, 1986.

(Garber) Garber, Marjorie. *The Use and Abuse of Literature*. New York: Pantheon, 2011.

I have not ordered the Garber book from the bookstore as I just decided to use it. I will make all assigned chapters available on eCampus as pdfs, but would encourage you to pick up the whole book, either in hard copy or eBook. Additional short texts will be available on eCampus by pdf, and are marked in the syllabus as ***. Please make sure you have these readings available in hard copy or in some readable digital form on the days they are assigned. In fact, please bring all assigned reading to class.

Arriving in an English class without the reading material is like coming without your brain.

Assignments

100 pts. for Participation: Much of this class will revolve around the free and ample exchange of thoughts, ideas, and feedback of each member of the classroom community. Therefore, be prepared for class, having done the reading, brought the materials, and ready to talk and listen respectfully, thoughtfully, and seriously. OK, not always seriously, but mostly. Participation will be graded in five 20-point increments spaced evenly throughout the semester. See attendance policy.

200 pts. for Journal: Over the course of the semester, there will be several journal exercises that will serve as discussion starters, build-up writing for your papers, thoughts on your favorite quotes and texts, and samples of the other kinds of writing (including some creative work) you might do in the major. Journals will be collected and graded at four intervals over the semester. Even so, these are designed to be completed on specific days, and we will refer to them in our class activities, so not doing them on time will have a negative impact on your ability to contribute meaningfully to class.

200 pts. x3 for Major Papers: For each of three units, a major paper assignment will be due. Every assignment will have three options: a literary/critical option, a creative option, and a professional/practical option. While you are free to choose which option you want to do for each paper, you must complete one of each (critical, creative, professional) by the end of the semester.

100 pts. for Final Assignment: On the last day of class, I will distribute a take-home prompt for your final. It will be due on Monday, December 14 at 3pm, and will offer an opportunity to reflect on the intellectual work of the course.

Total possible points= 1000

Grading Scale:

A range = 900-1000 pts.

B range = 800-900 pts.

C range = 700-800 pts.

D range = 600-699 pts.

F = 0-599 pts.

A+=965-1000 pts

B+ = 865-899 pts

C+ = 765-799 pts

A=935-964 pts

B = 835-864 pts

C = 735-764 pts

A- =900-934 pts

B- = 800-834 pts

C- = 700-734 pts

Format for Papers:

All out-of-class assignments must adhere to the following criteria: typed or word-processed, Times New Roman 12-point font (or equivalent), double-spaced, 1- 1.25-inch margins, spell-checked, page-numbered, and finally, stapled or paper-clipped. Please head your papers with your name, the date, the course, my name, and the word count, followed by a (creative) title that is centered above your essay. Submissions that do not meet these requirements may be returned to the student to be resubmitted. *Please note: I am seriously troubled by students who fiddle with the physical appearance of the paper so as to achieve the illusion of length. This belief assumes no difference between quantity and quality, an assumption that is incorrect. A paper that is presented in an honest way will earn far more respect.*

- Grades on all assignments, including journal submissions, will drop 10% of their point value for every weekday they are late.
- Work handed in more than one week past the due date will automatically be graded F (50% of their point value).
- Work handed in more than 2 weeks past the due date will earn zero points.
- A paper is not considered turned in until I have a hard copy in my hand: Electronic versions via email or disk are unacceptable unless I give explicit permission beforehand.
- Not coming prepared or participating fully in a draft workshop or a mandatory conference will result in a 10% penalty for the assignment.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance for this class is required. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to gather notes or make up any material. If you accumulate **6** absences for any reason, you **will forfeit your entire class participation grade (100 points)**. If you accumulate **9** absences for any reason, you **will fail the course**. If a circumstance arises that drastically impacts your attendance, perhaps in all of your classes (serious illness, family tragedy, etc.), I'd strongly encourage you to contact Kimberly Mosby, Sr. Associate Dean of Students, at 293-5611 or Kim.Mosby@mail.wvu.edu.

Tardiness:

Excessive tardiness is also a problem and will negatively impact your class participation grade. When you are late, you miss important class announcements, handouts, and the framework for the day's in-class work. Late entrance into class is disruptive to the workings of the class, assignments are collected at the beginning of class, and with so much material to cover, every moment is precious. Assignments turned in late because of tardiness will be considered one day late.

Office Hours:

My office hours are times that I am committed to being available to consult with students. Please note that I am always willing to review drafts with students in office hours, as well as to discuss any other concerns you may have about the class, its content, and its procedures. I am also around campus outside my stated office hours if you would like to make an appointment. Research suggests that students who are in the habit of seeking out additional contact with their teachers tend to do better, even if you're coming by to discuss the latest Fleet Foxes release or a good recipe for hamburgers. Point is: come by, have a cup of coffee, chat. It'll be good.

Social Justice:

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

More specifically to this course: It is my hope that this class will be a real welcome to the major, which means that even as I welcome you to my own field of study, I hope you will be welcoming to others. This classroom should be a space where we can have risky, far-flung, or completely out-there ideas, ask preposterous questions, or make silly or big interpretive mistakes. The best learning and the most important ideas come from environments where failure and success are valued as equally productive.

Academic Dishonesty:

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Catalog at:

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification/#academicintegritytext>

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Sexual Misconduct and Resources:

West Virginia University (WVU) does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [BOG Policy 44]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff, but keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator. If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the Carruth Center, 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC), 304-292-5100 or 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline). For more information please consult WVU policies at <http://titleix.wvu.edu>.

Schedule of Classes

This schedule is subject to minor changes after either in-class announcement or email announcement. Please check with me directly if you have any questions.

Date	Topic + Readings	Assignment Due
M Aug 17	Introductions	
W Aug 19	What is an English major? <i>Why</i> the English Major? What is a text? Read: "Why English? Why Now?"*** Assigned handout on the English Major Department website on Undergraduate Program at: http://english.wvu.edu/under	
F Aug 21	Discussion: Loving Language Read: Marjorie Garber, "What's love got to do with it?" ***	Journal 1: Why English?
M Aug 24	Introduction to Poetry: What is poetry? Read: L2G, Ch 12; Skim Ch 23	Journal 2: What is Poetry?
W Aug 26	Poetry: Word Choice, Order, Tone Read: L2G Ch 13	Journal 3: A Single Word
F Aug 28	Poetry: Word Choice beyond Poetry Read: Michelle Wildgen, "Ode to an Egg"*** China Millman, "Cure: A restaurant more than a Lawrenceville curiosity"***	
M Aug 31	Writing: Academic and Public Writing Read: L2G Chs 29, 31 Paper #1 Assignment Discussed	Journal 4: Audience
W Sept 2	Poetry: Imagery Read: L2G Chs 14	Journal 5: Analyze an Image
F Sept 4	Poetry: Sound and Rhythm Read: L2G Chs 15, 16 Excerpt from Baker, <i>The Anthologist</i> ***	Journals Collected
M Sept 6	Labor Day: No classes	
W Sept 9	Poetry: Metaphor Read: L2G Ch 14	
F Sept 11	Poetry: Symbol, Allegory, Irony Read: L2G, pgs. 178-180, Ch 15	
M Sept 14	Poetry: Form Read: L2G Chs 18, 19	Journal 6: Allusive Writing

W Sept 16	Discussion: Why Poetry? // Writing Anxieties Garber, "So You Want to Read a Poem" (pp. 141-166) Anne Lamott, from <i>Bird by Bird</i>	Journal 7: Writing Anxieties
F Sept 18	Peer Review	Complete, typed draft of Poetry Paper
M Sept 21	Narrative: Introduction Read: L2G Ch1	Final Draft of Poetry Paper
W Sept 23	Narrative: Plot and Theme Read: L2G Ch 2 and 7 Samuel Beckett: "PING"***	Journal 8: PING
F Sept 25	Narrative: Character Read: L2G Ch 3	Journal 9: Static and Dynamic Characters
M Sept 28	Narrative: Setting Read: L2G Ch 4	Journal 10: The Importance of Place
W Sept 30	Narrative: Symbol Read: L2G Ch 6	Journals Collected
F Oct 2	Narrative: Point of View Read: L2G Ch 5 Kincaid, "Girl" (L2G 326-327)	
M Oct 5	Narrative: Style Read: L2G Ch 8, 30 Paper #2 Assignment Discussed	Journal 11: Imitation and Parody
W Oct 7	Fact and Fiction, Truth and Beauty Read: O'Brien, "How to tell a True War Story"*** Garber, "On Truth and Lie..." ***	Journal 12: Ethics of Truth and Style
F Oct 9	Class Cancelled: Begin reading <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	
M Oct 12	Fall Break: No Classes	
W Oct 14	The Novel: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Read: Atwood, 1-195 (Ch 1-30)	Journal 13: First Impressions and Narrative Form
F Oct 16	The Novel: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Read: Atwood, 1-195 (Ch 1-30)	Journal 14: Reading for History
M Oct 19	The Novel: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Read: Atwood, 199-295 (Ch 31-46)	
W Oct 21	The Novel: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Read: Atwood, 299-311 (Historical Note)	Journal 15: Reading for Politics

		Journals Collected
F Oct 23	Discussion: The popular and the literary Read: Atwood, from <i>In Other Worlds</i> Read: Garber, "What isn't Literature" ***	
M Oct 26	Peer Review	Complete, typed draft of Narrative Paper
W Oct 28	Genres: Drama Read: L2G Ch 24, through page 617 Glaspell: "A Jury of Her Peers"***	Journal 16: Drama as Literature, as Theatre
F Oct 30	Drama: Realism Read: Ibsen, <i>A Doll's House</i> , Act I	Final Draft of Narrative Paper
M Nov 2	Realist Drama Read: Ibsen, <i>A Doll's House</i> , Act II Paper #3 Assignment discussed	
W Nov 4	Realist Drama Read: Ibsen, <i>A Doll's House</i> , Act III	Journal 17: Text into Performance
F Nov 6	Class Cancelled: Read up on Parks	
M Nov 9	Suzan-Lori Parks: <i>365 Days / 365 Plays</i> Read: Plays TBA	Journal 18: Performing Parks
W Nov 11	Suzan-Lori Parks: <i>365 Days / 365 Plays</i> Read: Plays TBA	
F Nov 13	Drama in Popular Forms Read: L2G Ch 24, through page 624-636	Journal 19: Argument for Popular Forms
M Nov 16	Writing about Performance: genres and modes	
W Nov 18	Discussion: High-Performance Writing	
F Nov 20	Peer Review	Complete, Typed Draft of Drama Paper
MWF Nov 23-27	Thanksgiving Break	
M Nov 30	Theory, Criticism, Cultural Studies; or Advanced Study in English Read: Bressler, Introduction to <i>Literary Criticism</i> ***	Final Draft of Drama Paper
W Dec 2	Doing Research; or Advanced Study in English II Skim: Ch 33 L2G	

F Dec 4	Discussion: Three Pathways and a Common language	Journal 20: Reading & Writing
M Dec 7	Wrapping up, Moving Onward Take Home Final Distributed	Journals Collected
M Dec 14	Exam due on or before 3pm in my office in Honors Hall	Take-Home Final Due