

English 200: Foundations of Literary Study
or, How to Read Like an English Major and Why
Fall 2011 // MWF 12:30-1:20 and 1:30-2:20

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305 Colson Hall
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Office Hours: W 10:30-12:30 or by appointment

Description:

At the heart of the English major is the study of language, particularly (but not exclusively) in literary form. 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.

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 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.

This course is a cornerstone (literally: "*Foundations of Literary Study*") to the English major. 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'll also 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.

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

(Wilde) Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Ed. Robert Mighall. New York: Penguin Classics, 2009.

Additional short texts will be available on eCampus by pdf, and are marked in the syllabus as ***.

Please print it out to have available on the days it is assigned. In fact, please bring all assigned reading to class. Arriving in class without the reading material is like coming without your brain.

Assignments

120 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 three 40-point increments spaced evenly throughout the semester. See attendance policy.

200 pts. for Exercises: Over the course of the semester, there will be several exercises (10 points each) that will serve as discussion starters, build-up writing for your papers, , collections of your favorite quotes and texts, and samples of the other kinds of writing (including some creative work) you might do in the major. For one exercise over the semester, you will submit your work a day in advance and the class will workshop it (anonymously). I will collect all of your exercises at the end of the semester, so be sure to save everything.

200 pts. for Close Reading Paper: This 4-6 page paper will concentrate on closely analyzing the specific words, images, figurative language, rhythm, rhyme, and structure of a single poem to unearth a central theme of that text.

150 pts. for Short Narrative Paper: This 3-5 page paper will concentrate on closely analyzing the language surrounding a single narrative component (plot structure, character, setting, point-of view, etc.) of a single short story as that narrative component helps to advance the story's theme.

30 pts for Group discussion: Throughout the semester, we will take breaks to read and discuss sections of Marjorie Garber's *The Use and Abuse of Literature*. Groups of approximately 3 students will provide a handout that maps out the key issues in the chapter, generate 8-10 relevant and substantive discussion questions, and lead the discussion on the chapter for several relevant days. Sign-up on Friday, August 26.

300 pts. for the Final Paper: This 6-8 page paper will make an argument that engages a key critical issue in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. It will incorporate close reading, research on historical context, and engagement with other literary criticism to make an interpretive analytical argument about that text.

Total possible points= 1000

Grading Scale:

A+ = 965-1000 points	A = 935-964 points	A- = 900-934 points
B+ = 865-899 points	B = 835-864 points	B- = 800-834 points
C+ = 765-799 points	C = 735-764 points	C- = 700-734 points
D = 600-699 points	F = 0-599 points	

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 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 **5** absences for any reason, you **will forfeit your entire class participation grade (15%)**. If you accumulate **6** 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 Dr. Thomas Sloane, Sr. Associate Dean of Students, at 293-5611 or Tom.Sloane@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 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:

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I support that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran's status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration. 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 Disability Services (293-6700).

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:

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I take this problem very seriously, and will aggressively pursue full punishment (an unforgiveable F for the course) if I find significant evidence of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty cheats you out of your education. Moreover, there is an underlying assumption of absolute disrespect for your classmates, your instructor and your institution. If you are panicking and feel like you might be forced to rely on academic dishonesty, please please please try to see me about other options. It is your responsibility to be informed about your responsibilities. For more information on the University's Code of Academic Integrity, visit <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>

Schedule of Classes

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 22	Introductions	
W Aug 24	What is an English major? <i>Why</i> the English Major? What is a text? Read: Assigned handout on the English Major Department website on Undergraduate Program http://english.wvu.edu/current_students/undergraduate	Exercise 1: “Why Major in Literature?”
F Aug 26	Discussion: The Use and Abuse of Literature Read: Garber: “Introduction” and “Use and Abuse” (pp. 3-57)	
M Aug 29	Genre I: Introduction to Poetry: What is poetry? Read: L2G, Ch 11	Exercise 2: What is Poetry?
W Aug 31	Discussion: Loving Literature Read: Garber, “What’s love got to do with it?” (pp. 117-140) L2G Ch 22	Select a poem from Chapter 22 for your close reading paper
F Sept 2	Poetry: Word Choice, Order, Tone Read: L2G Chs 12	Exercise 3: A Single Word
M Sept 5	Labor Day: No classes	
W Sept 7	Discussion: On really reading poetry Read: Garber, “So You Want to Read a Poem ” (pp. 141-166)	Exercise 4: Found Texts 1
F Sept 9	Poetry: Imagery Read: L2G Chs 13	Exercise 5: Analyze an Image
M Sept 12	Poetry: Sound and Rhythm Read: L2G Chs 16, 17	Exercise 6: Identifying Rhythm and Rhyme
W Sept 14	Discussion: Metaphor Read: Garber, “Mixed Metaphor” (pp. 233-258) L2G Ch 14	Exercise 7: Creative Response
F Sept 16	Poetry: Symbol, Allegory, Irony Read: L2G, pgs. 178-180, Ch 15	Exercise 8: Layered Meanings

M Sept 19	Poetry: Form Read: L2G Chs 18, 19	
W Sept 21	Discussion: The Canon: What, Why, and why not... Read: Garber, "The Pleasures of the Canon" (pp. 58-76)	Exercise 9: Allusive Writing
F Sept 23	Writing about Poetry Read: L2G Chs 28, 30	Exercise 10: Outline
M Sept 26	Peer Review	Complete, typed draft of Close Reading Paper
W Sept 28	Class Canceled for Individual Conferences	Complete <u>Revised Draft</u> of Close Reading Paper
F Sept 30	Short Narrative: Introduction Read: L2G Ch1	Final Draft of Close Reading paper
M Oct 3	Short Narrative: Plot and Theme Read: L2G Ch 2 and 7 Samuel Beckett: "PING"***	Exercise 11: PING
W Oct 5	Short Narrative: Character Read: L2G Ch 3	Exercise 12: Static and Dynamic Characters
F Oct 7	Short Narrative: Setting Read: L2G Ch 4	Exercise 13: The Importance of Place
M Oct 10	Short Narrative: Symbol Read: L2G Ch 6	
W Oct 12	Short Narrative: Point of View Read: L2G Ch 5	Exercise 14: Creative Response
F Oct 14	Short Narrative: Style Read: L2G Ch 8, 29	
M Oct 17	Peer Review	Complete, typed draft of Short Narrative Paper

W Oct 19	Genres: Creative Non-Fiction Read: O'Brien, "How to tell a True War Story" pp. 318-328	Final Draft of Short Narrative Paper
F Oct 21	Discussion: Fiction and Non-Fiction Read: Garber, "On Truth and Lie..." (pp. 186-232)	
M Oct 24	Genres: Drama Read: Ch 23, through Glaspell, "Trifles," Glaspell: "A Jury of Her Peers"***	
W Oct 26	Genres: Beyond the Conventional	Exercise 15: Genres
F Oct 28	Discussion: The Range of the Literary Read: Garber, "What isn't Literature" (pp. 77-116)	Exercise 16: Found Texts #2
M Oct 31	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> Read: Wilde pp. 1-90	Exercise 17: First Impressions and Narrative Form
W Nov 2	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> Read: Wilde pp. 91-140	
F Nov 4	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> Read: Wilde pp. 141-184	
M Nov 7	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> and History Read: Wilde pp. 185-213 Introduction, pp. ix-xliii Appendix I, pp. 214-223	
W Nov 9	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> and Literary Theory Read: Essays on Dorian Gray TBA Read: Bressler, Introduction to <i>Literary Criticism</i> ***	
F Nov 11	Discussion: Reading for the Historical Read: Garber, "Why Literature is . . ." (pp. 167-185)	Exercise 18: Creative Response to Wilde
M Nov 14	Research Read: L2G 32, Selections from Acheson, <i>Writing Essays...</i> ***	Exercise 19: Reading Criticism
W Nov 16	Documentation, Citation and MLA Style	
F Nov 18	Class Canceled: Enjoy your break!	

Thanksgiving Break		
M Nov 28	Structuring Sophisticated Arguments	Exercise 20: Tentative Outline and Works Cited page
W Nov 30	Peer Review	Complete, Typed Draft of Final Paper
F Dec 2	Discussion: Coming to a close Read: Garber, "The Impossibility of Closure" (pp. 259-283)	Exercise 21: Found Texts #3
M Dec 5	Class Canceled for Individual Conferences	Complete <u>Revised</u> <u>Draft</u> of Final Paper Collected Exercises
W Dec 7	Taking Stock: Course Evaluations	
F Dec 9	Wrapping up, Moving Onward	Final Paper