

ENGLISH 299: Critical Methods of Reading and Writing Fall 2016

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Wednesday, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Thursdays, 3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
or by appointment

Email: cl-morrow@wiu.edu

Meeting Times: 9:30 am – 10:45 am, Tuesdays and Thursdays, in Simpkins 014

A person may sleep many years at the fountain of learning, and yet awake no physician.
Mary Trye, *Medicatrix*, (1675)

Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections; unless we chew them over again, they will not give us strength and nourishment.
John Locke (1706)

All worthy work is open to interpretations the author did not intend.
Art isn't your pet – it's your kid. It grows up and talks back to you.
Joss Whedon (2012)

Interpretation just refers to the many possible ways of trying to figure out what something means and why it matters.
Rita Felski (2015)

Course Description and Objectives

As English majors and minors, reading is something that we often take for granted as an activity that we fully understand and embrace. Often, when we cite our love of reading, we mean “reading for pleasure” or reading as a form of escape. Even when we read in this manner, literary texts explore, promote and suggest ways of understanding our lives and the world. In the formal study of literature, reading is a much more active and difficult process. It means thinking critically about the content and form, unpacking the visible and invisible mechanics of the text, as well as identifying and interrogating a text’s ideas and assumptions.

In addition to learning about and practicing critical methods of reading and interpreting texts, we will read and explore literary criticism, we will write our own critical interpretations and we will contextualize our interpretations in the work of others. As the gateway course to upper division study, English 299 will introduce you to the methods of reading and writing as an English major and enable you to develop your own ability to read, write about, and engage with literature and literary criticism.

Required Texts:

Please purchase the following books. Because these books contain additional required essays and readings, these editions are required.

Cesaire, Aime. *A Tempest*. Translated by Richard Miller. TCG Translations, 2002.

McCaw, Neil. *How To Read Texts: A Student Guide to Critical Approaches and Skills*. Continuum Books, 2008.

MLA Handbook. 8th ed. Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Edited by Gerald Graff and James Phelan. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. Case Studies in Critical Controversy.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Edited by Johanna M. Smith. 3rd ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016. Case Studies in Critical Controversy.

*Any additional readings will be provided on WesternOnline.

Bring Appropriate Book(s) to Every Class

Recommended:

Writer's handbook such as Hacker's *Pocket Style Manual* or Graff & Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say*.

Course Requirements & Assignments

Participation (10%): Discussion in this course relies on strong, nuanced, and consistent participation from each student in the class. Therefore, I expect students to have read and reflected on the assignment in advance and to come to class prepared to discuss it. Students are required to participate in discussion regularly by answering questions, posing questions, and making analytical comments. Participation will be evaluated using the following general criteria:

- A: Student contributes *daily* and *significantly* and always actively focuses on class discussion.
- B: Student contributes *regularly* and always actively focuses on class discussion.
- C: Student contributes *sporadically* and/or always actively focuses on class discussion.
- D: Student contributes *rarely* and/or often does not stay actively focused on the discussion.
- F: Student does not contribute and regularly does not stay actively focused on the discussion.

I do not expect nor require students to have the "right" answer or to provide ground-breaking analysis but merely to engage in the process of discussing and analyzing the literature. Remember that quality is better than quantity, but quantity is better than no quantity. I will generally (but not always) rely on voluntary participation. Depending on the level of class participation and how well the class is keeping up with the reading, I may also give announced or unannounced objective reading quizzes covering the reading assigned for that class period. These quizzes will be figured into the participation grade.

Minor Assignments and Projects (10%): There will be numerous (almost daily) minor writing assignments and projects. These assignments will typically be announced and assigned in class for the following class period. Some might be slightly larger projects. Larger projects will be

announced in class and most likely over email a week or more in advance of their due date. These assignments will not be accepted late. In cases of absences, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate about potential assignments.

DUE: Varied

Formal Writing Assignments: For this course, each student will write 3 formal essays and an annotated bibliography. While brief descriptions can be found below, detailed prompts for each will be circulated in class and/or available on WesternOnline. Each essay must conform to MLA guidelines for format, in-text citation, and the works cited page. The following policies apply to all formal writing assignments.

Pre-writing: There may be pre-writing assignments (such as topic paragraph, thesis sentence, outline, etc.) for each essay. Failure to complete these assignments will result in a penalty to the final paper grade.

Rough Drafts: You must bring a complete, typed, rough draft that meets the minimum length requirements for the assignment. If you fail to do so, the highest grade the final draft can receive is a D.

Late Work: Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Papers will be submitted in print in class and electronically via WesternOnline. Late essays incur a 5% penalty for every calendar day. If you need an extension, send a written request via email (prior to the due date) stating the specific reason for the extension request. In the event that you submit your paper outside of class (i.e. under my door, etc.), it is your responsibility to confirm that I received it.

Close Reading/Literary Analysis Essay (20%): Students will write a 4-5 page analytical essay which advances and demonstrates a coherent, argumentative, and significant interpretation of a specific work of literature. In this essay, students will practice and demonstrate close reading and textual analysis: the fundamental building block of literary criticism and interpretation. This assignment will showcase your close reading and analysis and, therefore, will not include secondary research.

Rough Draft DUE: September 15th

Final Draft DUE: September 22nd

Scholarly Essays (20% each; 40% total): Students will write two 6-7 page essays which advance specific, contestable, and significant literary arguments that are contextualized within and contributes to current literary scholarship. The respective arguments must be developed, demonstrated, and supported with close reading and textual analysis as well as at least two scholarly sources (published after 1990) that are conceptually in dialogue with one another. More than unambiguous support, the argument needs to engage these two sources and conceptually extend, revise, or reject the analysis from or argument of these scholarly sources.

Scholarly Essay #1

Rough Draft DUE: October 18th

Final Draft DUE: October 25th

Scholarly Essay #2

Rough Draft DUE: November 29th

Final Draft DUE: December 8th

Annotated Bibliography (20%): Students will compile an annotated bibliography of literary scholarship and criticism devoted to the work of literature of their choice. The bibliography will include an introduction which provides a coherent overview of the major topics and issues in the criticism, properly formatted MLA citations for 7 scholarly sources (published after 1990) directly focusing on the specific work of literature, and 100-200 word annotations for each which provide a summary of the source's argument and its theoretical perspective.

DUE: December 15th by 10:00 am

Distribution and Grading Scale

Participation	10%
Minor Assignments and Projects	10%
Close Reading/Literary Analysis Essay	20%
Scholarly Essay #1	20%
Scholarly Essay #2	20%
Annotated Bibliography	20%

A	93-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	F	0%-59%
A-	90-92%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%		
		B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%		

**Failure to complete all four major writing assignments will result in a failing grade.*

Course Policies

Attendance: Regular attendance is not only mandatory but essential for success in this course. Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis and will be held accountable for any material covered in class, including class discussion, announcements, and any changes to the reading schedule and assignments. Students are responsible for getting information and class notes from a fellow classmate. Preparation is a crucial part of attendance. Therefore, students are required to bring the appropriate text to every class meeting.

Each student is allowed *four* absences for any reason -- ranging from illness to oversleeping. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. As such, students are not expected to document these absences, nor does documentation "excuse" the absence. Allowances may be made in extreme circumstances that necessitate missing multiple days. These circumstances will need to be documented, and you must contact me as soon as possible.

Possible Attendance/Preparation Penalties:

- Failure to bring the appropriate text to class will result in a 5% penalty to the participation grade.
- After four, each subsequent absence will result in a 3% penalty to the final grade.
- Students who miss more than 8 total classes will receive an automatic **F** for the course.

Tardiness: I am not bothered by individuals who are occasionally late for class or must occasionally leave class early – the key word being *occasionally*. However, if you anticipate that you must consistently arrive late or leave early, you need to replace this course with another.

If you arrive after I take roll, it is your responsibility to speak with me after class to ensure I record your attendance. If you do not speak with me, you may be counted absent. If you miss more than half of the class due to tardiness or leaving early, it will count as an absence.

Email: Email correspondence is a quick and easy way to communicate during this semester. I will use it frequently to communicate with the class, and I encourage you to use it to contact me to set up an appointment, ask questions, make comments, etc. I do consider email to be formal communication so I expect emails to be properly addressed, to maintain a professional tone, and to be grammatically correct. If your question or request is too large to be handily resolved over email, I will ask you to set an appointment to discuss it in an individual conference. Do Not Use WesternOnline email – I will not check that email regularly.

Office Hours: Students are encouraged to visit during office hours. These are available to use without setting an appointment. Additionally, if I am in my office, feel free to drop in to see if I am available to meet. If you are not able to meet during office hours, please email me with a couple of potential times, and we can schedule an appointment.

I always enjoy speaking with students about their writing, the readings for the course, or literary topics large or small! Additionally, if you are working on a paper and have questions or would like feedback, I am happy to work with you on your paper at any stage of the writing process.

Scholastic Dishonesty: Scholastic dishonesty of any kind on any assignment undermines the quality of education at WIU and will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This includes cheating, fabrication, falsification, multiple submissions, and plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty of any kind will result in an F in the course and will be reported to CAGAS. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes scholastic dishonesty. I will also be happy to answer any questions you may have. You should also consult the University policy at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

Students with disabilities: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at **309-298-2512**, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify me as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

Classroom Behavior: Students are expected to behave with respect toward the course, their fellow students, and the instructor. We will be reading a variety of pieces which contain subject matter that may be deemed offensive to some people, such as profanity and depictions of sex and violence. I expect students to be able to discuss this material in a mature way and maintain an appropriate demeanor during class. If you have extenuating circumstances with encountering this material, please set an appointment with me immediately.

Private conversations and other disruptive behaviors interfere with teaching and learning and will not be tolerated. Continued disruptive behavior can result in an assigned classroom seat, penalty to final grade, and/or expulsion from the class for the day or the semester.

Electronic Devices: Laptops and tablets are acceptable for note-taking and consulting electronic versions of required readings as long as the technology does not become a distraction.

Cellphones, which can play a valuable role in the event of an emergency, should be set to vibrate at the beginning of class. If you need to take a call, you are welcome to step outside of class briefly.

Texting, emailing, social media, and non-class related activities are strictly prohibited and will negatively affect your grade. After an initial warning, violation of this policy will result in dismissal from the class and a 15% penalty to your participation grade per instance.

University Writing Center: The UWC is available to assist you with general and specific questions on any of the writing assignments for this course. Consultants can provide another voice on your writing at any stage in the writing process from brainstorming to polishing the final product. Please call for an appointment (298-2815) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment to your session. A visit to the UWC should be a supplement to rather than a replacement for talking about your paper with me.

WesternOnline: We will be using WesternOnline for the online submission of formal essays and for providing electronic access to course documents. If you need help using WesternOnline, please let me know.

Title IX Announcement: University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: For information, visit www.wiu.edu/provost/student/