

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 1020E (002)
Understanding Literature Today
Fall/Winter 2022-23

Instructor: Professor Jonathan Boulter
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Prerequisites: Grade 12U English or permission of the Department. For part time students who have been admitted without the OSSD, this permission will be granted as a matter of course.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

“Literature,” writes Ezra Pound, “is news that stays news.” Our task in this course will be to give serious attention to the question of literature. What precisely do we mean when we speak of literature? If literature is, as Pound says, some kind of “news” what can this mean? (and why does literature remain “new”?). Our approach will be to analyze various forms of literature (prose, poetry, drama) and ask specific questions: Is literature some kind of specialized language? What demands does literature place on its reader? What happens when we read? Does literature teach us something about what it means to be human? Does literature offer us some kind of truth? How can we, as serious students of literature, speak—and write—effectively about our experience of these great works of art?

Course Objectives:

Successful students who complete the course will be better able to:

- Develop further their ability to analyze texts critically, and formulate and produce essays which have an effective thesis with a clear, well-articulated intent, and a logical argument supported by adequate evidence from the text(s) under discussion;
- Explain the various theoretical and rhetorical approaches to literature, with specific attention both to their concepts, their historical, cultural and intellectual contexts, and their application to different texts;
- Develop research and writing skills which will not only augment their knowledge of the field of study, but will also be able to incorporate the results of this research into their essays and other assignments; among the basic research skills are the ability to collect relevant bibliographic material on a prescribed topic (online and in the library), and critically engage with the scholarly literature with an assessment of the relative merits of an argument in essays and other written/oral assignments, and articulate their own positions within a particular scholarly discussion;
- Develop further their written/oral communication skills in the clear and organized presentation of an argument/hypothesis within the prescribed word limits of the research essays and other written/oral assignments.

Course Materials

Required Texts:

The Norton Introduction to Literature, Portable 12th Edition. Ed. Kelly J. Mays.

Endgame and Act without Words. Samuel Beckett

"Wakefield." Nathaniel Hawthorne. (available through OWL)

"Bartleby, The Scrivener." Herman Melville (available through OWL)

Sexing the Cherry. Jeanette Winterson

Rules for Writers, 8th Edition. Eds. Hacker and Sommers

Methods of Evaluation

Take home passage analysis: 500 words (due in class November 24, 2021): 10%

Essay One: 1500 words (due in class January 26, 2022): 15%

Essay Two: 2500 words (due in class March 23, 2022): 20%

Two in-class passage analyses (November 10, 2021; March 7, 2022): 5% x 2

Participation/Tutorial grade: 10%

Final examination: 35%

Extensions and Late Penalties: Extensions will not be granted. Late essays will be penalized 2% per day including weekends. After seven days the essay will be given a grade of zero.

You are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Academic Offences

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. (We will be discussing plagiarism later in the term. Please see the Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar:

<https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?PolicyCategoryID=1&command=showCategory&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=>

Plagiarism Checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Accommodation Policies

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The necessary form and further information regarding this policy can be found at the Student Services website:

<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Timetable

September

Introduction

Introduction. *Interpretation*

Melville. "Bartleby, The Scrivener"

Melville. "Bartleby, The Scrivener"

Hawthorne. "Wakefield"

Hawthorne. "Wakefield"

Marquez. "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"

October

Kafka. "A Hunger Artist"

Art Auden "Musee des Beaux Arts"

No class

Heaney. "Digging"

Yeats "Leda and the Swan"

Yeats "Leda and the Swan"

Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper"

November

No class

No class

In-class passage analysis

Desire

Shakespeare. "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments"

Shakespeare. "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"

Donne. "The Flea" "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (***Take home passage analysis due in class***)

Herbert. "Prayer"

December

Keats. "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Keats. "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Review

January

Loss. Sophocles. *Antigone*

Sophocles. *Antigone*

Sophocles. *Antigone*

Sophocles. *Antigone*

Keats. "Ode to a Nightingale"

Keats. "Ode to a Nightingale"

Arnold. "Dover Beach"

Larkin. "Church Going" (***Essay One due in class***)

Pathologies and Character. Browning "My Last Duchess"

February

Browning "My Last Duchess"

Tennyson. "Ulysses"

Eliot. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Eliot. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Plath. "Lady Lazarus"; "Daddy"

No class

No class

Plath. "Lady Lazarus"; "Daddy"

March

Heaney. "Punishment"

In-class passage analysis

Beckett. *Endgame*

Beckett. *Endgame*

Beckett. *Endgame*

Beckett. *Endgame*

Winterson. *Sexing the Cherry* (***Essay Two due in class***)

Winterson. *Sexing the Cherry*

Winterson. *Sexing the Cherry* Review