

# Critical Methods of Reading & Writing

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English 299, Section 001  
Fall Semester 2015

Office: Simpkins 109  
Hours: M, 3:00-4:00; TTh, 3:30-5:00

TTh, 2:00 p.m.—3:15 p.m.  
Simpkins 214

## Texts

*There will be materials to download from WesternOnline and on my website. Students planning to order books online need to make sure they buy the editions with the ISBNs listed below; alternative editions are not acceptable.*

Kathy Acker, *Blood and Guts in High School*. ISBN: 080213193X  
Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*. Grove ISBN: 080214442X  
Allen Ginsburg, *Howl and Other Poems*. ISBN: 0872860175  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. Norton Critical Edition. ISBN: 0393979539  
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Harper. ISBN: 0061120065  
*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Seventh Ed. ISBN: 1603290249  
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. Norton Critical Edition. ISBN: 0393929582  
Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass. The First (1855) Edition*. Penguin. ISBN: 0140421998  
Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*. Mariner Books ISBN: 0156031825

## Course Objectives

How do we read literary texts critically, and how do literary texts read each other critically? How does reading connect with writing? These are some of the fundamental questions that this course addresses, as it prepares students for the English Major.

English 299 supplies the methods and terminology of critical inquiry that are necessary to produce more sophisticated interpretations, at the same time emphasizing close reading, effective writing, and standard academic form. English 299 also introduces students to published critical writing about literary texts.

The reading schedule is designed to challenge you and to broaden your understanding of literature. I hope you will read with an open mind, not too quick to dismiss, block, or belittle what's unfamiliar to you.

## Requirements

Prerequisites: ENG 180 with a grade of C or better, and at least one of the following with a grade of C or better: ENG 200, 201, 202, 206, 228, 238 258, 290.

This course involves written (and typed) homework, two creative assignments, two close reading essays, and a final research essay. You will receive instructions for every assignment, and all should be submitted by email as Microsoft Word attachments. The five-page close reading essays ask you to closely read a passage from a particular text and link the passage to the text as a whole. The creative assignments ask you to respond in an artistic way to the readings. The eight-page research essay is due at the end of the semester. Students will design a research project related to our texts and submit a proposal for approval shortly after the middle of the semester. The research essay requires at least three critical sources that the student has independently located.

Students will be responsible for leading small group discussions on a rotating basis. When it is your turn, you will prepare five typed, double-spaced questions for discussion and send them to me by email before class begins.

Everyone must actively participate. To participate actively means to keep up with the reading and to come to class every session prepared with insights and arguments. Thus it is very much to your advantage to take notes as you read.

See <<http://www.wiu.edu/provost/student/>> for student rights and responsibilities.

## Grading

|                       |     |            |
|-----------------------|-----|------------|
| Participation:        | 15% |            |
| Homework:             | 10% |            |
| Discussion Questions: | 15% |            |
| Creative Assignments: | 10% | (5% Each)  |
| Five-Page Essays:     | 30% | (15% Each) |
| Research Essay:       | 20% |            |

Unless excused, late essays will receive a one-letter grade reduction. I am, however, usually willing to grant an extension, so long as the student contacts me *at least 24 hours in advance*. There are no extensions on the research essay. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course, and I will report the student for academic discipline. Missing classes will affect the participation grade. A student with four unexcused absences *automatically fails the course*. You cannot pass the course if you fail the Research Essay.

## Visiting My Office

Please take the opportunity to meet with me during my office hours, or by appointment, to talk about the readings, or your writing. *I very much appreciate any kind of feedback about the course.*

## The Writing Center

The University Writing Center can assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The tutor's job is to add another voice in response to your writing. The one-on-one assistance available at the Writing Center can help with generating ideas, suggesting organization, and even working through grammatical issues. The University Writing Center is located in Malpass Library (3rd Floor, West Side). Call for an appointment (298–2815) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment to your session. For more information on other locations, see [www.wiu.edu/uwc](http://www.wiu.edu/uwc).

## 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](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

## Schedule

*Readings may be added or modified throughout the semester. This schedule is tentative.  
WO = WesternOnline*

Week 1: August 25 & 27

Introduction to the course

Rose poem handout

“Elements of Poetry”; WO, “From Work to Text”

Week 2: September 1 & 3

*Leaves of Grass*

WO, “Art as Technique”

Week 3: September 8 & 10

*Leaves of Grass*

Whitman criticism & context

Week 4: September 15 & 17

*Howl & Other Poems*

Week 5: September 22 & 24

**Creative Assignment 1 due September 22**

*Hamlet*

Week 6: September 29 & October 1

**First Short Essay due October 1**

*Hamlet*

Shakespeare criticism & context

Week 7: October 6 & 8

*Waiting for Godot*

Week 8: October 13 & 15

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 9: October 20 & 22

**Research Essay proposal due October 20**

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

*The Color Purple*

Week 10: October 27 & 29

**Second Short Essay due October 27**

*The Color Purple*

Week 11: November 3 & 5

*The Color Purple*

*The Scarlet Letter*

Week 12: November 10 & 12

*The Scarlet Letter*

Week 13: November 17

Hawthorne criticism & context

**Class is canceled for November 19, but Creative Assignment 2 is due**

***Thanksgiving Break***

Week 14: December 4 & 6

*Blood and Guts in High School*

WO, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense"

Week 15: December 8 & 10

*Blood and Guts in High School*

Discussion of the English Major

Final Exam Week

**Research Essay due Monday, December 14 by 7:00 p.m. (Due December 11 at 10:00 a.m. if you want comments)**