

Critical Methods of Reading & Writing

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English 299, Section 001
Spring Semester 2012

Office: Simpkins 109
Hours: W, 12:00-1:00; MWF, 2:00-3:00

MWF, 1:00-1:50 p.m.
Simpkins 27

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

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 Perennial Modern Classics
ISBN: 0061120065

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Seventh Ed. ISBN: 1603290249

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. Norton Critical Edition. ISBN: 0393929582

Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Grove ISBN: 0802132758

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*. Second Norton Critical Edition. ISBN: 0393974960

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, indeed, 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.

Requirements

Prerequisite: 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 homework, close reading papers, creative assignments, a midterm essay, and a final research essay. You will receive instructions for every assignment. The two-page close reading papers ask you to summarize a particular text and closely read a passage from it. The creative assignments ask you to respond creatively to the readings. The five-page midterm essay offers you several options concerning the literature covered in the first half of the semester. 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.

Students will be responsible for leading small group discussions on a rotating basis. When it is your turn, you will prepare four typed, double-spaced questions for discussion and turn them in to me at the end of the class. Please do not write out answers to the questions on the page you give to me.

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:	10%	
Homework:	10%	
Discussion Questions:	10%	
Creative Assignments:	10%	(5% Each)
Close reading papers:	30%	(5% Each)
Midterm Essay:	10%	
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*. Extensions on the final essay, however, will only be given under exceptional circumstances. 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 five unexcused absences *automatically fails the course*.

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.*

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I will make academic accommodations for any student who notifies me of the need. For me to provide the proper accommodation(s), you must provide me documentation from Disability Support Services. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to my attention, as I am not legally permitted to ask. Students who require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e., fire, tornado, etc.) should tell me the most appropriate procedures to follow. Please contact Disability Support Services at 298–2512.

Schedule

*Notes: Readings may be added or modified throughout the semester. This schedule is tentative.
CRP = close reading paper / WO = WesternOnline*

Week 1: January 18 – 20

Introduction to the course

Rose poem handout

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

Week 2: January 23 – 27

Leaves of Grass

WO, “Four Master Tropes”

“Semiotics for Beginners”

Week 3: January 30 – February 3

CRP 1 due January 30

Leaves of Grass

Whitman criticism & context

Week 4: February 6 – 10

Howl & Other Poems

Week 5: February 15 – 17

CRP 2 due February 15

Hamlet

Week 6: February 20 – 24

Creative Assignment 1 due February 22

Hamlet

Shakespeare criticism & context

Week 7: February 27 – March 2

CRP 3 due February 27

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

Week 8: March 5–9

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Midterm Essay due March 5

Spring Break

Week 9: March 19 – 23

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Research Essay proposal due March 23

Week 10: March 26 – 28

CRP 4 due March 26

The Color Purple

Week 11: April 2 – 6

Creative Assignment 2 due April 2

The Color Purple

“Art as Technique”

Week 12: April 9 – 13

CRP 5 due April 9

The Scarlet Letter

Week 13: April 16 – 20

The Scarlet Letter

Hawthorne criticism & context

Week 14: April 23 – 27

CRP 6 due April 23

Blood and Guts in High School

“On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”

Week 15: April 30 – May 4

Blood and Guts in High School

Discussion of the English Major

Final Exam Week, May 7

Research Essay due May 7 at 1:00 p.m. in my office