

Critical Methods (English 42.200.201) Syllabus for Spring 2014

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Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 – 1:45

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11 – 12:15 and by appointment

Office Location: O’Leary 4th floor

Office Phone: 978-934-4179

Course Description: This course is a sort of “gateway” to the study of literature (and the English major). It introduces you to the diversity of critical approaches available today in the study of literature and culture. We will read primary texts (poems, a short play, short stories, and two novels) and secondary works representing a range of critical and theoretical approaches. The goal of the course is to make you more conversant with these various critical approaches, but the emphasis will be on the practical application of these approaches and on how they can enrich our understanding of the literary texts. Special attention will also be paid to the writing and research process — in other words, you will be doing a lot of writing in this class (in class, out of class, informal and formal). We will also work on how to locate secondary sources and use them effectively and correctly, following MLA guidelines for documentation.

Additionally, this semester, we will be testing out a new online student portfolio system. The English department and the University are exploring various ways to assess student work and test a potential online portfolio management product. Each student will have an account with Digication for this semester, where you will submit your writing assignments online for these purposes.

Course Goals: At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- **Close read** (explicate) poems and fiction (e.g. define & discuss rhyme scheme & meter, point of view, characterization, etc.).
- Identify, analyze, and discuss elements of the **form, content, and context** of literary texts.
- Identify the principles and apply the basic methods of the **major schools of literary criticism**, including formalism/New Criticism; reader-response; historicism and cultural studies; deconstruction; psychoanalysis; feminism, gender studies & queer theory; Marxism; and ethnic & postcolonial studies.
- Locate reliable, scholarly **secondary sources** on literature and culture.
- Write a lucid, organized essay with a clear **thesis** (argument), **support** (analysis of primary and/or secondary texts), and proper **MLA documentation** (in-text citations & Works Cited page).
- Properly **integrate primary & secondary sources** into academic writing (using paraphrase, summary, and/or direct quotation).

Your Course Goals:

This course relies upon a participatory, collaborative learning experience. While I have many goals for the course (specified above), hopefully you also have your own goals. Take a moment right here at the beginning of the semester to write down **at least 3 goals you have for yourself in this course:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Required Texts: There are three required texts for the course:

1. *Close Reading: An Introduction to Literature*

ISBN-10: 0132436566

ISBN-13: 978-0132436564

2. *The Awakening: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*

ISBN-13: 9780312195755

ISBN: 0312195753

3. *The Turn of the Screw: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*

ISBN-10: 0312597061

ISBN-13: 978-0312597061

IMPORTANT: You need to have these specific editions of all three of these books.

Instructional Resources

The Centers for Learning and Academic Support Services provide many resources, including tutoring in writing: <http://class.uml.edu/>. I encourage you to seek assistance if you are struggling in this or any class here at UML. Their services are free to use (and paid for by your student fees!).

Disability Accommodations:

In accordance with University policy and the ADA, I will provide accommodation for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Their office is on North campus, in Cumnock Hall C6, phone: 978-934-4574, e-mail: Disability@uml.edu. This documentation is confidential.

A note on classroom conduct:

In this class, and in all classes at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, students are expected to exhibit professional and respectful behavior that is conducive to a mutually beneficial learning environment in the classroom. Examples of inappropriate behavior include: text messaging, listening to music, cell phone use (other than the campus alert system), late arrivals, early departures, use of laptops for other than class purposes, disrespectful comments or behavior, intentional disruptions, failure to follow faculty directives. Students in violation of these standards may be asked to leave class and/or be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

University Cancellation Line: 978-934-2121

Course Requirements:

This is a 3 credit course, as defined by federal regulation (I'm not kidding). You should expect to complete 6 hours of out of class work each week for approximately 15 weeks, for a total of 90 hours of outside-of-class work.

Attendance is required. This is not a correspondence course. You can fail the course for not attending class. You have two (2) "free" absences to use as you need. For every class beyond those two that you miss, your final grade for the class will be lowered one grade step. (I.e., if you have a "B" for the class, but have missed 4 classes, you will receive a "C+" for your final grade.) Excessive or habitual lateness can also count as an absence.

Good classroom citizenship is required. Good classroom citizenship goes beyond just “participation” in the sense of raising your hand a lot. It includes sharing your thoughts and actively listening to the thoughts and comments of your peers. We will have both full-class discussions and small group work. If you are not particularly comfortable speaking in the full-class discussion, be sure you are making up for it in the smaller group discussions. Please be considerate of your classmates and make the classroom a space where everyone can speak their mind. Also, as a courtesy to everyone in the room, please turn off your cell phone before class begins. If you must eat or drink during class, please be respectful of those around you, and of those who come after you by cleaning up after yourself.

You are responsible for completing all reading assignments on the dates they are due. You need to have read (and have your book with you) so that you can join the discussion and participate in each class session’s activities. I reserve the right to give reading quizzes as necessary to prod your reading, though I would rather not resort to such ploys.

You are responsible for completing all writing assignments on the dates they are due. I do not accept papers over e-mail or on electronic storage devices. If a paper is due, that means it is due in printed, hard-copy form. Do not attach documents to e-mails that you send to me unless you check with me first.

Major Assignments & Graded Materials:

- ⇒ **Short Writing Exercises and Assignments:** In the first half of the class in particular, we’ll be doing many short writing exercises from our textbook. These are due in print at the start of the class. You need to have them with you and ready to go for the day’s class activities. In some cases, you will **also** need to submit these online to your account in Digication.
- ⇒ **Two Close Reading Papers:** These papers will be a chance to develop your exercises in more expansive arguments, and to practice skills of close reading. One will be on a poem of your choice (from our book), and the other will be either on a short play or a short story of your choice (from our book). See the assignment sheets for more information. You will **also** need to submit these online to your account in Digication.
- ⇒ **Critical Article Presentation:** During the second half of the semester, when we’re reading our two novels, we’ll have small group presentations on critical articles by students (in groups of 3-4). Students must consult with me prior to the presentation about their plans for the presentation. Presentations will at minimum require a handout or other visual form (powerpoint slides, posterboard, etc.). See the assignment sheet for more details.
- ⇒ **Final Paper:** For the final paper project, you will choose one of our two novels (*The Awakening* or *The Turn of the Screw*), one of the critical articles we read for class about that novel, and one other critical article on the novel. Your paper will be a comparison of the two critical articles, in which you summarize, evaluate, and compare the different claims that the two critical articles make. There will be more details on the assignment sheet. You will **also** need to submit the final paper online to your account in Digication.

Evaluation and Grading:

Please keep in mind the attendance policy (already detailed in the “Course Requirements” section above). Absenteeism is the leading cause of poor grades in my courses. Excellent attendance and participation will have a positive effect on your grade, particularly if you end up on a “borderline” between two grades. Following is information on how final grades will be calculated:

Breakdown of points for the final grade:

Classroom Citizenship: 15%
Short Writing Exercises & Assignments: 10%
First Paper: 15%
Second Paper: 20%
Presentation on a Critical Article (as part of a group): 15%
Final Paper Project: 25%

Final grade ranges:

94-100=A: Superior work, *highest quality*
90-93=A-: High Honors Quality
87-89 = B+: High Quality
83-86= B: Basic Honors Quality
80-82=B-: Below Honors Quality
77-79=C+: Above Satisfactory Quality
73-76=C: Satisfactory
70-72=C-: Below Satisfactory
67-69=D+: Above Minimum Passing
60-66=D: Minimum Passing
below 60=F: Failed

Your completion of the reading assignments, scores on any reading quizzes, and my evaluation of your participation in classroom discussion and activities, will be included in the “Classroom Citizenship” portion of your grade.

If you have a concern about a grade or your standing in the class, I am quite happy to talk with you. This type of conversation is best suited to an individual conference. Please e-mail me to schedule an appointment.

*Please note: This much is **nonnegotiable**: you are not eligible for a passing grade of D unless you have attended at least 11 of 14 weeks worth of classes, and completed 90% of the assignments.*

Academic Integrity

Please review the Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy:

<https://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Integrity.aspx>

*If you plagiarize or cheat on an assignment in this course, you will receive an “F” for this course, and you are subject to other discipline (including expulsion from the University) at the discretion of the instructor and the University. Keep in mind that even if you write some part or even “most” of the paper, if some portion of the paper is copied from another source without proper attribution, (i.e., if you “only plagiarize a little”) **you will still get an “F” for the course.** Don’t plagiarize at all.*

Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism. You must cite all sources that you use, including online sources. Also, remember that “using” a source includes directly quoting, paraphrasing, and using ideas from any source. There is nothing wrong with “getting help” from other writers, just be sure to acknowledge it by using quotation marks and author/page citation appropriately. Please take the time to give proper credit to the work of other authors. It is a matter of respect – for yourself, for other authors, for your classmates, and for me.

Don’t waste your time or mine by plagiarizing a paper. If you’re having difficulty with a writing assignment, talk to me before the day it is due.

Semester Schedule

If you miss a class, you are still responsible for what was due on the day(s) you missed and on the day you return, so always consult the syllabus (or a classmate, or me) when you are absent.

A note about reading assignments listed in the schedule below: Almost all reading assignments prior to March 6th direct you to specific pages in the textbook *Close Reading: An Introduction*, by Elisabeth A. Howe. There's a selection of poetry, drama, and short stories in the appendices at the back of this book. There will occasionally be additional readings in the form of handouts. After March 6th, we will be reading our two novels, as well as the critical articles in our editions of the novels, so the page numbers there refer to specific sections of our editions of the novels. Please be sure you have the correct books!

| DATE | DUE IN CLASS ON THIS DATE |
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| Tuesday 21 January | First day of class introductions and whatnot Read some poems & discuss |
| Thursday 23 January | Intro to Theories / Close reading Poetry Read: Howe: "Brief Introduction to Literary Criticism" 188 – 193 Read: Howe: Chapter 1 (Poetry) 1 – 20 Do: set up your Digication Profile in order to submit your assignment. Write: Choose (and complete) one of the two "Exercises on Vocabulary" (either a or b) on pages 10-11. Your exercise response should be about a page (typed), which you should bring to class and also submit to Digication. |
| Tuesday 28 January | Poetry Read: Howe: Ch 1 pages 21-44 Read: Howe: Ch 2 pages 45 – 51 Review: Howe: Ch 3 pages 52 – 76 and CHOOSE ONE of the 8 poems w/ questions Write: Answers to the questions for your chosen poem. |
| Thursday 30 January | Poetry Review: Howe: the poetry selections in Appendix 2, pages 195 – 214 and CHOOSE ONE of the poems that you will write about for the first paper Pre-Write: Mark up the poem (either in your book or get a fresh copy online/photocopy. Write: One page of questions about the poem (as in the exercise samples) and at least one page of notes or an outline of points you want to make about the poem. |
| Tuesday 4 February | Poetry First Paper – Poetry Close Reading -- Due Today Bring hard copy to class AND submit to Digication. |
| Thursday 6 February | Close reading Drama Read: Howe: Ch 7 pages 126 – 147 Read: Howe: <i>Trifles</i> , pages 278 - 286 |
| Tuesday 11 February | Drama Read: Howe: <i>Trifles</i> analysis pages 152 - 156 Write: EITHER do exercise 5 on page 164 – 166, OR choose your own passage (of relatively the same length) from <i>Trifles</i> and develop a series of appropriate questions for it (you don't have to answer them). Read: Howe: sample short essay 178 - 180 |

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| Thursday 13 February | Close Reading Prose: Short Story Read: Howe: Ch 4 pages 78 – 97 (skim the “exercises sections”) Write: Your three most important “takeaways” from this chapter (i.e., things you learned, things that surprised you, things you thought were helpful or important) Read Poe: “The Black Cat” (255 – 259) |
| Tuesday 18 February | NO CLASS – UNIVERSITY MONDAY SCHEDULE |
| Thursday 20 February | Short Story Read: Kate Chopin “The Storm” (224 – 227) Read: Kate Chopin “The Story of an Hour (227 – 228) Read: Model Close Reading of “The Storm” & commentary #3 (110 – 113) |
| Tuesday 25 February | Short Story & Critical Approaches Read Stevn Lynn: “Critical Worlds: A Tour” (handout) Read closely and annotate; choose your favorite theory/section and prepare to explicate/discuss it. |
| Thursday 27 February | Short Story Read: Howe: “A Rose for Emily” (228 – 233) Write: 2-page draft of Short Story/Drama Paper |
| Tuesday 4 March | Short Story Second Paper – Short Story or Drama Close Reading -- Due Today Bring hard copy to class AND submit to Digication. |
| Thursday 6 March | Novel Read: <i>The Awakening</i> (text of the novel itself) 22 – 52 (through end of chapter X) |
| Tuesday 11 March | Novel Read: <i>The Awakening</i> (text of the novel itself) 51 – 139 (through end of the novel) |
| Thursday 13 March | Critical approaches to the Novel Read: <i>Awakening</i> “Intro: Bio & Hist. Contexts” 3 – 21 “Contextual Documents” 140-166 |
| March 17-21 | Spring Break (no class) |
| Tuesday 25 March | Critical approaches to the Novel Presentation Group 1 <i>Awakening</i> “Feminist Criticism” 186 – 222 <i>Awakening</i> “Gender Criticism” 223 – 256 |
| Thursday 27 March | Critical approaches to the Novel Presentation Group 2 <i>Awakening</i> “New Historicism” 257 – 290 <i>Awakening</i> “Deconstruction” 291 - 336 |
| Tuesday 1 April | Critical approaches to the Novel Presentation Group 3 <i>Awakening</i> “Reader Response” 337 – 373 <i>Awakening</i> “Combining Perspectives” 374 – 395 |
| Thursday 3 April | Library Session: Meet in O’Leary Library! We’ll meet with a librarian to talk about the research process Read: “Critical History” 169 – 185 Write: Draft prospectus/questions for the Final paper |

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| Tuesday 8 April | Novel First ½ <i>Turn of the Screw</i> (novel text) 22 – 72 (through the end of chapter X) |
| Thursday 10 April | Novel Second ½ <i>Turn of the Screw</i> (novel text) 72 – 120 (through the end of the novel) |
| Tuesday 15 April | Critical approaches to the Novel <i>TotS</i> “Intro Bio Historical Contexts” 3 – 21 <i>TotS</i> “A Critical History” 235 -270 |
| Thursday 17 April | Critical approaches to the Novel Presentation Group 4 <i>TotS</i> “Reader-Response Criticism” 271 – 301 <i>TotS</i> “Gender Criticism” 333 – 359 |
| Tuesday 22 April | Critical approaches to the Novel Presentation Group 5 <i>TotS</i> “Psychoanalytic Criticism” 302 – 332 <i>TotS</i> “Marxist Criticism” 360 – 389 |
| Thursday 24 April | Critical approaches to the Novel Presentation Group 6 <i>TotS</i> “Combining Perspectives” 390 – 405 |
| Tuesday 29 April | Outline and Rough Draft of Final Paper Project Due |
| Thursday 1 May | Last class meeting: Revisions, Wrap-up, etc. |
| Thursday 8 May | Final paper due by noon. Bring hard copy to my office AND submit to Digication. |

General Advice:

Check your UML e-mail regularly for important updates from the University and from me.

Come to class prepared to work. Bring the text we’re reading to class every day. Join the conversation, which means both listening to others and contributing your own ideas.

If you need extra time for an assignment, for whatever reason, ask (preferably early). I do not automatically give extensions; however, I am a reasonable person, and you should ask for help or time if you need it. An “extension” is something you ask for before a paper is due. When you ask for extra time on the day a paper is due (or in the days after it was due), that is called “late.” Late papers are subject to a grade reduction at my discretion, and I do not provide comments on late papers. In general, I would rather have a late paper than no paper at all; I would rather have no paper at all than a plagiarized paper.