

Syllabus - ENG 121 - Humanities Literature - Spring 2006

MWF 9:15, Leo 219 - Sec 003 Crn 22774

MWF 1:00, Leo 219 - Sec 006 Crn 22777

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Course Objectives

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To develop your understanding of literature2. To develop your general critical and analytical reading abilities3. To develop ways of enjoying and appreciating literature as a lifelong activity4. To improve your general critical thinking and writing abilities5. To improve your general oral communication skills through class discussions and presentations. |
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Overview

As part of the Liberal Studies curriculum, this course immerses you in the experience of literature. Readings that vary across time, culture, and style may lead you to begin thinking differently about yourself and the world. We will not simply appreciate the greatness of literary "masterpieces" or the diversity of human experience like awestruck fans in front of a painting (or Graceland if you prefer). Of course all the literary texts I'll ask you to read are rich and rewarding in my judgment. But my mission will not be so much to alter your taste in reading as to help you to develop habits of questioning and reflectiveness. Beginning simply and delving more deeply over the course of the semester--class discussion, activities, assignments, and "toolbox" readings will come together to change your literature reading and to enable you to think "theoretically" about such questions as what? why? and how? you read. You will become familiar with and employ interdisciplinary concepts such as authority, reading, subjectivity, ideology, and culture. I hope you will find this kind of thinking relevant to your own work in other classrooms and beyond.

Required Texts

Theory Toolbox, Nealon and Giroux. Rowman and Littlefield: 2003 0742519945

With His Pistol in His Hand: Ballad of Gregorio Cortez, Americo Paredes.

Public Domain - (a "home made" literary anthology you will purchase)

Selections on password protected E-Reserve (which you must print out)

Technology and Resources Requirements

Printer access, E-reserve, IUP email account, IUP network password, and internet access (for Blog and WebCT).

Requirements and Expectations

Quizzes (announced and unannounced); literary readings will frequently be assessed with announced, WebCT content quizzes; <u>Toolbox</u> concept readings may also be assessed via in-class or out-of-class short answer or essay questions.	30
Participation Discussion- prepared engagement in class: offering to share marginal notation, posing questions, or venturing observations; Inclass-writing Group-work (may include panel presentations) Other (daily assignments, public readings, etc.)	20
Informal Writing Post-It – Marginal notation (spot collected) Blog (a form of journaling using a web interface) For each major reading, you will post a semi-formal reflection to your groups web log at blogger.com. You'll also keep up with posts of your group members and leave comments for at least two classmates posts a week. Other (from time-to-time, informal written work may be assigned and collected)	40
Formal Writing Two, extended, 3-4 page cover letters that reflect upon your work over the semester, your appreciation of toolbox concepts and readings, and the trajectory of your blog posts. You will submit these as cover letters with your portfolio of blog posts at mid-term and then during the final. (5 points each)	10

On Jazz and Emergent Performance

As an amateur jazz performer, I am interested in improvisation – what happens when a group of people join together to create new variations or versions of established music. I like to think of each course I teach as a kind of semester-long, collaborative performance: a series of events that is planned or structured but remains open to accident, discovery, and collaboration. Jazz depends on the participation of musicians and the audience as well. To extend the metaphor, I want to you to begin the semester at least as an active audience member; but I hope you will find your way onto the stage as an engaged participant. I expect this course will ask you to do things that are unfamiliar, different from what you have experienced in prior English classes. At its best, reading literature from a performative perspective is as exploratory, challenging, and exciting as improvisation.

On Texts and Technology

In designing this course, I look to the ways that different texts and technologies can be made into tools for your active use. I will ask you to use various digital communication tools this semester as part of our performances with literary texts. Students in past semesters have found this profitable; such activities and assignments help you to learn to use the tools themselves, but they also stimulate you to thinking and working differently than you otherwise might in an English classroom. In the area of texts, I have asked you to purchase few traditional books; don't think this means we won't be doing a lot of reading. Rather, I'll make available a number of readings electronically and through a "home-made" anthology. The idea here is that taking a fresh approach to "literature" means we cannot start with the big, expensive, and established college literature textbook.

Attendance

Presence in class is assumed. I want to respect the maturity of students and the decisions they make. Each student is allowed three absences, no questions asked. There is no need for you to provide documentation or excuses. A student who misses a second week of classes will lose 2 points from the final average for each. Beyond six absences, a student's final average will be reduced 5 points per absence. Students who anticipate missing more than five classes for health, family, or other personal reasons should discuss this with the instructor but may be advised to consider taking the class at another time. Students (e.g. athletes) attending IUP sponsored events should notify the professor in advance via email; a typed, 350-word discussion of any assigned reading will be expected within one week of such absences; any pre-scheduled assignments should be submitted in advance. A student with perfect attendance will receive a 5% bonus to his/her final grade.

Cheating, Plagiarism, and Collusion

Scholastic Dishonesty is a serious matter. I am savvy and vigilant in detecting students who use unattributed web sources, "collaborate" (beyond what I may ask in group work etc.) with fellows students, or utilize other "clever" methods to enhance their grades. Take the grade you honestly earn on an assignment. Should a classmate attempt to use your work, refuse; I make no distinction between cheaters and those who aid them. A plagiarized assignment will earn you a zero for the assignment and referral to administrators for disciplinary action. We may use turnitin.com as a safety net for formal writing assignments.

Make-up Work, Computer Breakdown, and Other Exigencies

Successful mastery of course material requires students to complete assignments in a timely fashion. Consult the class web page or fellow students to inform yourself of upcoming responsibilities if you miss a class. Make-up work does not serve the learning process and so will not generally be permitted; this includes missed quizzes, whether announced or not. Writing assignments should be handed in at the beginning of class on the day due; the grade of a major assignment will be reduced by a 1/2-letter-grade

for each day or portion of a day it is late; after one week, a grade of F will pertain, though the student should still submit a paper in order to avoid getting a zero. Should you unavoidably miss a class, be sure to convey any assignment to me: leave it in my English-office mailbox (Leo 110); use a classmate as courier or email it (sherwood@iup.edu).

Should you have difficulty obtaining a book from the library, accessing a web assignment, or printing a required reading: please tell me about it, but take the responsibility of addressing the problem yourself as best you can. Readings can often be found in other editions within the library; classmates can be asked to lend a copy, remind you of a password, etc.

Computers have not saved us from Murphy's Law: anything that can go wrong will. Make paper and back-up copies of work done on computers on at least two different disks (learn how to do this today if you're not computer literate). Keep written notes, but also print and save intermediate drafts. If you begin work in advance of deadlines, you will have more time to troubleshoot disk errors, virus alerts, and printer problems. I know intimately how unreliable technology can be, but you are responsible for submitting work despite the gremlins. Whether you use the library, school lab, or your own computer – web access will frequently be required for the completion of assignments. Build this into your schedule please.

Expectations, Workload, and Help

I hope you will find this to be an enjoyable course that challenges you to be reflective. We will discuss all major readings during class, but I will expect that you have closely read and reflected upon them in advance. Your ability to participate in class discussion depends on this. As in all English courses, you must make the effort to draw your own inferences about the texts you read and be prepared to learn how to articulate and justify your interpretations. Make sure you schedule time for reflective reading; falling behind in the reading diminishes what you can gain from each class. On the positive side, please note that most of the assignments heavily reward effort! A student who conscientiously reads, enthusiastically participates, and thoughtfully posts can expect a respectable grade.

Cell Phones

Please silence cell phones and beepers during class time.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

What counts as good participation?

Comments sharing insights, posing questions, and responding to classmates. Your readiness to participate in class (attentive listening, informed and thoughtful contribution to class and group discussions, raising of questions) is assumed. Informed

and attentive participation is the key. Verbal contributions to class may be combined with electronic contributions to the web discussion.

What exactly is a panel presentation?

The panel is usually an informed group of speakers who prepare material to present, perhaps on the basis of prior questions, and who collaborate to communicate information and insight, as well as engaging in dialogue. This semester, we'll set aside the usual format of group oral presentations and adopt the panel format. Using your group blog to exchange ideas, and come to class prepared for public dialogue with group members, the class, and professor. You may research, create an outline or notes, and blog relevant resources; but I will discourage the power-point style broadcast of information.

What is marginal notation?

If you have written nothing in the margins of a text, I will assume you have not read it. Almost all good readers literally interact with the texts they read by making notes in the margin. Students sometimes tell me that they prefer not to write in their books because they want to resell them. My first response is, don't! Hold onto them and you may decide to read them again some day. This semester, I'm asking you to keep post-it notes handy and write on them. Yes, I'm serious about this!

What do you expect us to do when we read these assignments by ourselves?

First, make marginal notation as you read, recording whatever observations you can on your own. It matters little whether your response is clever or confused; the first step to understanding is having a response. Second, do your best to make some sense of them; reading a text is less about getting the right answer than it is about one's experience of the text; if you wait for the professor to teach it before reading, you miss that experience.

What if my interpretation of a work is wrong?

I like to compare good interpretations to the arguments of good lawyers. Obviously, in an ideal courtroom, both prosecuting and defense attorneys make strong, informed and persuasive claims. They work with the evidence at hand to persuade a judge or jurors. Obviously, only one can have the "right" on his or her side, but both can make competent cases. The analogy is key too, because a good literary interpretation is not just an expression of a reader's feelings or intuitive response to a work; it must be expressed in a way designed to persuade others. Thus ultimately for most literature courses, exactly what your opinion is matters much less than how you arrived at it and how effectively you can communicate your reasoning.

What can I expect from the quizzes?

Reading quizzes will generally be basic and content-oriented. They will encourage and reward reading in preparation for the class discussion, where we will have the

opportunity to engage in reflection, interpretation, and analysis. I anticipate using WebCT to administer these quizzes without wasting class-time; it will be necessary to complete any announced WebCT quizzes before 9am of the day the reading is assigned.

How do I blog?

I will lead the class through the process of registering at blogger.com for a free blog. (Instructions will also be available on the class webpage.) This semester, much of your work will involve posting reading responses to a blog shared with group members. Your posts should be clearly titled, signed, and posted promptly as assigned. Individual posts will not be graded, but I will read and comment to your group, and then assess your posts for grades twice – when you print and assemble them for the portfolio. Sometimes I will offer questions or topics to guide you in responding to a given reading; drawing on your marginal notations and your group-mates' comments, you should use the blog to articulate your thoughts, questions, and interpretations of readings. Remember too that, although this is not formal, edited writing, it is public; use your judgement and be sensitive to classmates in terms of what you write and how you write it.