

Syllabus - ENG 121 **Humanities Literature** - Fall 2006  
(Sec 008 CRN: 13178)  
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm MWF - Leonard Hall 204  
Dr. Kenneth Sherwood  
**Sherwood@iup.edu**  
**www.chss.iup.edu/sherwood**  
724-357-2606/messages x2261 Office: Sutton 340

---



## Course Objectives

1. To develop your understanding of literature
2. To develop your general critical and analytical reading abilities
3. To develop ways of enjoying and appreciating literature as a lifelong activity
4. To improve your general critical thinking and writing abilities
5. To improve your general oral communication skills through class discussions and presentations.

## 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 buy and 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

Ceremony. Silko Penguin 0140086838 \$10

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in heaven, Alexie Grove 2004 0802141676 \$10

One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest. Kesey. Penguin 2002 0141181222 \$11

House of Spirits, Allende. Bantam 1986. 0553273914

AND: Selections on reserve (which you must print out or copy)

## Technology and Resources Requirements

Printer access, E-reserve, IUP email account, IUP network password, and web access.

## Requirements and Expectations

<p><b>Participation*</b></p> <p>Prepared and engaged discussion makes the class a success: I value students who contribute by offering to share marginal notation, posing questions, or venturing observations. I invite students to discuss with me their participation level and how to improve it at any time. (Additional in-class writing, group-work or presentations and any other minor, daily assignments may also fall under this category. Students have the option of submitting marginal notation Post-Its with their final portfolio for additional class preparation credit.)</p>	<b>20</b>
<p><b>Blog Posting and Commenting</b></p> <p>The Blog enables us to extend class discussion through a form of semi-public journaling via a web interface. At least once each week, you will post a semi-formal reflection on class reading and discussions to your web log at blogger.com. You'll also keep up with posts of your group members and contribute to the online discussion by contributing comments to at least two classmates posts a week. Comments should be substantial, not just two word "I agree"s. (Save your own posts and comments in a word file; for grading purposes, I will ask you to assemble them as a paper portfolio at the middle and end of the semester.)</p>	<b>35</b>
<p><b>Quizzes</b></p> <p>Pre-discussion quizzes (announced and unannounced) will be given to motivate you to complete reading assignments; often they will take the form of WebCT content quizzes; but in-class, "pop" quizzes related to major, minor, or theory readings may also be given.</p>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>Tests and Formal Writing</b></p> <p>Mid-term and final exams will assess reading comprehension and thoughtful application of course concepts through paragraph-length, mini-essay, and extended written responses. You will submit cover letters with your portfolio of blog posts at mid-term and at semester's end; the 3-4 page cover letter should reflect upon your work over the semester, your appreciation of concepts and readings, and the trajectory of your blog posts.</p>	<b>30</b>

### Note On Attendance\*

Presence and participation in class should be assumed. I want to respect the maturity of students and the decisions they make, thus each student is allowed three absences, no questions asked. There is no need for you to provide documentation or excuses. A student with perfect attendance will receive a 5% bonus to his/her final grade. **\*Further policy elements will be discussed with the class and posted after the first week of class.**

### **Note 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 each course I teach is 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 unpack 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 hope you find this course asking you to do things that are unfamiliar, different from what you have experienced in prior English classes. At its best, reading literature is performative, exploratory, even challenging.

### **Note On Expectations and Workload**

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. You do not have to be a natural "English-major type" to do well in this course!

### **Note On Texts and Technology**

In designing this course, I look to the way that different texts and technology 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, and they also stimulate you to thinking and working differently than you otherwise might in an English classroom. Unavoidably, students will have different levels of prior experience and access to technology. I do expect all students to participate. If the technological component of the course presents you with difficulties, please speak with me, as I should be able to point you to IUP facilities or recommend free, helpful training to you.

### **IUP Events**

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.

### **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. Make-up work does not serve the learning process and so will not generally be permitted. Writing assignments should be handed in at the beginning of class on the day due. In an exceptional case a late assignment may be accepted, but the grade will be reduced by a 1-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; use a classmate as courier or email it (sherwood@iup.edu). There will be no make-up of quizzes.

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.

### **FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)**

#### **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 written work will involve posting reading responses to a blog accessed by your classmates. 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 assemble them for the portfolio.

#### **Is Blogging Safe?**

You will be instructed not to advertise your blog, since doing so often results in comment spam. But you should note that writing posted to your blog can be found and read by others outside of our class. You publish to the blog, making your writing public. There are pedagogical reasons for choosing this technology for our course which I am glad to talk with you about. As always on the web, you should be cautious about disclosing personal information; you may choose to remove your blog after the semester closes.

**What's the key to earning a good grade in blogging for this class?**

Ideally, blog entries provide the perfect format for students to show their thinking about class readings and issues. Because students choose the topic and focus, they can often avoid the hit-or-miss quality of instructors' test questions. The best posts consist in 2-3 well developed paragraphs that ask and answer a question or develop the student's perspective on a course topic. You should avoid simple summary and resist the urge to touch upon all of the week's readings in a single post. Aim to post continuously throughout the semester, from week to week, so that you and I can both chart your growth and progress as a reader.

**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.

**Why use Post-Its for 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. As students often tell me that they prefer not to write in their books because they want to resell them, I encourage you to jot comments and questions on post-its that you stick in your books and xeroxes. Yes, I'm serious about this. In fact, if you arrange your post-its on clearly labeled sheets and include them in your final portfolio, I'll give you bonus points for doing so.

**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. Then formulate your initial thoughts and offer them through your blog.

**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 Much Do You Love Cell Phones?

Please silence cell phones and beepers during class time. Do not text-message, play games, or do work for another class during our time together.

		ENGLISH 121	Fall 2006
<b>Week</b>	Se		
1	M	Varieties of Texts	
	W		Syllabus Review
<b>Sep</b>	F	1	"Why Theory"
2	M	x	
	W	6	Grimms Tales (versions)
	F	8	Uncle Remus. Joel C Harris
3	M	11	Blues Lyrics
	W	13	E-poetry Part 1
	F	15	<i>Ceremony. Leslie Marmon Silko</i>
4	M	18	
	W	20	
	F	22	Whitman, Song of Myself (sels)
5	M	25	
	W	27	
	F	29	Waldman, <i>Fast Speaking Woman</i>
6	M	2	Paredes. <i>With His Pistol in His Hand: Ballad of Gregorio Cortez.</i> (sel)
<b>Oct</b>	W	4	
	F	6	Poetry (part 1)
7	M	9	
	W	11	<i>House of Spirits. Isabel Allende</i>
	F	13	
	M	16	
	W	18	
	F	20	Lorca, <i>Blood Wedding</i>
9	M	X	
	W	25	
	F	27	<i>Gulliver's Travels: Houynhms (c) Swift, Jonathan</i>
10	M	30	
<b>Nov</b>	W	1	
	F	3	E-poetry (Part 2)

11	M	6		
	W	8	The Yellow Wallpaper, Gilman.(c)	
	F	10	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest. Ken Kesey</i>	
12	M	13		
	W	15		
	F	17		
13	M	20	Poetry (part 2)	
	W	x		
	F	x		
14	M	27	<i>The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven. Sherman Alexie</i>	
	W	29		
<b>Dec</b>	F	1		
15	M	4		
	W	6	Last Class	
			Final Exam	