

Syllabus - ENG 121 - **Humanities Literature** - Spring 2005

MWF 9:15, Leo 218 - 22687 §003

MWF 10:30, Leo 218 - 22689 §005

MWF 2:15, Leo 204 - 22702 §014

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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.

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. I hope you will find this kind of thinking relevant to your own work in other classrooms and beyond.

Texts

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

Best American Poetry, Hejinian and Lehman. Scribner: 2004 0743257375

The Awakening, Chopin. Dover Thrift 1993. 0486277860

Three Tragedies (Blood Wedding), Lorca. New Directions. 0811200922

Antigone, Sophocles/Brecht. Applause/Grove. 0936839252

House of Spirits, Allende. Bantam 1986. 0553273914

Invisible Man, Ellison. 0679732764

Things Fall Apart, Achebe. Anchor. 0385474547

Technology and Other Materials and Resources

E-reserve (including printer access), IUP email, and web access (for Blog or WebCT); composition notebook.

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.

Requirements and Expectations

Oral Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Class Discussion</i> - prepared engagement in class: offering to share CPBs, posing questions, or venturing observations;▪ <i>Group Presentation(s)</i>: informal; contribute to the generation of "working questions" for the class (which your group will provide electronically in advance of the class), and initiate the day's discussion on an assigned reading;	20%
Written Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Marginal Notation</i> - Use pencil, pen, or post-its to mark-up your texts as you read. Bring marked texts to class to aid you in contributing to class discussion.▪ <i>Commonplace Book</i> - CPB entries include quotations and responses to each reading assignment. This is designed to make you a more active reader, to prepare you for class discussion, and to lead you to take intellectual "ownership" of the reading. You must keep up with assignments; a journal faked in the final week will not be credited. (Collected at mid-point and semester close, but may be spot checked at any time).▪ <i>Blog</i> - For each major reading, you will post a semi-formal reflection to a web log I'll show you how to create at blogger.com. A blog entry may extend and develop one of your best CPBs. You'll also keep up with your working group's blogs and comment on at least two classmates posts a week.▪ (Also includes any announced or unannounced reading quizzes, marginal notation quizzes, or any miscellaneous assignments not included elsewhere)	50%
Formal Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Take home essay test (3)</i>- in organized, edited and succinct (300-500 words) essays, you will demonstrate your ability to independently apply critical concepts from the class to select readings; each of the three questions will be designed to give you the chance to synthesize toolbox concepts, class discussion, and independent responses to literary texts.	30%
Final Exam (the third take-home essay)	

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. 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; 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; use a classmate as courier or email it (sherwood@iup.edu).

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.

Cell Phones

Please silence cell phones and beepers during class time.

FAQ (Other 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 does he 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 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. If you can't resist getting \$10 for a \$50 text, then read with an erasable pencil (hi-lighting is useless anyway) or keep post-it notes handy and write on them. Yes, I'm serious about this!

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.