Introduction to Literature (Fall 2015)

Instructor Ann Emmons
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“I try to laugh / At whatever life brings / Cause when I look down / I just miss all the good stuff / When I look up / I just trip over things.” Ani DiFranco, “As Is”

Overview:
This course serves as a general introduction to literature, the art of writing, and the act of reading. I have divided the semester into four study units: Close Reading, or Looking Up and Looking Down; Critical Schools, or Writing about Reading; The Reader; and The (Literary) Canon. Beyond this general organizational strategy, the course is fluid; I will adjust the syllabus and the reading assignments in response to your interests and the pace of our discussion.

Please, silence your cell phones and put them away. I assume/expect that laptops are being used in the service of our class activities and that they will not distract you, me, or the other students in the class; distractions include noise and your wayward attention. If you prefer to take notes on a laptop, you must sit within the first row of the classroom.

Texts:
- Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno”
- Henry James, The Turn of the Screw
- William Shakespeare, King Lear
- Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

Requirements

Participation 30%
Essays 40%
Midterm exam 10%
Final exam (cumulative) 20%

✓ All essays must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due, typed and double-spaced, with 1” margins. One of these essays must be revised. All of them may be revised, for up to a grade-point increase on each revision (C → B, for example). Additional formatting instructions will be provided when the papers are assigned. I encourage you to visit me during office hours to discuss the papers and your writing in more detail - and also be aware of the staff and assistance available to you at the Writing Center (LA 144).

✓ Your participation grade is based on your careful and diligent reading of the assigned texts and on your willingness to talk about this reading in class; there will be mini-lecture segments, but this will largely be a discussion-based environment. If you miss more than three class sessions, I will reduce your final grade by one grade point. If you miss more than six class sessions, you cannot pass the course.

✓ Both the midterm and the final exam will feature a combination of questions on terminology and short essays. More details to follow later in the semester.
✓ There are lots of extra-credit opportunities: provide music, poems, or illustrations to accompany the course or a study unit (with a very brief discussion of how the work applies to the course or unit); attend one of many
university or community lectures or readings – I will announce the coming week’s roster every Monday. You will write a brief review of the lecture or reading; bring in a grammatical error from a reputable source (one that should know better)
Academic Honesty
All work that you submit for this class must be your own, and it must be written exclusively for this course. The unacknowledged borrowing of others’ words or ideas—whether from books, the internet, or other sources—constitutes the serious academic crime of plagiarism if you fail to document properly those sources consulted for your writing, you risk an automatic failure for the entire course. If you have any doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University’s policy on it, please see me.

Special Needs
If you have a documented disability, or otherwise anticipate needing special accommodations for this course, please bring this to my attention as early in the semester as possible so that we have an understanding and can make arrangements.

Tentative Schedule
NB: this schedule is truly tentative and will be adjusted according to the needs of the class. Specific reading assignments will be determined at least one week in advance. All reading must be completed by class time on the date listed; please note that you are not prepared for class unless you have that reading in front of you as we discuss it.

**Unit 1: Close Reading**

**Wk 1 (Aug 31 - Sept 4)**
- m Course introduction
  - reading for Wednesday: Norton Anthology, pp. 1 - 11
- w Student introductions
- f lecture: narrative structure

**Wk 2 (Sept 7 – 11)**
- m Labor Day – no class
- w *Touching the Void* (in-class movie; please be on time)
- f *Touching the Void* (in-class movie; please be on time)
  - reading for Week 3: to be announced

**Wk 3 (Sept 14 - 18)**
- m *Touching The Void* discussion
- w *Touching the Void* discussion
- f “Strangers” and “The Art of Fiction” discussion; *Tiv* in-class free write (part of your participation
  - reading for Monday: “Benito Cereno”

**Wk 4 (Sept 21 - 25)**
- m Writing Workshop
  - reading for Wednesday: Benito Cereno” (up to the depositions)
- w lecture: looking down; Discussion: “Benito Cereno”
  - reading for Friday: “Benito Cereno” (to the end)
- f lecture: looking up; Discussion: “Benito Cereno”
  - reading for Monday: none (“Benito Cereno” Essay due Monday)
Unit 2: Writing about Reading

Wk 5 (Sept 28 – Oct 2)
- m “Benito Cereno” essay due; lecture: “The Elements of Style”
  - reading for Wednesday: to be announced
- w writing workshop
  - reading for Friday: to be announced
- f writing workshop
  - reading for Monday: Kenneth Burke, “Kinds of Criticism” (pdf posted to Moodle)

Wk 6 (Oct 5 – 9)
- m lecture: Plato, Aristotle, and Liberal Humanism
  - reading for Wednesday: revisit “Benito Cereno,” up to the depositions
- w lecture: Identity Studies; Discussion: “Benito Cereno”
  - reading for Friday: revisit “Benito Cereno,” depositions to the end
- f lecture: New Historicism; Discussion: “Benito Cereno”
  - reading for Monday: begin The Turn of the Screw

Unit 3: The Reader

Wk 7 (Oct 12 - 16)
- m lecture: critical versus uncritical reading
- w lecture: reader response theory
- f discussion: The Turn of the Screw
  - reading for Week 8: finish The Turn of the Screw

Wk 8 (Oct 19 - 23)
- m discussion: The Turn of the Screw
- w discussion: The Turn of the Screw
- f discussion: development of a writing prompt for The Turn of the Screw
  - reading for Week 9: Eagleton and Bloom Essays posted to Moodle; Turn of the Screw essay due Monday

Unit 4: The Canon

Wk 9 (Oct 26 – 30)
- m Turn of the Screw essay due; lecture: the canon
- w discussion: Bloom v Eagleton
- f discussion: Bloom v Eagleton
  - reading for week 10: begin King Lear

Wk 10 (Nov 2 - 6)
- m discussion: King Lear (Acts 1-2)
- w discussion: King Lear (Act 3)
- f Writing Workshop/essay 2 revisions
  - reading for week 11: to be announced
Wk 11 (Nov 9 – 13)
- m Writing Workshop/essay 2 revisions, continued
- w discussion: development of a writing prompt for King Lear
- f Midterm Exam
  - o reading for week 12: none (*King Lear* essay due Wednesday 11/11)

Wk 12 (Nov 16 – 20)
- m exam review
- w *King Lear* essay due; Writing Workshop
- f Writing Workshop
  - o reading for week 14: re-read Toni Morrison, “Strangers” (pdf on Moodle); Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” OR Reader’s Choice/alternative storytelling.

Wk 13 (Nov 23 – 27)
- m no class
- w Student Travel Day
- f Thanksgiving Holiday
  - o reading for week 14: see week 12, above

**The Canon, Part II: The Nation and The World**

Wk 14 (Nov 30 – Dec 4)
- m lecture: National Literature; discussion: “Rip Van Winkle” and “Sleepy Hollow”
- w lecture: World Literature; discussion: “Strangers”
- f development of writing prompt for final essay
  - o reading for week 15: none (*Essay 4 due Wed. 12/9*)

Wk 15 (Dec 7 – 11)
- m Writing Workshop
- w Essay 4 due; discussion: other forms, other genres
- f Course Review

**Final Exam:** 8 -10 am ⌧, Wednesday December 16, LA 207