Introduction to Literary Studies (LIT 201)  
Fall 2015

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Office Hours: (LA 217) MWF 12:30-2:30 and by appointment

“To look closely with the attention of questioning changes everything.”

--Jane Hirshfield, Nine Gates

LIT 201 is an introduction to the English major and the discipline of literary studies more broadly. The main aim of this course is for each student to become a more perceptive reader of literature in the genres of poetry, fiction, and drama. While we will study a small selection of works from these three genres, your goal should be to acquire and practice the transferable skills you will need to read literary works of any sort beyond the scope of this particular course. In addition to practicing close reading (on, nearly, a daily basis), we will learn about a range of interpretive approaches that literary scholars typically employ. This course will also familiarize you with the basic qualities and conventions expected of writing about literature at the college level.

Required texts:

- Readings on Moodle. See top of class schedule (below) for how to access this website.

An important requirement of this class is that you have with you in class a hard copy of the literature we’re reading for each day. This includes the required texts listed just above, all the poems listed on our schedule, and a few additional readings. You can access the poems and additional readings on our class’s Moodle page and then you’ll need to print them out. Our culture is on the cusp of print and electronic technologies, but until electronic texts can allow us to mark them up with the same facility that we can annotate a paper text with a pencil they’re not sufficient for our purposes. Not having a hard copy text with you in class is like going canoeing without a paddle or showing up to a hockey game without a stick. A physical text is a basic tool that can enable you to read literature more engagingly.


Graded work:  

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Poetry close reading</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Poetry journal</td>
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<td>Poetry essay</td>
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<td>Drama essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper on Oryx and Crake</td>
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<td>Contributions to class discussions</td>
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Writing assignments: Essay writing is the bedrock of this course. The assignments include four different kinds of essays: 1) short, very focused analysis papers; 2) an informal journal of your reflections on poetry; 3) formal essays addressing a focused question or task concerning the texts we’re studying; 4) a term paper in which you "engage" (we’ll discuss what this means) with a selection of the published criticism on *Oryx and Crake*. I’ll distribute assignment sheets for each assignment at least one week in advance of the due date.

Contributions to class discussions: Exploring literature in the company of other readers is an opportunity to learn about the texts in ways that we never could as solitary individuals. Our class meetings will be successful to the extent that each of you keeps up with the readings and contributes to our discussions. Consistent preparation and thoughtful participation typically will raise a final grade by one-third of a letter grade; poor preparation, repeatedly not having a hard copy of our readings in class, and a lack of participation will lower a final grade by one-third of a letter grade.

Attendance is essential to your success in this class. I notice and wonder what’s up when you’re not in class. If you have met with an unusual circumstance, don’t hesitate to let me know. You do not need to give me specifics (although I’ll always listen). Unexpected problems are a normal part of life. Barring unusual circumstances, however, each class you miss beyond four will lower your final grade by one-third of a letter grade. If you miss four classes (without excuse), your letter grade will drop from an "A" to an "A-minus," for example, or a "B-minus" to a "C-plus." All this is just to say that your attendance in this class is very important!

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is a violation of trust. According to the Provost, "Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321](http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321)." Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper. Each essay you submit must be signed at the bottom of the last page, assuring that the work is your own, except where indicated by proper documentation. Your signature is your word that the essay is free of plagiarism.

Accommodation: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Specific objectives of the course:

1. To gain understanding of the distinguishing characteristics of the major literary genres (poetry, drama, fiction) and to analyze specific examples in light of these characteristics.
2. To learn how to perform a meaningful, interesting close reading of a literary text.
3. To engage thoughtfully with a range of different perspectives concerning the central ideas and aesthetic characteristics of a literary text.
4. To learn how to find, evaluate, and engage with literary scholarship as part of a larger effort to gain a better understanding and appreciation of a literary text.
5. To learn the stylistic conventions of formatting an essay and documenting secondary sources.
6. To become proficient in writing rhetorically effective essays (well-reasoned and grammatically sound), driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

"The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning." --Mark Twain

“Poetry is a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary.” --Khalil Gibran

Words: You should take it upon yourself to learn each word that's new to you in the literature we read. Keep a dictionary by your side as you read (most dictionaries, including dictionary.com, are perfectly fine).

“Moodle”: This is where I'll post copies of poems, short stories, and essays we'll be reading; assignment sheets; slides I have used in class; and links to useful or interesting internet links. Here is one route to Moodle: go to UM's main web page and click on “my.umt.edu” on the top bar. Click on UMOline/Moodle on the top bar. Log-in with your NetID. Look for our course in your list of courses on the left side of the page.

According to the pace of our discussions, we will deviate from the following schedule from time to time. At the beginning or end of each class I will confirm the assignment for the next class. It's important that you exchange contact information with one of your classmates. Anytime you miss a class you should get in touch with that person to learn if there have been any changes to the schedule.

8/31 Mon. Introductions; Plato's challenge to poets and responses from Percy Shelley and Walt Whitman; Keats, “On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

9/2 Weds. Dylan Thomas, “Fern Hill” (This and all other poems we're reading are on our Moodle page. Please print out and bring with you to class.); Thomas, “Notes on the Art of Poetry” (Moodle); Mary Oliver, “Diction, Tone, Voice” (76-86), in A Poetry Handbook.

9/4 Fri. Oliver, “Verse That Is Free” (67-75); e. e. cummings, “in Just-” . Recommended: Eric Wilson, “Poetry Makes You Weird” (Moodle)

9/7 Mon. Labor day – no class

9/9 Weds. Oliver, “Imagery” (pp. 92-108); Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”


9/16 Weds. Oliver, “The Line” (35-57); Robert Frost, “Birches”; Theodore Roethke, “My Papa’s Waltz”; William Carlos Williams, “The Dance”; Walt Whitman, “When I Heard the Learned Astronomer.” If you would like additional guidance on metrical analysis, see “Rhythm and Meter” (Moodle).

9/18 Fri. Ted Hughes, “Thistles”; Maya Angelou, “Africa”

9/21 Mon. Edward Hirsch, “Help Me, O Heavenly Muse” (Moodle); S.T. Coleridge, “Kubla Khan”


9/28 Mon. Poetry journal due. Discussion of journals: please come to class prepared to share with us one of your discoveries or experiences or a reading recommendation.
For this class we'll focus on the art of quotation. Read: "Introducing Quotations" (handout) and study the different ways Mary Oliver (in A Poetry Handbook) and Robert Miola (in his Introduction to our edition of Macbeth) incorporate quotations into their respective essays.

Poetry essay due. Alfred Harbage, “On Reading Shakespeare” (Moodle); Macbeth, act 1, scene 1

Macbeth

Discussion of film adaptations of Macbeth

Thesis writing workshop

Drama essay due. No class meeting; I'll hold an office hour during class time. Please drop off your essay at my office (LA 217)

Hawthorne, “Wakefield”

Hawthorne, “The Birthmark”

Hawthorne, “The Artist of the Beautiful”

Hawthorne, “Ethan Brand”

Reading will be announced in class on 10/30.

Octavia Butler, “Speech Sounds” (on Moodle. Please print out this story)

Ted Chiang, “Exhalation” (link on Moodle. Please print out this story)

Margaret Atwood, Oryx and Crake

Veterans day – no class

Oryx and Crake

Library research session with Sue Samson (meet in the Student Learning Center: Mansfield Library, “2nd floor”/one floor below ground level)

Oryx and Crake

Thanksgiving break – no class

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Oryx and Crake and a critical essay (to be determined)

Oryx and Crake and a critical essay (to be determined)

Individual meetings (no class)

Individual meetings (no class)

Term paper due. Conclusions and extrapolations.

There is no final exam for this class.