LITERARY STUDY
ENGLISH 308W -- MWF 10-10:50 -- MUSIC 207

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is a course on reading and writing about literature. Its main goal is to give you a new understanding of literature and literary analysis—and especially to show you how to move beyond dull, dry, or non-rigorous kinds of analysis and to make literary study more informative, adventurous, and meaningful. Forget symbolism! Our critical methods will be far more concrete and analytical. We’ll learn how modern theories of language, text, and cognition have given rise to new critical approaches. And you’ll learn how to put those new approaches to use on an array of literary texts, from old classics to modern science fiction.

COURSE GOALS

Literary Skills: Help students to develop a thorough understanding of a wide range of literary devices and conventions, to learn to engage skillfully with texts of various genres, perspectives, and periods. Give students insight into modern approaches to literary study, including notions of the text, literary aesthetics, and methods of analysis.

Writing Literary Analysis: Develop students’ skills in critical analysis through essays and other forms of composition, strengthening their ability to express complex ideas and formulate scholarly arguments. Have opportunities to work collaboratively with peers to improve writing/reading.

Mechanics of Writing: Controls syntax to write with clarity and to communicate effectively with the reader, using detailed textual evidence to support ideas. Cites sources appropriately and writes with minimal errors.

Diversity: Recognizes the wide diversity of values and traditions represented in literary tradition. Responds to the challenges and opportunities that arise from an engagement with underrepresented texts.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Angela Carter The Bloody Chamber (Penguin)
- Oscar Wilde The Picture of Dorian Gray (Dover)
- The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (Penguin)
- Various Reading provided on Blackboard

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- RESPONSE PAPERS (3) 20%
- 5-7 PAGE PAPERS (2) 15/15%
- STUDENT-LED CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS (2) 10%
- FINAL PORTFOLIO 30%
- RANDOM WRITING 10%

***Regular attendance and active participation is also a requirement, but these won’t be “scored” directly. See below.

RESPONSE PAPERS (20%): You’ll be required to turn in three two-page essays, graded on a typical A-F scale. These papers will require no outside research, but you must adhere to style guidelines from the MLA Handbook for formatting, citations, etc. I’m not looking for summaries to prove you’ve done the reading, or boring five paragraph essays, but rather papers which express your best and most interesting ideas, especially ones which will spur further discussion.

DUE on FRIDAYS. Two of these response papers will likely be linked to your CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS.
CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS (10%): Over the semester you will be responsible for leading two discussions on our readings for that week. You'll be signing up in the first week of class, and I'll give you more detailed instructions then. While a group of students will be working together to lead these discussions, this is not exactly a “group presentation.” For one, there will be an individual response paper attached to it. And two, your goal is not to deliver a bunch of information, but rather to get people talking—which is a far different and more interactive (and honestly probably harder). We’ll talk about how to make this work.

LONGER PAPERS (15% Each): These are argument/thesis-driven essay that rely on critical thinking, strong textual evidence, and clear academic-style prose. In the coming weeks, I’ll be giving you lots of guidance about how to write such papers successfully. You will also have the opportunity to revise either one or both of them, according to the following guidelines. Revisions will be due along with your final project.

REVISION OPTION #1: (FULL) You may completely revise and resubmit a paper for a higher grade. If you do this, you must submit (1) Your new paper, (2) Your original paper, (3) A one paragraph explanation about what you believe you have improved and how you’ve done so. If any of these elements are missing, you can’t receive a new grade (so be sure to save your original paper). Even if you do hand in all of them, though, that doesn’t guarantee that you will improve your grade. To improve your grade, you actually have to improve your paper. Under no circumstances will you harm your grade.

REVISION OPTION #2: (PARTIAL): Write one page giving an outline explaining how you would revise the paper, if you were to do so. This MUST include significant details. For example, “I would write a better thesis statement,” will get you absolutely no credit. Actually writing a new thesis statement will. “I would improve my close readings” will also get you nothing, sketching out some new ideas for a better reading, even if they’re not in complete sentences, will. This option will net you 0-7 points, which will be added to your original grade. The exact number of points you receive will depend on the quality and thoroughness of your revision plan.

RANDOM WRITING: Several times during the semester, I may call on you to write in class for approximately 10-15 minutes on some topic or question. None of these will be announced ahead of time, so make sure you come to class prepared. No make-ups will be permitted. Each writing will be graded on an A-C-F scale, then averaged for the final grade. While these assignments will count 5% toward your final grade, I may, under certain conditions forego these assignments, which would result in the entire class receiving a grade of “A.” Now, what are those certain conditions? Well, let’s put it this way, if we’re having excellent, high-quality class discussions I probably won’t want to stop you to make you sit in silence and write. If, however, our discussions begin petering out, or if most people aren’t participating, or if people seem disengaged and uninterested, well then I’m more likely to assign a random writing assignment. If by the end of the semester, you have not been assigned at least THREE random writing assignments, every student will receive a 100% grade to bring the total up to three. Perhaps you would like to challenge yourselves be the first class to never get assigned random writing?

FINAL PROJECT: Your final project will be a critical argument supported by outside research. You will submit both a final essay (7-9 pages) and a short annotated bibliography. Detailed instructions will be provided.

PARTICIPATION: You won’t have a participation grade per se, however, strong participation will be rewarded at the end of the semester with up to 3% extra credit. Here’s how to get that:

1) Contribute to class discussions. For this quality counts over quantity. You don’t have to try to dominate a discussion (in fact, I’d recommend against it). Better are thoughtful questions or comments that show that you’re challenging yourself intellectually, listening to and taking seriously the questions/comments of your peers, and trying to be an overall positive presence in the class. There are no stupid questions. Feel free to disagree with others (including me), debate a point, come up with alternative critical readings, or what have you, BUT DO SO RESPECTFULLY. Anyone that laughs, snickers, giggles, sighs, coughs deliberately at, or outright demeans or disrespects another student will first be given a death glare and then asked to leave the room. You won’t be welcomed back until you make a public apology. Repeat offenders will no longer be welcome in the class. And yes, I’m serious.

2) Be present and engaged during class. There will be times when I’ll ask for contributions from everyone, or even cold-call on people. Quality responses in these situations will impress me—oftentimes more than volunteered questions.

3) Contribute to formal discussion days.

4) Come to office hours with questions or ideas you’d like to follow up on.

5) Send me an email sometime before class with an idea or a topic of discussion you’d be interested in talking about that day. The night before is usually a good time to send an email like this. If I get an email like this in time, I’ll be sure to work it into our class discussion.
POLICIES, ETC.

OFFICE HOURS: I have an open-door policy, so feel free to stop in whenever you like. I’m often in my office after the end of my official office hours, and you’re welcome to come by then, but it might be a good idea to send a quick email to see if I’m there. I’m also happy to make appointments—especially if you can’t make it to my normal office hours. If you’d like one, send me an email.

EMAIL POLICY: I try to respond to emails in a timely manner, but I rarely check email in the evenings or on weekends. Don’t expect an immediate response to any emails written after 5pm. I’ll be sure to answer your email the next morning.

LAPTOP POLICY: Laptops ARE NOT ALLOWED in class. I will stop class if you have a laptop out. If you think you have a compelling reason why you need to have your laptop, let me know during the first week of class.

TEXTS AND E-TEXTS: In order to keep book prices down, and to introduce you to a wider range of materials, I tend to post a number of course readings on Blackboard. Because of this, when those electronic texts come up, I would recommend printing them out (double-sided of course) and bringing them to class. I recognize, however, that this might not be practical for everyone, so feel free to bring whatever e-reader you might use, phone, kindle, ipad, etc. Just don’t surf the inter-webs in class, please.

PLAGIARISM: Is not acceptable. Make sure all your work is original, and you fully and accurately cite all your sources. If you have any questions about how to do so properly, please ask.

ATTENDANCE: I really dislike having to enforce an attendance policy, but I will if I have to. My official policy is that you get THREE free absences and then they begin to count against you, 2% off your final grade for each one over three, a slow drain on your grade, bringing you down closer and closer to mediocrity and failure. Sounds depressing, no? Make sure you come to class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

COURSE CALENDAR
Subject to change—all changes will be announced in class and via email

**ALWAYS BRING YOUR TEXT TO CLASS!!!**

M 8/25  INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE. Emily Dickinson 632, 1129.

M 9/1   NO CLASS
W 9/3   Langston Hughes “Theme for English B”
         Wallace Stevens “The House was Quiet…” Archibald MacLeish “Ars Poetica”
F 9/5   MODERN POETRY John Ashberry “Paradoxes and Oxymorons,” Elizabeth Bishop “At the Fishhouses”
M 9/8   SHORT STORIES: Edgar Allan Poe “The Tell-Tale Heart”
W 9/10  Edgar Allan Poe “Murders in the Rue Morgue”
F 9/12  CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 9/15  Philip Roth: The Conversion of the Jews”
W 9/17  Alice Walker “Everyday Use”
F 9/19  CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 9/22  Z. Z. Packer “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere”
W 9/24  Louise Erdrich “Fleur”
F 9/26  CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 9/29  POSTMODERNISM: Salman Rushdie “At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers”
W 10/1  George Saunders “The Semplica-Girl Diaries”
F 10/3  CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 10/6  METAPHOR AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE. W. C. Williams “The Red Wheelbarrow”
         Ezra Pound “In a Station of the Metro”
W 10/8  Nathaniel Hawthorne “The Minister’s Black Veil”
F 10/10 CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 10/13 PSYCHOANALYSIS & LITERATURE: Sigmund Freud from Interpretation of Dreams
F 10/17 CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 10/20 Angela Carter The Bloody Chamber, “The Bloody Chamber”
W 10/22 “The Werewolf” “In the Company of Wolves” “Wolf-Alice”
F 10/24 CRITICAL DISCUSSION

W 10/29 “The Tiger’s Bride,” “The Snow Child”
F 10/31 CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 11/3 POSTSTRUCTURALISM and DECONSTRUCTION “The Lady of the House of Love”
W 11/5  Continue: “The Lady of the House of Love”
F 11/7  CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 11/10 CONTEMPORARY FICTION: Readings TBA
W 11/12 TBA
F 11/14 CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 11/17 SCIENCE & FICTION: Daniel Dennett, “Where am I?”; David Hawley Sanford “Where was I?”
W 11/19 Ted Chiang “The Story of Your Life”
F 11/21 CRITICAL DISCUSSION

M 11/24 The Picture of Dorian Gray
W&F   NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING!!!

M 12/1   \\
W 12/3  Continue The Picture of Dorian Gray
F 12/5   \\

M 12/8   The Picture of Dorian Gray
W 12/10 CONCLUSION