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**English L202/Literary Interpretation**

**Fall 2011**

**Dr. Hardin Aasand**

**CM 147**

**481-6750**

**Office Hours:**

**Class Hours: T R 10:30-11:45 a.m.**

**Classroom: CM 148**

Literature has been the salvation of the damned; literature has inspired and guided lovers, routed despair, and can perhaps . . . save the world – John Cheever

**Course Description:**

John Cheever can perhaps be forgiven for hyperbole in his description of the value of literature, but not much forgiveness is truly required: he’s ultimately right. Without literature, life would be a pallid, hollow existence: love would exist, but there would no written or oral recitation of its power; wars would be fought, but there would be no account of the bravery or senseless losses incurred by civilizations. Appreciation literature for its power means acquiring both sensitivity to the language and a vocabulary for voicing that appreciation. In Literary Interpretation, I hope we can collectively achieve that goal: enhance our appreciation and our expressive regard for literature to move us, to touch us, to incite us, to irk us, to trouble us, and to inspire us.

Through a variety of experiences (discussion, both face to face and virtual; written responses; critical analyses; group projects), this course can become one of the most important experiences you have this semester: it should prepare you for your English major and also set you free to explore your expressive capacities within the world of literature.

Thus, many of the IPFW Baccalaureate foundations should be realized in this course:

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this semester, students who successfully complete this class will be able to:

**Written Communication Competency:**

1.5 Develop, assert and support a focused thesis with appropriate reasoning and adequate evidence.,

1.7 Demonstrate proficiency in reading, evaluating, analyzing, and using material collected from electronic sources (such as visual, electronic, library databases, Internet sources, other official databases, federal government databases, reputable blogs, wikis, etc.).

**Humanistic and Artistic competency**:

6.1 Recognize and describe humanistic, historical, or artistic works or problems and patterns of the human experience.

6.2 Apply disciplinary methodologies, epistemologies, and traditions of the humanities and the arts, including the ability to distinguish primary and secondary sources.

6.3 Analyze and evaluate texts, objects, events, or ideas in their cultural, intellectual or historical contexts.

6.4 Analyze the concepts and principles of various types of humanistic or artistic expression.

6.5 Create, interpret, or reinterpret artistic and/or humanistic works through performance or criticism.

6.6 Develop arguments about forms of human agency or expression grounded in rational analysis and in an understanding of and respect for spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts.

6.7 Analyze diverse narratives and evidence in order to explore the complexity of human experience across space and time.

Course Objectives:3

1) **Acquisition of knowledge**: you will explore literature but also all attendant aspects of literature as it is forged to explore life’s richness and enigmas. Literature is not written in a vacuum. It swings like music because it captures the rhythms of life, all of the breadth of thoughts and dreams that power our lives. By the completion of this class, you should have the critical vocabulary and generic breadth to write essays that reflect literature’s uncommon grandeur.

2) **Application of knowledge**: you will write and speak of your reflections, the emotional and intellectual responses that literature has moved you to explore. It’s one thing to learn something, but it means even more when it is shared. In essays and oral expression, you will demonstrate your command of the essential elements of literature (generic crossings; literary architecture; landscapes of meanings).

3) **A sense of Community**: we will be reading a mosaic of works, written by men and women across time and ethnic boundaries. If literature is truly universal, it is also specific to cultures and historical moments, no less universal for that moment captured on page.

4) **Critical Thinking and problem solving**: Reading literature well is to be engaged critically and to ponder the often irresolvable problems of human existence. In this course, you will use both your mind and your heart in a critical engagement with life’s imponderables. You will never reach a definitive answer, but neither should you expect one. You will be asked to demonstrate your research skills and your ability to practice a variety of interpretative strategies to derive meanings and significance from the texts we read.

5) **Communication**: Ironically, this goes without saying . . .

**Texts:**

*The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature: Reading, Thinking, Writing. 9*th ed. Ed. Meyer, Michael.ed. Bedford: New York, 2008.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness.* 3rd ed. Bedford: New York, 2011.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. 3rd ed. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009.

**Class policies:**

**Attendance policy**: Classroom involvement is a necessary, essential aspect of this course, and should be viewed with seriousness. Try to make every effort to be in class.

**Plagiarism policy**: Plagiarism is the use of original language or ideas without the proper documentation of your source. Any sign of plagiarism (use of sources without documentation or use of other essays from other sources) will result in the essay receiving a “0.” The instructor’s discretion will be the deciding factor in making these judgements.

**Cell Phone policy**: No cell phone use will be tolerated or allowed in this class. All cell phones must be shut off during the duration of this class.

**Special needs:** If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. Contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities (Walb Union, Room 113, telephone number 481-6658) as soon as possible to work out the details. Once the Director has provided you with a letter attesting to your needs for modification, bring the letter to me. For more information, please visit the web site for SSD at http://www.ipfw.edu/ssd/.

**Assessments:**

**Bi-weekly short responses (5%)**

**Weekly threaded discussion in Blackboard Vista (10%)**

**Group Projects (15%)**

**Three short analytical essays (3 x 15%=45%)**

**1 research essay (25%)**

**Deadlines:** Papers will be due on the assigned dates that are stipulated in this syllabus. Late papers will be allowed only in extreme medical emergencies (deaths, illnesses, quarantines, or plagues of epidemic proportions). Medical confirmation must be presented for any illnesses claimed for late papers. Late penalties for papers that have not been excused for medical reasons will be as follows: for each day after the due date, 10 percent will be deducted from the percentage the paper would have received had it been turned in by the due date. University-sanctioned events will not be accepted as reasons for late submission of essays, unless the student consults with me prior to the absence and validates the attendance at the university-sanctioned event

**Weekly discussion:** You will be asked to write weekly queries and to respond to a minimum of two other queries prompted by your classmates. I will tally these threaded conversations at the end of the semester for your 10% grade.

**Group Projects:** You will be asked to be involved in three group projects throughout the semester. These projects, prompted by questions in our text, will be group work conducted during class for various genres as presented in the syllabus. You will be able to use Blackboard Vista to follow up on these projects during the process of the work.

# Tentative Reading Schedule

**Fiction**

Introduction: Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour”

Critical Strategies of reading (also see Barry, chapter 1)

**Character Emphasis:**

Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (gay criticism)

**Plot**

William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily”

Andre Dubus, “Killings” (also see Narrotology chapter)

**Point of View**

Anton Chekhov, “The Lady with the Pet Dog” ;Joyce Carol Oates, “The Lady with the Pet Dog”

(“Structualism”)

**Symbolism**

Colette, “The Hand” ;Ralph Ellison, “Battle Royal”

**Tenor (Post-structuralism)**

Raymond Carver, “Popular Mechanics”; Susan Minot, “Lust “

**Regional Fiction**

Flannery O'Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” ; E. Annie Proulx, “55 Files to the Gas Pump” Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”

Xu Xi “Famine”; Jack London, “To Build a Fire” ;Peter Meinke, “The Cranes”; Lydia Davis, “Letter to a Funeral Parlor”

**~~Group Work on selected stories [See A Collection of Stories, pp. 641-757]~~**

**Assignment: Analytical Paper # 1 Due: February 12**

**Unit: Poetry**

Bruce Springsteen, “You're Missing” Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Crossing the Bar”

**Sound**

May Swenson, “A Nosty Fright”

Emily Dickinson, “A Bird came down the Walk—“

Andrew Hudgins “The Cow”

**Paul Humphrey**, “Blow” **Robert Francis**, “The Pitcher” **Helen Chasin**, “The Word Plum”

**Words (Images and Tropes)**

**Margaret Atwood**, “you fit into me”

Linda Pastan “marks”

**Jim Stevens**, “Schizophrenia”

**Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach”**

Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress”

Ruth Fainlight “Crocuses”

Cathy Song “The White Porch”

Jane Kenyon, “Surprise”

James Merrill “Casual Wear”

**Robert Browning**, “My Last Duchess”

**Form:**

**Sonnet**

William Wordsworth, The World Is Too Much with Us

William Shakespeare, Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

William Shakespeare, My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun

Edna St. Vincent Millay, I will put Chaos into fourteen lines

**Villanelle**

Dylan Thomas, Do not go gentle into that good night \*Wendy Cope, Lonely Hearts

**Sestina**

Algernon Charles Swinburne, Sestina Florence Cassen Mayers, All-American Sestina

**Epigram**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, What Is an Epigram? ;

**Haiku**

Matsuo Basho, Under cherry trees Carolyn Kizer, After Basho Sonia Sanchez, c'mon man hold me

**Elegy**

\*Theodore Roethke, Elegy for Jane Andrew Hudgins, Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead

**Ode**

Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ode to the West Wind \*Mary Jo Salter, Home Movies: A Sort of Ode

**Picture Poem**

Michael McFee, In Medias Res

**The Form(less) Poem and the Prose Poem**

Louis Jenkins, “The Prose Poem”; Galway Kinnell, “After Making Love We Hear Footsteps”;

Kelly Cherry, “Alzheimer's”; William Carlos Williams, “The Red Wheelbarrow”

**Extended Study**: Selected Poems of Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson

**A Thematic Case Study: Love** Christopher Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to his Love”; William Shakespeare, “Not Marble, nor the gilded monuments”; Anne Bradstreet, “To my dear and loving husband”; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways”; e.e. cummings, “Since feeling is first”; Mark Doty, “The Embrace”; Billie Bolton, “Memorandum”

**Group Project #2 :**

A Collection, Susan Minot, John Donne, “The Flea”; T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”; Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The Windhover”A.E. Housman, “To An Athlete Dying Young”; Shakespeare, “When, In Disgrace with Fortune and men’s Eyes”

Selections by students:

**Analytical Paper #2 Due March 7**

**Unit: Drama**

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*

August Wilson, *Fences*

**Analytical Paper #3 Due April 11**

**Unit: Novella**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

**Group Project #3**

**Research Paper: Due May 9**

**Grading Rubric for all essays**:

**90-100 A** Excellent writing: minimal number of minor errors in grammar or style, with a standard use of language and punctuation; sentence structure is logical and rhetorically effective with superior use of transitions between sentences and paragraphs; paragraphs are unified, developed, and effectively placed within the paper’s context. The essay surpasses the minimum features of the essay assignment: information is logically presented and substantial use of references for research level is demonstrated.

**80-89 B** Above average writing: competent writing with some errors in grammar or style that affect comprehension; sentence structure is logical and rhetorically effective with some transitions between sentences and paragraphs; paragraphs are generally unified and developed but may lack the maturity found in an “A” quality essay. The essay exceeds the minimum features of the essay assignment with above average use of references for research level of class.

**70-79 C** Average writing: acceptable writing with assorted errors, some serious, in grammar or style that affect comprehension; sentence structure is adequate but lacking in thematic focus and specificity; paragraphs have some problems with focus, unity, and development with minimal or no presence of transitions. There are some problems in mechanics of punctuation, spelling, and grammar that hamper effective communication. The essay fulfills the minimum features of the essay assignment with adequate number of resources for research level of class.

**60-69 D** Below average writing: generally inadequate writing that displays several severe errors that dramatically affect comprehension; sentence structure is often substandard with underveloped or undeveloped focus; paragraphs lack transitions and logical placement within essay. There are a significant number of mechanical problems of punctuation, spelling, and grammar that undermine the effectiveness of the essay. The essay inadequately fulfills the minimum features of the essay assignment, lacking adequate references for research level of class..

**below 60 F** Unacceptable writing; there are several major errors that reflect inadequate writing for comprehension; sentence structure is generally substandard with no focus or thesis concern; paragraphs lack transitions, development, and all logical placement within the essay. The mechanical numbers are excessive for college-level writing and reflect a failure to grasp English fundamentals. The essay fails to fulfill the minimum features of the essay assignment with insufficient resources for research level of class.