

Professor Anna Gibson
Office: College Hall 630
(412) 396-6431
gibsona@duq.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays: 1-4PM

English 300W.01
Spring 2015
Libermann Hall 314
Tues & Thurs, 9:25-10:40AM

Critical Issues in Literary Studies



Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the practices of literary criticism. Students will engage in close analysis of primary literary texts; discuss and research a text's historical and cultural contexts; and examine a range of scholarly approaches to a text. We will also spend some time learning how to use print and electronic resources available to literary scholars. As we grasp the practices of literary scholarship and try our hands at different approaches, we will also reflect upon the purposes and goals of literary study. In addition to keeping a reading response "notebook," students will join the scholarly conversation with other literary critics by proposing, researching, drafting, and revising their own research paper in order to develop the skills they will need for the English major: research, critical thinking, and writing.

Course Objectives

- To critically read and analyze a variety of literary works in a range of genres (poetry, plays, stories, novels, films, etc.), demonstrating through writing and discussion an ability to closely read and interpret texts.
- To construct an argument about a text/texts and write a persuasive, well-organized paper. This is a writing-intensive class with much emphasis on building up a project step-by-step and improving the organization and effectiveness of your writing through revision.

- To practice the research and writing skills necessary to the English major, and to evaluate the goals of literary study.
- To identify and evaluate a range of scholarly approaches to literary texts and actively join and further these critical conversations by practicing scholarly critique.
- To recognize and probe the relationship between literary works and their historical and cultural contexts.
- To formulate insightful critical questions that generate class discussions about texts and contexts.

Our Texts

These texts are all available at the Duquesne Bookstore. Please purchase the following editions of the texts in question so that we can all stay on the same page:

- Katherine O. Acheson, *Writing Essays About Literature*, Broadview (ISBN: 9781551119922)
- William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Norton Critical Edition (ISBN: 9780393923261)
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, Norton Critical Edition (ISBN: 9780393932348)
- Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, Vintage (ISBN: 9781400078776)

All other texts for this class will be uploaded to Blackboard as PDF files or posted as web links. Please print these texts and bring them with you to class.

Course Policies

In-Class Expectations Overview: I expect you to come to class prepared and having read and thought about the assigned material. There is a lot of material to cover in this class, and you cannot learn and do well unless you do all the reading. Please arrive on time, remain in the room during class (e.g. if possible, please try to use the bathroom before class), and remain attentive during the class (no working on material for other classes or reading other texts). I also expect you to participate in class discussions so that we are all engaged in the learning process. However, please refrain from side-conversations with your neighbors.

Disability: Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation should contact me privately by the second week of the class. If the disability is not yet officially documented, contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services, 309 Student Union, 412-396-6658.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all class meetings, to complete all reading and written assignments and exams, and to participate in class discussions. Attendance involves being on time and attentive in class. More than 3 absences will result in a lower final grade. Latenesses will be added up on the same principle. I will take attendance at the beginning of

the session, and any quizzes will also take place at the beginning of class. If you miss a class for some reason it is your responsibility to catch up on missed material by contacting a classmate. During the first week you should share contact information with two of your peers (space is provided on the syllabus to do this. If work is due on a day you miss class, you must still turn in that work by the due date.

Meetings/Contacting Me: I am very happy to discuss any aspect of this class with you during my office hours (1-4 p.m. Wednesdays, or by appointment). My office is College Hall 630. It is my policy not to discuss grades via email. If you have any question about your progress in the class you need to set up a meeting to discuss this with me in person.

Late papers: Please contact me as far in advance as possible if you need more time for an assignment because of a crisis, illness, or family emergency. I will grant one extension, due one class session after the assigned due date. The final essay is except from this allowance. Additional late assignments will not be accepted.

Electronics: Unless I let you know in advance that you will be able to use a laptop/tablet for a specific reason, please put all electronics away during class. You can take notes on paper. Turn off your cell phone before you come to class. If I find you texting, chatting, or using a phone in class I will ask you to leave, which means you will miss important material. This will also adversely affect your attendance.

Academic Integrity: The Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: “Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use, whether by summary, paraphrase, or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work or specific ideas of a person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the use of material prepared by another person or agency engaged in selling of term papers or other academic materials.” Come see me or visit the Writing Center if you’re using outside sources and are not sure whether or not your incorporation of the material is fair use. Start writing your essays well in advance and consult with me if you are having trouble interpreting an assignment. *You will fail the course if you plagiarize.*

Assignments

Reading Responses: You will regularly respond to your reading throughout the semester with a series of fairly short (1-page, approx.) reading responses. Think of this as a sort of reading notebook in which you begin to explore and develop ideas or issues that arise from your reading. You can decide upon the format for this reading response notebook. You might simply turn in a series of hard-copy papers that you collect together once you have received them back from me. Or you might decide to create an online notebook/blog in which you post your responses. Whether you choose hard copies or an online version, you will write nine responses over the course of the semester (with the addition of one close-reading exercise on 1/15 for a total of 10 responses). You will have two types of responses, Primary Reading

Responses (labeled on the schedule as **PRR**) and Critical Reading Responses (labeled **CRR**).

Primary Reading Responses (5): One for each of our primary texts (*Macbeth*, “Goblin Market,” *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and *Never Let Me Go*). You might write about specific issues or ideas that interest you in the reading, images or themes that arise, or even a specific passage or scene that interests you. Avoid plot summaries (you can assume I have read the text!), and don’t read any outside sources in order to write these responses. They are meant to be just that: *your* responses to the text in which you identify and write about what you find to be significant and why.

Critical Reading Responses (4): These 1-page brief responses are designed to help you think about the literary criticism on our syllabus. Responses to critical essays should outline the essay’s thesis or key points and consider the point of view from which, and assumptions with which, the author approaches the primary text. These responses should also consider what insights the essay provides and how it helps you understand the primary text. There will be four critical responses in total (*Macbeth* criticism; “Goblin Market” criticism; *Alice* criticism; *Never Let Me Go* criticism).

Important Notes About Responses:

- All reading responses are due at the beginning of the class in which we are due to discuss the text in question. Turn in a hard copy or email me a link to your blog.
- When there are two days allotted for discussion of a text (e.g. two sessions for *Macbeth*) you can choose on which day you write a response. These are marked on the syllabus. If you are writing about a text after we have already discussed part of it, try to avoid merely covering material we discussed in class.
- If you decide to do hard copy responses, please keep them together in a safe place when I return them to you. You will need to gather them together and turn them in (stapled) at the end of the semester when you turn in your final paper.
- Individual responses will not receive a letter grade; I will use ✓–, ✓, and ✓+ to grade them so that you have a sense of your progress.

Position Papers: You will write two position papers in this class, one on *Macbeth* and one on *Alice in Wonderland*. These short papers (2-3 pages) should include: a debatable but well-grounded thesis concerning the text; citation of the best possible evidence for that thesis from the text; and a sound critical analysis that discusses specific features or qualities of the passages and text at hand. Instead of trying to comment on the piece as a whole, meaningfully limit your topic so that your point has more impact. You might want to attend closely to literary language in a specific passage

or phrase. Use these assignments to hone your voice in the scholarly debates that have emerged in our discussions. You should not plan to use secondary sources for these position papers.

Final Research Project: Your final project will be approximately 8-10 pages in length and will be a research essay in which you support a debatable, well-grounded thesis about a text on our syllabus with evidence from the text in question. Because this is a research essay, you will also put your argument in conversation with other scholars' interpretations of the text. You will write this paper in stages, beginning with a **proposal** in which you outline the argument you plan to make in your paper. After receiving feedback on your proposal from me and from an in-class workshop on your **thesis** and your **outline**, you will write an **annotated bibliography** in which you briefly summarize five sources and analyze their usefulness to your project. You will turn in the **first five pages** of your essay and receive feedback on those before turning in your **final paper** during our exam period (April 30). During the last day of class and our exam period (i.e. our final two meetings) each student will offer a short (5 minute, approx.) **presentation** on her/his paper. You will receive an assignment sheet with more details about each stage of this project.

Reading Quizzes: I may give quizzes from time to time to test your basic comprehension and reading. They will not be announced ahead of time. As long as you have read the text and paid attention to the reading you should do fine on these quizzes. In some instances a quiz might be replaced by a short in-class writing exercise.

Grading Breakdown

Reading Responses	30% (10 total responses)
Position Papers	10% each (20% total)
Paper Proposal	5%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Final Paper	30%
Participation	10% (includes regular participation, final presentation, and quizzes)

Grades are not negotiable. If you have any concerns about your progress in this class, please feel free to make an appointment to talk with me. It is my policy not to discuss grades via email.

Schedule

Note: this is a tentative schedule and is subject to revision as the semester progresses. You will be notified about any schedule changes both in class and via email in good time.

- Thursday, January 8** Class introductions. What does a literary scholar do? What should an English major be able to do? What can I do with an English major, and what does literature have to do with it?
- Tuesday, January 13** Read: Gopnik, "Why Teach English?" (link on Blackboard)
Read: Wordsworth, "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"
In Class: Close Reading Exercise
- Thursday, January 15** Read: Acheson, *Writing Essays about Literature* (pp. 1-34)
Close Reading Assignment: Bring a poem fully annotated (will count as one reading response)
- Tuesday, January 20** Read: Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Acts 1-3)
PRR 1 (*Macbeth*): pick either 1/20 or 1/22
- Thursday, January 22** Read: Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Acts 5-4)
Read: Acheson, Chapter 3: Using Reference Works
PRR 1 (*Macbeth*): pick either 1/20 or 1/22
- Tuesday, January 27** Topic: *Macbeth* - Critical material
Read: (from Norton edition):
- Harry Levin: "Two Scenes from *Macbeth*" (pp. 238-255)
- Stephen Orgel, "*Macbeth* and the Antic Round" (pp. 255-270)
CRR 1: focus on either Levin or Orgel
- Thursday, January 29** Topic: *Macbeth* and Drama
Read: (from Norton edition):
- Orson Wells Interview (pp. 111-115)
- Ian McKellen Interview (pp. 116-122)
In class: Writing Center Visitor: Overview of Writing Center
Position paper 1 due
- Tuesday, February 3** Topic: Research Methods
Read: Acheson, Chapter 4
In Class: Position Paper Workshop
- Thursday, February 5** Read: Christina Rossetti, "Goblin Market"
PRR 2: "Goblin Market"

- Tuesday, February 10** Topic: “Goblin Market” criticism
 Read: Mary Wilson Carpenter, “‘Eat Me, Drink Me, Love Me’: The Consumable Female Body in Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market.’”
CRR 2: Carpenter
- Thursday, February 12** Topic: Conducting Research
 Read: Acheson Chapter 5
 In Class: Ted Bergfelt (Research and Instruction Librarian)
- Tuesday, February 17** Read: Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*
PRR 3 (*Alice*): pick 2/17 or 2/19
- Thursday, February 19** Read: Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*
Position Paper 2 Due
PRR 3 (*Alice*): pick 2/17 or 2/19
- Tuesday, February 24** Read: Alice criticism (TBA)
 Read: Acheson chapters 6 & 7
CRR 3 (pick either 2/24 or 2/26)
- Thursday, February 26** Read: Alice criticism (TBA)
CRR 3 (pick either 2/24 or 2/26)
- Spring Break*
- Tuesday, March 10** T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”
PRR 4: Prufrock
- Thursday, March 12** Arguments, Research, Writing, Documenting
 Read: Acheson, chapters 8-10
 In Class: Writing Center Visitor: Documenting Sources
- Tuesday, March 17** Read: Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (to page 60)
PRR 5: *Never Let Me Go* (pick 3/17, 3/19, 3/24, or 3/26)
- Thursday, March 19** Read: Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (to page 111)
PRR 5: *Never Let Me Go* (pick 3/17, 3/19, 3/24, or 3/26)
- Tuesday, March 24** Read: Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (to page 203)
PRR 5: *Never Let Me Go* (pick 3/17, 3/19, 3/24, or 3/26)

- Thursday, March 26** Read: Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (to end)
Due: Paper Proposals
PRR 5: *Never Let Me Go* (pick 3/17, 3/19, 3/24, or 3/26)
- Tuesday, March 31** Topic: *Never Let Me Go* criticism
Read: Bruce Robbins, “Cruelty is Bad: Banality and Proximity in *Never Let Me Go*”
CRR 4: Robbins
- Easter Break*
- Tuesday, April 7** *No Class – Monday Schedule*
- Thursday, April 9** Topic: *Never Let Me Go* criticism
Read: Rebecca Walkowitz, “Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, translation, and the new world literature”
Bring **working thesis & outline of key points** for final paper
In class: Workshop proposals and theses
- Tuesday, April 14** Movie screening: *Alice* or *Never Let Me Go*
Due: Annotated Bibliography
- Thursday, April 16** Movie Screening cont. and discussion
- Tuesday, April 21** Movie discussion
Due: Draft of first five pages of essay
- Thursday, April 23** Paper revision discussion
- Tuesday, April 28** **Oral presentations**
- Thursday, April 30** **1:30-3:30PM**
Oral presentations
Final Paper Due