

ENGL 383: History of Literature in English III

Amanda French

Section 4: Friday 12:30-1:45pm, McLeod 2009

Section 12: Thursday 8:00-9:15am, Clark 146

Section 19: Friday 3:30-4:45pm, Bryan 312

Section 20: Wednesday 5-6:15pm, Cabell 224

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Mailbox: Bryan 219

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Office Hours: T 10-11:30am; F 2-3:15pm

GOALS

- To read, with the closest attention, some representative works of 20th-century literature in English.
- To have lively, interesting, enlightening discussions about the material.
- To evaluate critical arguments about individual texts and collective literary movements, and to develop our own arguments about these texts and movements.
- To practice analytical, inductive writing.
- To learn to apply some technical terms of literary criticism.

REQUIREMENTS

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| Participation | 10% of course grade |
| 12 weekly quizzes | 10% of course grade |
| Midterm exam--Friday, October 8; 10-10:50am, Wilson 402 | 15% of course grade |
| Final exam--Thursday, December 16; 9am-12pm, Wilson 402 | 25% of course grade |
| 11 weekly 1-page close reading essays..... | 40% of course grade |

PARTICIPATION

At the end of the course I assign a participation grade based on my judgement of your commitment to the class, based on such factors as your attendance, whether or not you've done the reading, and whether or not you seem to be paying attention in class. Sleepers better wake up.

QUIZZES

The first few minutes of every class will be devoted to taking a quiz. If you're late, tough luck--you've got that much less time to take it. (I'll use the quizzes to keep track of attendance, too.) There will be no makeup quizzes. At the end of the course I'll drop your lowest quiz grade of the 12 total quizzes and average the remaining 11 grades; this average will count for 10% of your course grade.

Every quiz will consist of five easy factual questions that will test whether you've read and remembered the week's reading--not only the literature, but also any assigned supplementary critical reading, such as the author biographies on the course web page. Each question will be worth 2 points, for a total of 10 points per quiz.

EXAMS

We'll discuss the exams further as they begin to loom. I can tell you that the exams (unlike the quizzes) will test how well you've understood, remembered, and evaluated the ideas presented in lecture; the exams will also test how well you are able to make and support independent interpretations of the readings--exactly as in your weekly essays, though on a rather larger scale.

CLOSE READING ESSAYS

Every week, you will write and turn in a one-page essay on a short passage from that week's reading, and every week one or two people will read their essay aloud to the class. These essays should not be loose, unstructured "responses"; rather, you should strive to carefully examine an interesting passage, and then use what you see to arrive at some theory, some interpretation, some hypothesis, or even some conclusion about the text as a whole. This kind of essay is called a "close reading." Read the attached instructions carefully! Essays are due in lecture on Wednesday, or in my mailbox in Bryan 219 by 1pm at the latest. No extensions.

There will be 11 essays due, total: none is due the first time section meets; none is due in the week of the midterm; none is due in the week of Thanksgiving. No extra credit essays. You can, if you like, write an essay in a week when none is due as a *substitute* for another essay, but I will read no more than 11 papers per student. The lowest grade of the 11 will be dropped, and the remaining 10 grades will be averaged. This average will count for 40% of your overall course grade, or 4% per essay.

Some of you will find this to be a more difficult assignment than writing two 5-page essays; others of you will find it easier. I believe that, whether it's easier or whether it's harder, it's the best kind of assignment for a survey course. In survey courses, the goal is to make connections between many texts, not to examine one or two texts in great depth. Moreover, I think of survey courses as *reading* courses rather than *writing* courses; given the heavy reading load and the high ratio of students to teachers, it's simply not possible to spend a lot of time improving your formal writing skills. By writing weekly, you'll have to think carefully about every work, not just one or two of them, and you'll quickly develop (or reinforce) the habit of close reading--a habit which will prove useful when you approach any unfamiliar piece of literature.

E-MAIL AND THE WEB

We have a course web site, located at <http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~engl383/engl383home.htm>. You can also reach the web site through the English Department home page, <http://www.engl.virginia.edu>, through the link titled "Web-Accessible Courses." **Some required reading is available only on the web.** Each discussion section also has an e-mail address. These addresses are: engl383-4@toolkit.virginia.edu, engl383-12@toolkit.virginia.edu, engl383-19@toolkit.virginia.edu, and engl383-20@toolkit.virginia.edu. (Don't forget the "toolkit" part or else it won't work!) The chief use of these lists is administrative, but I will sometimes send my own reactions to the readings and lectures. You are more than welcome to do likewise, but you are equally welcome to hang back in austere electronic silence.

ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is crucial, because our section meets only thirteen times. The attendance policy is therefore strict: more than one absence without excuse will lower your course grade two-thirds of a letter grade (e.g. from a B to a C+). In other words, you have exactly one "free" absence. Save this for emergencies only. You cannot attend other sections.

PLAGIARISM

If you turn in work that is not your own, you will automatically fail the assignment, you will probably fail the course, and you might well get expelled from the University. Note too that if you turn in work that you have already turned in elsewhere, you are cheating.



CLOSE READING ESSAY INSTRUCTIONS

A "close reading," in English major-speak, is a piece of writing in which a fairly general hypothesis is derived from a small, carefully examined sample of language. Close readings are inductive in nature: in other words, they move from intent factual observation to hypothesis. What's called the scientific method is simply induction--scientists observe and describe phenomena and eventually generate conclusions from their observations. (Deductive reasoning, by contrast, moves from general principles to conclusions; logical syllogisms are examples of deductive reasoning.)

The goal of this paper is to say one enlightening thing about the general properties of the text based on neurotically specific analysis of an interesting passage. I will grade these on the basis of a) how well you can observe and describe, with precision, characteristic features of the text, and b) how well you can move from these observations to worthwhile comments on the text as a whole. Claims should be thoroughly supported with evidence, and your main point should be, well, interesting. Bad idea to bore the teacher.

Every week, at the end of class, I will distribute suggestions for the next week's essay--you are free to do one of these, or to ignore them. All of the assignments, however, will share the same structures of inductive reasoning--all will be close readings. Below, I give a series of guidelines for producing a good close reading.

1) Find an interesting passage of no more than six lines of poetry or prose and type it out at the top of your paper. Copy it exactly, right down to the punctuation, and do not under any circumstances cut-and-paste from the web! Transcribing helps you concentrate on the text.

2) Then, describe and discuss what you found interesting or characteristic about this particular passage. You might ask yourself one of the following questions: How does a particular word or kind of word contribute to the meaning? What does a particular image or group of images imply about the author's mindset? Why is this particular bit structured in precisely this way?

Explain your answer to one such question in your paper, making sure to support your claim with quoted evidence from the transcribed passage, and from elsewhere in the text if necessary. Do not repeat points that the lecturer made: these must be original. (Don't worry, though, if you wrote a paper before the lecture and then the lecturer made the same point--I can always, always tell the difference between an independent conclusion and a regurgitation.)

3) The paper should of course be typed in a 10- or 12-point font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins, spell-checked and otherwise mechanically clean. As for length, I refuse to count or measure obsessively: "about a page," with whatever interpretation you like to put on that phrase, is fine. Make one really interesting, really well-supported point, and we're copacetic, whether it takes you half a page or nearly two.

4) Bring your assignment to the lecture on Wednesday, or put it in my mailbox in Bryan 219 no later than 1pm on Wednesday. I'll comment briefly on these, grade them, and return them to you in class before discussion. Every week, as a spur to discussion, one or two volunteers (or draftees) will read their paper aloud to the class. Everyone will read their paper aloud at least once during the semester. You might want to keep this in mind while writing. What textual features would it be interesting to discuss in class? What can be done to make your own writing sound good when read aloud?

When the course ends I'll drop your lowest essay grade and average the ten remaining grades. The resulting average will be worth 40% of your course grade, which works out to 4% per essay.