

LITT 2114: Literary Interpretation

Fall 2014

T/TH 10:30-12:20, F202

Instructor: Dr. Deborah Gussman

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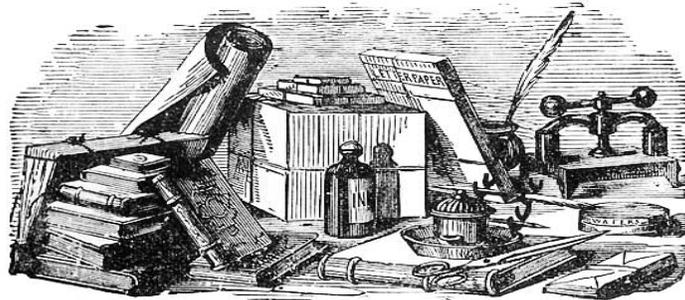
COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces you to the study of literature. We will focus on two related skills: how to produce close readings of texts and how to develop those readings into thesis-driven papers. The course will provide you with a toolbox of techniques and approaches to literature—a set of tools applicable not only to this course but to the critical analysis of the texts you encounter in other classes at Stockton and beyond. This course builds the contents of your literary toolbox, increasing your knowledge of the tools available for interpreting literature, and it also helps you understand how and when to use these tools. Additionally, your close reading skills will be enhanced through an introduction to contemporary literary theory and methods—such as psychoanalytic, Marxist, and feminist criticism. Students should come ready to read and re-read, write and re-write, think and re-think intensively. This is a W1 (writing intensive) course. This is also a portfolio course: this means feedback will be given throughout the term but grades on portfolio papers will not be assigned until the final portfolio is complete at the end of the term.

This course has three essential goals. Students will:

- **Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories** (e.g. the basics of close reading and critical literary analysis methods and theories)
- **Learn to apply course material** (e.g., produce a portfolio of writing that demonstrates your ability to apply close reading skills and basic critical reading methods)
- **Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas** (e.g., critically evaluate a range of literary texts, genres, and appropriate methods for reading primary texts)

Other important goals for this course include:

- **Gaining factual knowledge** (terminology, classifications, methods, trends; e.g., building your vocabulary of literary terms, genres, and methods)
- **Developing skill in expressing yourself in writing** (e.g., sharpening your critical writing and analysis skills, particularly in regard to your writing about literature)
- **Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field** (e.g., this course provides foundational knowledge for careers related to literary studies)
- **Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of literature** (e.g., the aim of this course is to learn to appreciate a range of poetry, fiction, and drama)



REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, (Booth, Hunter, Mays, eds.) Portable 11th edition.
- ISBN 978-0-393-92339-1
- **Blackboard:** If you have questions about using Blackboard, consult a computer lab assistant or your instructor. Log in via goStockton or <https://skimmer.stockton.edu/>.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (suggested readings listed below):

- *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (Fussell)
- *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* (Foster)
- *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (Murfin)
- **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Edition**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE WEB (See also “Course Links” in Blackboard):

- **Stockton Libraries:** <http://library.stockton.edu/>
- **Norton Anthology Webpage:** www.norton.com/litweb

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Stockton College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations should contact the Learning Access Program located in J204 or by calling 652-4988. Additional information on the program may be obtained from Stockton web site <http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html>.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and risk failing the course. Other sanctions may also apply and all cases will be reported to Academic Affairs. You are responsible for knowing this college policy:

<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=209&pageID=17>

Contact your instructor if you have questions.

EMAIL POLICY: Please keep the following in mind when communicating with me outside of class:

- (1) Use my Stockton email for all course-related correspondence. I do check Blackboard email, but not as often.
- (2) I usually check my email each day in the morning (before 9am). Please plan your email questions accordingly and, while I often respond immediately, allow a twenty-four hour time frame for my reply. I am rarely on the computer late at night.
- (3) Always try to visit my office hours with specific questions about course material. If you were absent, contact a classmate with questions about missed material (if possible), or post your questions to Blackboard, and then visit office hours if you still have questions.
- (4) Visit me during office hours to discuss grades. This includes final grades. Grades should be discussed in person during office hours or other arranged meetings. I do not discuss grades via email.

OFFICE HOURS: Think of my office as an extension of the classroom and use my office hours to discuss any aspect of the reading and material covered during class: come chat with me about your writing, the portfolio process, questions about the reading, lecture, or discussion, ideas you wish to develop, reading and interpretive strategies you'd like to try, and so on. Students who visit office hours tend to perform better.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: You will be expected to:

- (1) **ATTEND CLASS:** you are allotted 4 absences for illness or other personal reasons. (Note: I do not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences. If you miss 4 days and then get the flu and miss another day, you will lose points for the 5th absence. Any exception to this policy requires documentation for all absences and approval for special accommodations with the Wellness Center.) **Students entering class after the instructor records attendance, who leave before class ends, or who disappear for a substantial part of any class will be considered absent.** For each absence after your first 4, your final grade **will be reduced 50 points per additional absence**, down to and including "F." Regular, spirited class attendance is a crucial component to passing this course. I will not give incompletes at the end of the semester unless arrangements are made well in advance and you have appropriate reasons and qualify according to College policy;
- (2) **ATTEND CLASS MEETINGS PREPARED:** this means bring the appropriate text(s) and DO THE READING WITH GUSTO; this is a discussion-based class and if you haven't done the reading, thought a little about it, and have ready access to it, you will not be able to contribute and the class (as well as your grade) suffers accordingly;
- (3) **PARTICIPATE IN LARGE AND SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS:** this course is what you make of it and will work *only* if everyone actively contributes;
- (4) **COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS:** passing the course requires timely completion of ALL assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class. You risk failing the course if you do not complete all assignments. *It is not my responsibility to make sure that you have handed in all assignments; it is yours.* No late/incomplete assignments will be accepted after the last day of class;
- (5) **UNPLUG:** silence cell phones before entering class, cease text messaging, and do not surf the web or check email during class. An inability to use technology responsibly will negatively impact your final grade. All disruptive behavior (e.g., sleeping in class, inappropriate language directed at students/instructor, perpetual lateness, leaving class frequently, etc.) constitutes grounds for grade reduction and/or dismissal from class.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS:

CLASS PARTICIPATION (100 points): Class participation—both *verbal* contributions and silent *active listening* to your peers and instructor—is a required element of the course. You may also post messages to our Blackboard discussion board and/or visit instructor office hours as part of your class participation. *Students who miss a class are strongly encouraged to post a response to the missed day's reading prior to the next class period.* Frequently leaving class, the inability to take part in discussion, tardiness, leaving class early, sleeping, text messaging, and other disruptive behavior lowers your class participation grade and, when not corrected, may be grounds for dismissal from the class. **Coming to class with questions, comments about the reading, and/or passages to discuss raises your class participation.**

EVENT REVIEW (100 points): You will write a brief reaction paper (about 3-5 full paragraphs or 1-2 typed pages) to one of the scheduled Visiting Writers readings, Why the Humanities Matters talks, or plays at the Performing Arts Center (PAC) and post this reaction paper to Blackboard within one week of the reading. Detailed instructions for writing the review can be found on Blackboard.

PORTFOLIO: (800 points total): The final portfolio includes three close reading papers (poetry, fiction, and drama). The portfolio will also include a self-reflection paper.

- **Poetry, Fiction and Drama Papers:** These papers conduct close readings of assigned texts (available in Blackboard). One paper will conduct a close reading of a poem (3-4 typed pages), one will conduct a close reading of a short story (4-5 typed pages), and another will conduct a close reading of a play (4-5 typed pages). See assignment description for more information.
- **Portfolio Self-Reflection** (2-3 typed pages): This paper will reflect on your development as a close reader and writer about literature. The paper should discuss the three close reading assignments, including your draft and revision process and what you have learned in the course. See assignment description for more information.

Evaluation: The evaluation the final portfolio will be a be determined by your successful completion of the following (See the Portfolio Rubric as well as the rubrics for each paper):

- Completion of peer reviews, rough drafts, initial final draft, and final portfolio draft for all three papers (100 points each, 300 points total)
- Quality of argument, writing, and application of literary terms and theories in each of the three close reading papers (100 points each, 300 points total)
- Quality of the Self-Reflection paper (200 points)

Grading Scale

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 100-95: A | 89.9-87: B+ | 79.9-77: C+ | 69.9-67: D+ |
| 94.9-90: A- | 86.9-83: B | 76.9-73: C | 66.9-63: D |
| | 82.9-80: B- | 72.9-70: C- | 62.9-60: D- |
| | | | 59.9 & below: F |

Grades

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Class Participation | 100 |
| Event Paper | 100 |
| Portfolio | 800 |

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Total | 1000 |
|--------------|-------------|

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:

I understand that life is full of surprises and sometimes those surprises influence your coursework and your ability to complete assignments. As a community of learners, we also recognize that we have a responsibility to the group, to our instructor, and to ourselves. We understand that every action has a consequence—even when circumstance may limit our power to act. To balance individual and community needs, we have the following guidelines for late assignments.

Written Assignments: *Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class on the dates listed in the syllabus.* No portfolio will be accepted late. For drafts due to the instructor for feedback, students will lose 5 points per day late from the 100 points possible per paper for the completion of work in a timely and detailed format. See the close reading paper rubric for additional information.

Paper Extensions: Any student who asks the instructor **prior to** the due date may receive a 2-day extension from the due date listed on the syllabus. After 2 days the late paper penalty will go into effect. No exceptions. *Due to the College's grade submission deadline, no student may receive an extension for the final portfolio.*

Back-Ups: Back up all your files and you will be a much happier and successful individual. You may not be happy when your computer explodes or your flash drive crashes, but at least you will not be despondent. *Students are responsible for keeping a personal copy of every assignment and keeping all returned assignments with my feedback for the final portfolio.* Reminder, no assignments will be accepted after the last class meeting.

PAPER REVISION POLICY:

This course is based on the principle that revisions take place *before* I evaluate the final paper for a final grade in the portfolio. To this end, consider dropping in during office hours or other arranged meetings to discuss your papers well in advance of the final portfolio due date. Drop in at any stage of the writing process: from your initial brainstorming to nailing down those final brass tacks. I will happily read and comment on thesis statements (usually between 1-3 sentences) via email. If you wish me to read longer drafts in addition to the required deadlines outlined in the syllabus, drop by during my office hours.

Additionally, I encourage you to use your peer resources during the draft and revision process, including Stockton's Writing Center, located in J105:

<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=70&pageID=2>.

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to revision without notice –check Blackboard regularly!)

Week 1: Introductions and Questions

Sept 4 **Introductions:** to course, Blackboard, assignments, students and instructor.

Week 2: Reading and Writing About Poetry; Close Reading Skills

Sept 9: **What is Poetry?** Norton 450-475 and Chapter 18 “Elements of the Essay” (1233-1242).
Introduction to the Poetry Paper.

Sept 10: **End of drop/add period**

Sept 11: **Close Reading Pre-Test:** In-class assessment of your close reading skills. Norton Chapter 7
“Speaker: Whose Voice Do We Hear?” 483-500; Norton Chapter 19 “The Writing Process” 1243-1257.

Week 3: Poetry -- Setting, Theme, Tone and Critical Approaches

Sept 16: **Setting:** Norton Chapter 8 “Situation and Setting” 501-526; **Theme and Tone:** Norton Chapter 9
“Theme and Tone” 527-543

Sept 18: **Entering the Conversation—New Criticism/Formalism:** Norton “Critical Approaches” 1303-
1308 and Chapter 17 “Paraphrase, Summary, Description” 1229-1232.

Week 4: Poetry -- Words, Sounds, Figures, Symbols

Sept 23: **Words:** Norton Chapter 10 “Language” 548-559. In-class instruction in *OED* and poetry MLA
citation; **Rhyme and Meter:** Norton Chapter 13 “The Sounds of Poetry” 586-610

Sept 25: **Figurative Writing:** Norton Chapter 11 “Visual Imagery and Figures of Speech” 560-572;
Symbol: Norton Chapter 12 “Symbol” 573-585.

Week 5: Poetry - - Internal Structure, External Form

Sept 30: **Internal Structure:** Norton Chapter 14 “Internal Structure” 611-627; **External Form:** Norton
Chapter 15 “External Form” 632-656.

Oct 2: **Poetry Paper Draft Workshop:** Bring two typed copies of your draft poetry paper (3-4 typed
pages) to class.

Week 6: Fiction – Critical Approaches

Oct 7: **Poetry Paper Due.** Introduction to the Fiction paper. **Fiction:** Norton “Fiction: Reading,
Responding, Writing” 12-46

Oct 9: **Critical Approaches:** Norton 1308-1315; **Plot:** Norton Chapter 1 “Plot” 57-101.

Week 7: Fiction – Point of View, Setting, Character and Psychoanalytic Criticism

Oct 14: **POV:** Norton Chapter 2 “Narration and Point of View” 102-121; **Setting:** Norton Chapter 4
157-164, 179-198.

Oct 16: **Character and Psychoanalytic Criticism:** Norton Chapter 3 “Character” 122-156 and 1315-
1319.

Week 8: Fiction – Figures, Symbols, Themes, and Intro to Historical and Ideological Criticism

Oct 21: **Figures and Symbols:** Norton Chapter 5 “Symbol and Figurative Language” 205-240.

Oct 23: **Theme:** Norton Chapter 6 “Theme” 241-280. **Historical and Ideological Criticism:** Norton 1321-1333.

Week 9: Writing about Fiction

Oct 28: **Preceptorial Advising Day – no class**

Oct 30: **Fiction Rough Draft Workshop:** Workshop fiction papers (4-5 typed pages) with at least two peers. Bring two copies of your rough draft to class.

Week 10: Reading and Writing about Drama

Nov 4: **Drama:** Norton “Drama: Reading, Responding, Writing” 740-783. Introduction to the Drama paper.

Nov 6: **Class cancelled, Professor at conference. Fiction Paper Due on Blackboard by 11:59 pm.**

Week 11: Drama - A Doll House

Nov 11: **A Doll House**, Act I: Norton 784-807.

Nov 13: **A Doll House**, Acts II and III: Norton 807-843.

Week 12: Drama – Antigone and Rough Draft Workshop

Nov 18: **Antigone**, Norton 1191-1227.

Nov 20: **Drama Paper Rough Draft Workshop:** Workshop draft drama papers (3-4 typed pages) with at least two peers. Bring two copies of your rough draft to class.

Week 13: Drama – Monologues and Final Portfolio Preparation

Nov 25: **Monologue:** Norton 994-999. **Drama Paper Due.**
View monologues in class. Discussion of final portfolios and reflection essay.

Nov 27 **Thanksgiving Holiday: no class**

Week 14: Portfolio Preparation

Dec 2: **Close Reading Post-test and Portfolio Workshop:** Close reading post-test (approximately the first 45 minutes). The remainder of the class will be a portfolio workshop: bring your entire portfolio for feedback about its organization and points to stress in your self-reflection essay.

Dec 4: **Self Reflection Essay Workshop:** Bring two copies of your self-reflection essay to share with your peers for feedback.

Week 15: Portfolio Completion

T 12/9 **Final Portfolio Due** in class. Class post-mortem.