Aims of the Course
This class will teach you many of the skills of literary criticism and lead you to reflect on the purposes and value of literature and literary study. Its goals are to improve your ability to describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate – that is, to understand – literary texts; to develop your skill in communicating that understanding to others; and to provide you with a basic conceptual framework for thinking about literature in general.

Methods and Requirements
Although this class will be taught online, I have tried to preserve (or mimic) key aspects of the personal engagement and interaction that make the classroom experience valuable – and that most of us miss in online instruction. So while each module will include a few short recorded lectures and/or narrated PowerPoints, we will also have a weekly 90-minute meeting that will be devoted mainly to discussion. While you will complete weekly reading assignments (approximately two dozen poems, two plays, and some half dozen essays about literature), for the first five weeks of the class some of these will be done on an online platform, Perusall, which allows you to share your ideas and responses with your classmates. Graded work comprises:

1) Perusall assignments. For the five weeks of the Poetry unit, you will read and comment on two poems per week using Perusall, a shared reading platform. For each poem, you should make three or more annotations totaling 150 words or more. Perusall assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. each Wednesday from May 12 to June 9. Weight = 10%

2) Three short writing assignments, about 500 words each. The full assignments are on page 5 of this syllabus. You will receive three points for each assignment you turn in on time, two points for each assignment you turn in late, and a bonus point if you turn all three in on time. Like the Perusall assignments, these assignments are due Wednesdays at 11:59 p.m. Assignments falling significantly below 500 words may not receive full credit. As with any written assignment, you must properly acknowledge all sources consulted. Weight = 10%

3) A poetry essay, 1200-1500 words in length. The full assignment is on page 6. Weight = 30%

4) A short essay on Othello, 900-1000 words in length. The full assignment is on page 7. Weight = 15%

5) A longer essay on Othello, 1500-1800 words in length. The full assignment is on page 8. Weight = 35%
Class Schedule

Week 1/Module 1 – Poetry 1: Structure
Reading: Edna St. Vincent Millay, “I will put Chaos into fourteen lines”; George Herbert, “The Altar”; Emily Dickinson, “Because I could not stop for Death”; Ben Jonson, “On My First Son” [Note: About half the poems are available through Perusall. You can find the rest online. I have marked poems available at www.PoetryFoundation.org with an asterisk (*).] Perusall: Dickinson, Jonson
Class Meeting: May 13

Week 2/Module 2 – Poetry 2: Metre and Sound
Perusall: Dickinson, Hopkins
Class Meeting: May 20

Week 3/Module 3 – Poetry 3: Diction and Syntax
Reading: Shakespeare, Sonnet 129*; Fulke Greville, Caelica 100 (“In night, when colours all to black are cast”); William Carlos Williams, “The Dance”; Robert Pinsky, “Shirt”*
Perusall: Shakespeare, Pinsky
Class Meeting: May 27

Week 4/Module 4 – Poetry 4: Tone
Perusall: Crozier, Heaney
Class Meeting: June 3

Week 5/Module 5 – Poetry 5: Imagery and Figurative Language
Reading: Shakespeare, Sonnet 73*; Mary Sidney Herbert, Psalm 52; Langston Hughes, “Harlem”*; Rita Dove, “Daystar”; Hester Pulte, “My Love is Fair”
Perusall: Herbert, Dove
Class Meeting: June 10

Poetry Essay, due June 11, 11:59 p.m.

Week 6/Module 6 – Othello 1: Plot, Character, Language
Reading: Othello; Norton, Introduction, ix-xiii.
Writing: Short Writing Assignment #1, due June 16, 11:59 p.m.
Class Meeting: June 17

Week 7/Module 7 – Othello 2: Race
Class Meeting: June 24

Week 8 – Canada Day Holiday

Week 9/Module 8 – Othello 3: Gender
Reading: Norton, “Othello in Its Own Time, II. Women” (154-59); Siemon, “‘Nay, That’s Not Next’” (Norton 297-310)
Class Meeting: July 8
Short Othello Essay, due July 9, 11:59 p.m.

Week 10/Module 9 – Othello 4: Truth and Fiction
Reading: Nussbaum, “Interlude: ‘Things Such as Might Happen’”
Writing: Short Writing Assignment #2, due July 14, 11:59 p.m.
Class Meeting: July 15

Week 11/Module 10 – Othello 5: Texts, Pre-texts, Intertexts
Reading: Norton, “The Text and Editorial Procedures” (125-31); Cinthio, “The Moor of Venice” (Norton 175-84)
Optional Reading: Carol Chillington Rutter, “Unpinning Desdemona (Again)”
Class Meeting: July 22
Othello Essay, turn in by July 23, 11:59 p.m., for full comments

Week 12/Module 11 – Harlem Duet
Reading: Harlem Duet
Writing: Short Writing Assignment #3, due July 28, 11:59 p.m.
Class Meeting: July 29
Othello Essay, due July 30, 11:59 p.m. (will receive brief comments)

Week 13/Module 12 – Harlem Duet
Optional Reading: Margaret Jane Kidnie, “Writing the Present, Exorcizing the Past: Djanet Sears’ Harlem Duet”
Optional Class Meeting: August 4 [Make-up day for Canada Day]

The following required texts are available through the UW Bookstore and elsewhere:
Djanet Sears, Harlem Duet (Scirocco)

The following items are available on electronic reserve for English 251:
Kidnie, Margaret Jane. “Writing the Present, Exorcizing the Past: Djanet Sears’ Harlem Duet.” In Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation (Routledge, 2009), 70-89.
Class and University Policies
Late essays will be accepted without penalty only if prior permission has been granted. Otherwise, the penalty will be 2% per day, including weekends.

I will normally reply to email messages within 24 hours, weekends excepted.

All sources of information that you use in your written work in this class must be cited fully and scrupulously. If I suspect that you have committed an academic offense, including plagiarism, I will report it to the Associate Dean; if the offense is confirmed, the normal result is a failing grade on the assignment and a further five marks off the course grade.

Academic Integrity
In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information (https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/).

Discipline
A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71. For typical penalties, check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties.

Grievance
A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals
A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 - Student Appeals, https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72.

Note for Students with Disabilities
The AccessAbility Services office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities
without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AccessAbility Services office at the beginning of each academic term.

Mental Health Support

On Campus
- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca/ 519-888-4567 xt 32655
- MATES: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek form Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7
- Good2Talk: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-433 ext. 6880
- Here 24/7: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- OK2BME: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online at the Faculty of Arts website (https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/get-mental-health-support-when-you-need-it).

Short Writing Assignments

#1 – Respond to a central thematic, formal, or theoretical question that interests you in your initial reading of Othello. Your assignment should be focussed and should refer to specific words and actions in the play, but it need not argue or take a position. (Due June 16)

#2 – Summarize and respond to Martha Nussbaum’s argument in “Interlude: ‘Things Such as Might Happen’.” (Due July 14)

#3 – Respond to a central thematic, formal, or theoretical question that interests you in your initial reading of Harlem Duet. Your assignment should be focussed and should refer to specific words and actions in the play, but it need not argue or take a position. (Due July 28)
Essay #1

Write a well-organized essay about one of the four poems in the separate “251 poems for first essay” file. Describe it, analyze it, evaluate it. That is, say what you think needs to be said about it, organizing your response in the form of an argument. Considering some or all of the following questions may provide support for your argument. Make this support as specific as you can.

- How is the poem organized? Is there an argument?
- Is the poem written in a conventional form?
- What is the poem’s metre? Its rhyme? Of what importance are these? Are there significant metrical variations?
- What sort or sorts of language are used in the poem? Why?
- Is there figurative language in the poem? How important is it?
- What is the syntax, or word order, like?
- What appears to be the author’s attitude towards this subject?
- What is the poem’s tone? What gives it this tone? Does the tone change?
- Who appears to be speaking? If it isn’t the author, does the speaker’s perspective seem to be different from the author’s? Is there more than one speaker?
- Is a particular audience implied?
- Is a dramatic situation implied?

Your essay should be 1200-1500 words long (12-point type, Times New Roman font, double-spaced) and follow a consistent documentation format. It must argue a clear thesis, and it must take the form of a unified and well-structured defence of that thesis. It will be judged on the strength and originality of its thesis, on the quality, clarity, and coherence of its supporting arguments, on the appropriateness and thoroughness of the textual evidence it cites in making those arguments, and on the felicity and correctness of its expression. Late essays will be accepted without penalty only if prior permission has been granted. Otherwise, the penalty will be 2% per day, including weekends.

You do not need to consult secondary sources to write this essay, and doing so could hinder your creativity. If you do make use of such sources, however, be sure that they do not control or determine your argument; rather, your critical engagement with them, whether it takes the form of agreement or disagreement, must serve to advance, and must be clearly subordinate to, your own original thesis. Also be sure to cite all use of such sources fully and scrupulously.

DUE DATE: June 11, 11:59 p.m.
Essay #2

Choose a short passage (maximum 20 lines) from *Othello*, and, in a well-organized essay, make an argument about its importance to the play. How does it reveal about (in Aristotle’s terms) plot, character, and/or thought? This is an exercise in close reading part of a longer work, so the goal is to pay attention to the details of the passage while also reflecting on how those details contribute to a larger whole. Reproduce the passage you have chosen on a separate page at the start of your essay.

Your essay should be 900-1000 words long (12-point type, Times New Roman font, double-spaced) and follow a consistent documentation format. It must argue a clear thesis, and it must take the form of a unified and well-structured defence of that thesis. It will be judged on the strength and originality of its thesis, on the quality, clarity, and coherence of its supporting arguments, on the appropriateness and thoroughness of the textual evidence it cites in making those arguments, and on the felicity and correctness of its expression. Late essays will be accepted without penalty only if prior permission has been granted. Otherwise, the penalty will be 2% per day, including weekends.

You do not need to consult secondary sources to write this essay, and doing so could hinder your creativity. If you do make use of such sources, however, be sure that they do not control or determine your argument; rather, your critical engagement with them, whether it takes the form of agreement or disagreement, must serve to advance, and must be clearly subordinate to, your own original thesis. Also be sure to cite all use of such sources fully and scrupulously.

**DUE DATE: July 9, 11:59 p.m.**
Essay #3

Write a well-organized essay about *Othello*. Your essay should be 1500-1800 words long (12-point type, Times New Roman font, double-spaced) and follow a consistent documentation format. It must argue a clear thesis, and it must take the form of a unified and well-structured defence of that thesis. It will be judged on the strength and originality of its thesis, on the quality, clarity, and coherence of its supporting arguments, on the appropriateness and thoroughness of the textual evidence it cites in making those arguments, and on the felicity and correctness of its expression. Late essays will be accepted without penalty only if prior permission has been granted. Otherwise, the penalty will be 2% per day, including weekends.

You do not need to consult secondary sources to write this essay, and doing so could hinder your creativity. If you do make use of such sources, however, be sure that they do not control or determine your argument; rather, your critical engagement with them, whether it takes the form of agreement or disagreement, must serve to advance, and must be clearly subordinate to, your own original thesis. Also be sure to cite all use of such sources fully and scrupulously.

The following list is meant to suggest the range of topics you might choose to explore.

1) Examine an important scene, making an argument about its importance to the play.

2) Consider the importance of a central character to the play as a whole.

3) Explore the representation of gender, race, or religion in the play.

4) Make an argument about the importance to the play of a key word or pattern of imagery.

5) Write about the role of rhetorical persuasion in shaping the plot of *Othello*.

6) After reading Martha Nussbaum’s “Interlude: ‘Things Such as Might Happen,'” discuss the verisimilitude of *Othello*. To what extent does the play show “things such as might happen”?

7) Investigate *Othello’s* relationship to Cinthio’s version of the story in *Gli Hecatommithi*, making an argument about how Shakespeare rewrites Cinthio to serve his own purposes.

8) Write about a topic of your own. You must request and receive my permission to write on this topic by 4:00 p.m. on July 12.

**DUE DATE:** July 23, 11:59 p.m. (to receive full comments)
    
    July 30, 11:59 p.m. (to receive brief comments)