ENGL 251A: Criticism 1

Prof. Aimee Morrison
Hagey Hall 269, 888-4567 x37533
Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:00-2:00
ahm@uwaterloo.ca

Welcome to English 251A, Criticism 1!

Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions you have about the class, the readings, or the assignments. I will be in my office during the hours noted, and I’m always very happy to have students drop by during these times, or by appointment at other times. Beyond office hours, contact is probably best initiated via email. I will read your emails within one day, and will try to respond within two business days.

Course description:

The undergraduate calendar describes this course as “an introduction to strategies of reading, interpretation, and analysis of literary and non-literary texts, focusing on narrative, poetics, discourse, and rhetoric, and the acquisition of critical vocabulary.” Which is exactly what we’ll do here.

This course will challenge you to think in multiple ways about any given piece of text: moving beyond the individual or emotive reaction to a text (“I don’t really like bugs, so this is a crappy book”), we will aim for critical interpretation of it (“Bugs in this text operate as symbols representing the undifferentiatedness of urban ‘hive’ life”). In this way you will be empowered to participate in an interpretive community of scholars as you pursue the rest of your studies in language and literature.

Course meeting times

The course meets twice weekly, Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:30-12:50, in HH 280.

Required texts

The following texts are required for this course. They are available at the University Bookstore now.

Assignments and Mark Distribution

The following are the graded components of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance / Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam 1</td>
<td>October 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam 2</td>
<td>November 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>(exam period)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participation:** This mark is based on your diligent attendance in and preparation for class, as well as your work on in-class exercises. You need to show up, with the books, and pay attention—you lose one mark for each unexplained absence (after one freebie). This mark will also measure your accomplishment and engagement in class discussion.

**Homework:** Homework will be assigned during the term; due dates will be announced in class and noted on the Calendar on the UW-ACE site for the course. **You are welcome to collaborate amongst yourselves in working on interpretations; however, you must write up your own answers to submit to the site.** You will submit your work to that site, and receive feedback electronically. The homework asks you to do the same kind of work that will be required on the exams—so be sure to take these assignments seriously, and pay attention to the feedback you receive.

**Mid-term exams:** These will feature short-answer definition questions as well as longer-format interpretive questions. Mid-term 1 will cover material from the beginning of the course to that point, and mid-term 2 will cover material studied after mid-term 1.

**Final exam:** Structured similarly to the mid-term exams, the final exam covers material studied over the course of the entire semester. The exam will be scheduled during the exam period, so do not make any travel plans for that time until you know when the exam will be held.

Absence from class requires advance permission: excused absences are granted only in circumstances both dire and legitimate: “I’m really busy with assignments in all my other courses” is not a legitimate excuse, for example. Medical absences must be documented by a doctor’s note. Missing class on the date of a mid-term is very serious and must be supported by very strong evidence indeed.

Rights and Responsibilities
Every member of this class—instructor as well as students—has rights and responsibilities to ensure a pleasant and productive experience for all. Here are some more specific expectations for this course:

You will:

- regularly check the UW-ACE site for the course for deadlines and extra material
- be familiar with the university policies that govern your behaviour
- attend all scheduled classes
- arrive prepared: reading done, books in hand
- be an active participant in your own learning: speaking up, but listening too.
- give thoughtful consideration to instructor feedback on written and oral work

I will:

- regularly update the UW-ACE site with deadlines and extra material
- be familiar with the university policies that govern my behaviour
- attend all scheduled classes
- be available for consultation in person and over email as per stated policies
- return all assignments within two weeks
- provide helpful and respectful feedback on student work

A Note from the Faculty of Arts

Academic Integrity:

**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.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. 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. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline,

http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm

**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,

http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy
71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):**
http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

**Academic Integrity Office (UW):** http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

- **Note for students with disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, 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 OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**A final word**

Once more, welcome to the course! I hope you find it as valuable as it will be challenging. I am looking forward to a productive and exciting semester, and to getting to know all of you.

**Class Schedule**

**Basic Techniques and Problem Solving**

- 14 September
  - Introduction: The work of English literary studies
  - **homework:** “why am I here” and ACE email

- 16 September
  - Getting from Stop to Start: finding questions and finding answers
  - **read:** *WOR* Units 1, 2; Courseware—Edwards, “How to read a book”
  - **homework:** assigned question from Unit 2, due 21 Sept.

- 21 September
  - Form, Structure, Grammar: basic units of meaning
  - **read:** *WOR* Unit 3; *GLT* “Form and structure,” “Stylistics,” “Criticism,” “Affective fallacy,” “Intentional fallacy”;
  - Courseware—Cummings, “all ignorance to boggans into know,” Shakespeare, “Sonnet 80”

**Dimensions of Language Variation**

- 23 September
  - The word nerd in all of us: language as system
  - **read:** *WOR* Units 5, 6; *GLT* “Linguistics in literary criticism”

- 28 September
  - Register: Place? Time? Gender? Social?
read: WOR Unit 7, 8, 9; GLT “Archaism”; Courseware—Leyner, “Et Tu, Babe”

homework: Dover Beach / Dover Bitch analysis, due 5 Oct.

30 September

“Oh, so that’s what political correctness is!”
read: GLT “Canon,” “Theories and Movements in Recent Criticism”; Courseware—Hofstadter, “Person Paper”

Analysing Poetic Form

5 October

Poetic analysis basics: rhyme, pattern, verse, metre
read: WOR Units 16, 17; GLT “Rhyme,” “Meter”

7 October

Trickier poetic analysis: parallelism, deviation
read: WOR Unit 18, 19

12 October

Thanksgiving: University Holiday

14 October

Review, analysing poetic form
read: Courseware—Wordsworth and Coleridge “Lines,” Shelley, ‘Ozymandias’

19 October

MID-TERM NUMBER ONE

Hey Wait! We Forgot About the Book!

21 October

History of the book: material forms
read: GLT “Format of a Book”

Reading Figures of Speech

26 October

What you mean to say or don’t: Metaphor and Irony
read: WOR, Units 10, 11; GLT “Irony,” “Metaphor, Theories of”; Courseware—Austen “Pride and Prejudice”

homework: cutup, due 28 Oct.

28 October

Meaning what you haven’t said: Juxtaposition and Allusion
read: WOR, Units 12, 13; GLT “Allusion”

2 November

Review, reading figures of speech
Aspects of Narrative

4 November
Longer pieces: genre and narrative
read: WOR Units 4, 20; GLT “Narrative and narratology,” “Genres”; Courseware—Clarke “Merde,”

9 November
Deliberate form: narration and point of view
read: WOR Units 21, 22; GLT “Point of view”; Courseware—Haddon “Curious Incident”

11 November
Realism and beyond: analysing narrative
read: WOR Unit 23; GLT “Realism and Naturalism”; Courseware—Gaiman “Chivalry”

16 November
Review, aspects of narrative
read: Courseware—Joyce “Araby,” Orwell “Animal Farm”

18 November
Mid-term Number Two

Beyond the Literary Text

23 November
Where and why: locating the ‘reader’ and the ‘writer’
read: WOR Units 14, 15; GLT “Reader-Response Criticism,” “Author and Authorship,” “Death of the Author”; Courseware—Cisneros “Marin”

25 November
Beyond the written text: performance, film, multimedia
read: WOR Units 24, 25, 26

30 December
Review, class-directed session