COURSE INFORMATION SHEET

Purpose of Course: English 251 is a course which is designed to introduce students to the theory and methodology behind the formal study of English literature. In other words, it is the core course in approaching English studies as a discipline.

In English 251A, we will concentrate on a close reading of lyrical and narrative poetry and short narrative fictional prose. Close reading of a text is sometimes called (somewhat inaccurately) the "New Critical" approach or the "Formalist" approach. It is also called "Analytical Criticism" and parallels what in French studies is called "Explication de texte." The object of the course is to help you become a better, more confident reader on your own. We will concentrate on the literary text itself, not on what critics tell us about the text or what they tell us we should think about the text. We will try to determine just what can and cannot be said about any particular text and to what extent a text can be read on its own. At the same time, we will look at some of the assumptions behind this approach.

This is not a lecture course. Students are expected to come to class regularly, to have read the material assigned and thought about it, and to be prepared to discuss and even debate points. Every student will be assigned at least one seminar session in which she or he will be part of a small group responsible for leading class discussion of the literary works being analyzed.

In addition, in English 251A students are expected, by developing their understanding of critical terminology and critical concepts, to increase their critical vocabulary.

Texts
- R. Wiebe, The Story-Makers, 2nd ed (Gage)
- B. Raffel, How to Read a Poem (Meridian)
- M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 6th ed. (Harcourt Brace)

Requirements
1) 3 short papers on assigned topics: 2 on prose (one will be written in class) and 1 (a metrical analysis) on poetry (essay #1 worth 15%; essay #2, 25%; essay #3, 10%)
2) 1 final exam in regular exam period involving a sight analysis of a poem or group of poems (30%)
3) participation in an assigned seminar (10%)
4) 1 written comment (no longer than two pages, typed, double-spaced) handed in within 1 week of the student’s seminar on a significant aspect of the seminar (10%)

Office - Room and Hours
HH 246, ext. 2124
Office Hours: 9:30 to 9:55 Tuesday & Thursday
2:30 to 3:00 Tuesday & Thursday
Other hours by chance or by appointment.
1994 FALL SCHEDULE
(Subject to Change)

Sept. 13  Introduction—Texts, Requirements, Expectations
Approaching Literature: Analysis, Interpretation, and Evaluation
Sept. 15  Varying Evaluations of 3 Poems
Sept. 20  Direct (or Overt) vs. Indirect (or Covert) Plots and Resolutions
Ross, “A Field of Wheat”
Camus, “The Guest”
Sept. 22  Updike, Your Lover Just Called” (Seminar #1)
Sept. 27  Narrators vs. Authors
Faulkner, “That Evening Sun”
Thurber, “You Could Look It Up”
Sept. 29  Munro, “Thanks for the Ride” (Seminar #2)
Oct.  4   Essay #1, In-Class (Bring The Story-Makers)
Oct.  6   Reality and Verbal Constructs
Márquez, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”
Hodgins, “The Plague Children”
Oct. 11  Presenting the Inner Life; Free Indirect Discourse
Mansfield, “The Wind Blows”
Oct. 13  O’Connor, “Revelation” (Seminar #3)
Oct. 18  Reader Involvement
Oates, “The Molesters”
Joyce, “Counterparts” (Seminar #4)
Oct. 20  Robbe-Grillet, “The Secret Room”
Essay #2 due
Oct. 27  Seminar #5
Nov.  3  Seminar #6
Nov.  8  Chap. 5, “Shapes and Structures;” pp. 177-232; Chap. 6, “Metrics;” pp. 233-47
Class exercises in metrical analysis
Essay #3 (Metrical Analysis) due
Nov. 17  Seminar #7
Nov. 24  Seminar #8