English 251A.1: Literary Criticism - Practice
T Th, HH 139, 10-11:30

Instructor: Kevin McGuirk, HH 255/885-1211 x2419
Office hours: T Th 12:30-2:00

English 251A is a course in the close, critical reading of texts, especially
of literary texts. Accordingly, emphasis will fall on practice, the
development of interpretive strategies and tools for engagement with poetry
and narrative.

Texts:
Robert Scholes et al. Text Book: An Introduction to Literary Language 2nd
James Joyce, Dubliners. Dover Publications
Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart. Doubleday-Anchor

Coursework:
Students will write three essays. The essays should be about 800 words in
length, and no more than 1,000 words in length. Due dates are noted on the
schedule of classes; a selection of topics will be distributed in class at
least one week before each due date. Each essay will be worth 20% of your
class grade; together they will make up 60% of your course grade. The final
exam will be worth 40% of your course grade.
NOTE: You may submit a revised version of any one of the first two essays,
within two weeks of its return to you and after consultation with me. The
revision must be substantial - no mere tinkering. The final mark for the
assignment will fall midway between the mark on the original essay and the
mark on the revised essay. (For example: original essay 60%, revision 80% -
final mark for the essay 70%.)
Students who contribute to class through questions, discussions, and comments
(and to everyone's learning) may receive a bonus mark of up to 3% (added to
the final mark for the course).

Late policy:
Essays are due in class on the assigned date.
If you need an extension of no more than one week, follow this procedure
before the due date: 1: write a note indicating the day on which you will hand
in your essay ("I will hand in 251A.1 essay #2 to Professor McGuirk on Oct 8
instead of Oct 3"); 2. sign the note; 3: have me initial the note; 4. submit
the note with your essay on the new due date.
Please do not explain to me why you need an extension. If you have a medical
or other emergency that affects all your courses, see an academic counsellor.

On Plagiarism:
Respect yourself and respect your instructor: DO NOT PLAGIARISE. If you are
not sure what constitutes plagiarism, take steps to inform yourself.
Schedule of readings:

(week of:)

Sept 10: introduction; Ammons "Small Song" (on board)

17: elegies (handout); genre

24: image, metaphor, symbol; Brown "What Words Are: Metaphor" (TB 51-55); Freud (TB 60-62); Lakoff and Johnson (TB 76-78); poems in Text Book plus handout

Oct 1: (continued); "Metaphor and Metonymy: Advertising" (TB 120-27) ESSAY DUE OCT. 3

8: narrative: "Texts and People" (TB 1-44)

15: "Completing Texts" (TB 160-62); Joyce (TB 163-68); Parker (TB 168-71); Dubliners selections TBA

22: Dubliners selections TBA

29: "Identifying with Texts"(TB 186-87); Banks (TB 187-94); Allen (TB 194-200); Ray (TB 200-07) ESSAY DUE OCT. 31

Nov 5: Things Fall Apart

12: (Achebe continued if necessary); rhythm and traditional prosody (handout)

19: the sonnet, the lyric (handout); generative writing: "Transforming Texts (I)" (TB 137-41)

26: modernist poetics and thinking about form (handout); O'Brien, "How to Write a True War Story" (on reserve in library) ESSAY DUE NOV. 28

Dec 3: (O'Brien continued if necessary); conclusion