Course Description:

Welcome to Engl 251A, your introduction to English literary criticism. In the past, this course has often been used as a guide to “practical criticism” -- meaning, it taught close-reading skills using examples drawn from the canon of English literature. This course will continue in this tradition, as close-reading skills are an essential part of almost all critical practices. Students should expect to develop a basic vocabulary of literary terms (such as metaphor, metonymy, focalization, etc.) and learn how to apply them to interpret literary texts. Building on these basic skills, we will expand our scope to consider theoretical issues concerning the function of criticism. Throughout the term, I will include short excerpts from the work of landmark philosophers (Plato, Horace), literary critics (Arnold, Frye, Barthes), and other wits and malcontents (Wilde). Students should begin to question their own role as an interpreter of literature: what does it mean to be a critic? What are your goals? What are you hoping to prove? What can you prove? What constitutes a “literary” text (and does that term even matter)? Should you replicate the ideals of other scholarship and strive for complete objectivity? How broad, or how narrow, should the scope of your analysis be?

Course Objectives:

1. Students will discuss and debate literary texts, using advanced close-reading skills
2. Students will learn to apply appropriate disciplinary vocabulary and critical approaches
3. Students will articulate and support positions, through reasoned argument and the effective use of evidence
4. Students will construct formal literary essays. They should edit for content, organization (e.g. effective introductions and conclusions; unified, coherent paragraphs; transitions between and within paragraphs), style (e.g. sentence rhythm; sentence variety; vocabulary; figurative language), and grammar

Course Texts:
(available at UW Bookstore – try to use the correct editions)
Abrams, M.H., Geoffrey Galt Harpham. A Glossary of Literary Terms
Cuaron, Alfonso. Children of Men (class viewing)
Lewis, Janet. The Wife of Martin Guerre
Seth, Clyde Fans
Stoker, Bram. Dracula

Optional (but recommended):
Acheson, Katherine. Writing Essays about Literature
The Little Brown Handbook
Working Class Schedule:

Sept. 12: Intro
Sept. 14: Arnold, Emerson, Wilde, Ransom
   Optional Reading: Plato, Aristotle, Horace (ACE)
   Optional Reading: Eliot
Sept. 26: Keats “Ode on a Grecian Urn”
   Optional Reading: Brooks (ACE)
Sept. 28: Browning “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”
Oct. 3: Leacock “The Marine Excursions of the Knights of Pythis”
   Abrams: “Irony” (184-87), “Satire” (353-56)
Oct. 5: Melville “Bartleby, the Scrivener”
   Abrams: “Narrative and Narratology” (233-35), “Point of View” (301-6)
Oct. 10: University Holiday
Oct. 12: Mid-Term Exam
Oct. 17: Seth Clyde Fans
   Abrams: “Dramatic Monologue” (94-95), “Setting” (363-64)
Oct. 19: Seth Clyde Fans
   Optional Reading: Frye “Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada”
Oct. 26: Lewis Wife of Martin Guerre
Oct. 31: Lewis Wife of Martin Guerre
Nov. 2: Essay 1 Due. Secondary Sources and Research, Woolf “A Room of One’s Own” (excerpt)
   Abrams: “Feminist Criticism” (121-27)
Nov. 7: Joyce “Araby”
Nov. 9: Stoker Dracula
Nov. 14: Stoker Dracula
   Abrams: “New Historicism” (244-51)
Nov. 16: Dracula
   Barthes “Death of the Author”
Nov. 21: Plath “Daddy”, Heaney “Digging”
Nov. 23: Wimsatt and Beardsley, Eagleton
   Abrams: “Marxist Criticism” (203-10), “Cultural Studies” (72)
   Optional Reading: Gramsci
Nov. 28: Children of Men Screening
Nov. 30: Children of Men Screening
“Zizek on Children of Men”

Dec. 5: Essay 2 due. Final discussion day
Optional Reading: Abrams: “Theories and Movements in Recent Criticism” (405)

Assignment Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation (10%):
Students will be evaluated based on their attendance and participation in class discussions. This includes a number of in-class assignments designed to accommodate the less-vocal students.

Mid-term Exam (15%):
A test conducted on Oct. 12th. Short Answer responses concerning critical reading practices and literary terminology.

Short Essay (15%):
A short essay (3-4 pages) due Nov. 2nd. Essay topics will be distributed in class prior to the deadline. Students must avoid plot summary as much as possible. **Essays must be argumentative and include a proper thesis statement and paragraph structure.** Students will be evaluated both in terms of style and content. Remember, even the best arguments suffer when they are presented ineffectively. Secondary sources not required.

Long Essay (30%):
A long essay (6-8 pages) due Dec. 5th. Essay topics will be distributed in class prior to the deadline. Students may include some secondary sources to help formulate their ideas. Remember to cite correctly using the proper MLA guidelines.

Final Exam (30%)

Late Policy:
If you miss the mid-term you must provide medical documentation to substantiate your incapacity to write the test on the scheduled day.

The essay is due in class on the due date. Late papers will be penalized at a rate of 2% a day, including weekends, and will not be accepted more than 2 weeks after the due date. No extensions will be given unless there is a clear and verified medical reason for the delay. **Please note that I do not grant extensions except in emergency circumstances** (being busy with other courses does not count as an emergency).

Student Responsibilities
Students should be prepared to discuss all the assigned texts thoughtfully in class. Attendance is mandatory and I encourage classroom discussion. In my experience, English courses are the most successful when each student is actively engaged. Try to read shorter works multiple times in order to prepare for class.

Electronic Devices:
Please be respectful of your peers. Electronic devices can be a nuisance in the classroom and disrupt the ability of other students to concentrate during lectures and discussion. Cell phones (and other similar gadgets) must be turned off. I would prefer students to refrain from using their laptops as well, but this is not a requirement.

Contacting the Instructor
I encourage students to contact me about the course. The best way to get thorough feedback for any question is to come to my office and talk to me in person. I am happy to discuss the course material and essay topics. I will answer **short** e-mail questions, but my ability to respond is limited. I check my e-mail regularly, but always assume it will take at least 48 hours for me to respond and plan accordingly.
Essay Formatting
When formatting your essays, conform to MLA style. This includes the following:
- In the top left-hand corner of the first page, list on four separate lines, flush with the left margin: your first and last name and student number, my name, the course name and number, and the date on which you submit the essay. Do not include a separate title page.
- Following the identifying information, provide a title for your essay and centre it.
- Use one-inch margins (except for page numbers), and indent each paragraph.
- Use 12-point Times New Roman font or equivalent.
- Double-space all text, including your identifying information, the title, and any quotations.
- Number all pages of your essay (numbering the first page is optional) in the top right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top of the page and flush with the right margin. Your last name should precede the page number.
- Include a Works Cited on which you list all the sources you’ve used, including the primary text. Guidelines for Works Cited format will be discussed in class.

Academic Integrity
The Faculty of Arts requires that I make you aware of the following: “Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who need 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 Assistant Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy #71, Student Academic Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm

The Internet has made plagiarism and other forms of cheating much more tempting; it has also made it easier to detect. I will investigate and report to the Associate Dean all cases of suspected plagiarism. Proven cases will result in academic penalty, proportional to the extent of the infraction, and could include an official written reprimand from the Associate Dean that will be placed in your file. Please consult the following web site, “Avoiding Academic Offences” for a comprehensive explanation of plagiarism and how to avoid it http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve: refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm.

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 OPD at the beginning of each academic term.