

UPDATED: JANUARY 20, 2010

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**English 285: Texts and Contexts
(Writing Intensive)**

This course is intended to teach you (or deepen your understanding of) what it means to study literature written in English. The course will introduce you to some of the larger concerns of the discipline. What is literature? What is the canon? How does one think about literature in relation to history and culture? The course is also designed, however, to teach you some fundamental principles and skills: how to read a work closely and write an interpretive analysis of it, how to approach and distinguish between different literary genres, how to enter into a critical conversation about a given text. By the end of the semester, you should be prepared to do the work in any of the 300-level English course at Rhodes, and you will have a more sophisticated perspective on the challenges and rewards of your chosen major.

Required Texts

Cuddon, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 1999.
Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia: A Play*. London: Faber & Faber, 1994.
Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Case Study in Critical Controversy*. Eds. Gerald Graff and James Phelan. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.
Whitla, William. *The English Handbook: A Guide to Literary Studies*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
*One or two more texts will be added to this list as the semester progresses.

Assignments

Essay #1	15%
Essay #2	15%
Essay #3	20%
Midterm	15%
Essay #4	25%
Participation	10%

We will discuss these assignments more fully during the course of the semester. PLEASE NOTE: You cannot receive a passing grade for this course unless you complete all major assignments.

Participation

This course is a seminar and requires the active and engaged participation of every member of the class. Make sure you read each day's assignment carefully and come to class with questions or comments to bring to the discussion. The success of the class depends upon your willingness to engage actively with the material and discuss it with the rest of the class. Often the most productive questions are ones that work to pinpoint what is difficult about a particular reading.

Cell Phones and Laptops

I should never see or hear your cell phone, nor should I be aware of it vibrating. Please turn your phones off before you enter the room. Be warned that I reserve the right to answer any phone that rings in my class and that if I see you texting or checking your phone, you'll be counted absent for that day. I am happy for you to use laptops for taking notes, etc. However, if I discover that you are on the internet for any reason (other than my asking you to look something up) or you are doing something on your laptop that distracts you from class participation, then you will be counted absent that day, and I'll ask you not to bring your laptop back.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to be in class every day. Being "present" doesn't just mean physically being in the room; you are to be alert and prepared. Anyone not alert (i.e. sleeping, reading the paper, working a crossword, etc.) will be counted absent, as will anyone clearly not prepared to participate. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and what, if anything, you need to make up. **More than 4 absences (for any reason other than a school sanctioned event) will adversely affect your grade; i.e. you will lose 1/3 letter grade for each additional absence.** Chronic tardiness will count towards absences. Excessive absences (i.e. more than 6 of the total class days) could result in an "F" for the course.

Assignment Submission Policy

Essays are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted. Late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade per day, including weekends. Except in the case of documented illness or family emergency, papers more than a week late will receive a failing grade. If you believe you have a legitimate reason for missing a due date, talk to me beforehand to make alternative arrangements. Also, please note that unless I tell you otherwise, all work you submit should be typed, double-spaced with an inch margin, stapled, and adhere to MLA standards in both layout and documentation. See me if you have questions about MLA or need further information.

Plagiarism

Every assignment that you submit must be your original work, written specifically for this class, and it must clearly and properly cite any sources you used in writing it. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask. I am bound by the honor code to turn in any work I suspect of being plagiarized to the honor council, and I will not have a conversation with you before doing so. Therefore, it is best to approach me with any concerns before the assignment is submitted.

Reading Schedule

January

- W, 13: Introductions
- F, 15: Whitla, *English Handbook*, “What is English and What is Literature?” (5-21)
- M, 18: King Holiday: No Class
- W, 20: Continue discussion of Chapter 1
- F, 22: *English Handbook*, “Chapter 2: Reading English” (27-56)
 Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour”
 Assignment: Come to class prepared to discuss Chopin’s story using the five intensive reading methods Whitla describes (literal, formal, expository, comparative, analytical). **Note:** the last two depend on knowledge outside the text, so do the best you can. You needn’t do any outside research.
- M, 25: *English Handbook*, “Chapter 6: Prose Fiction” (155-64 **ONLY**)
Penguin Dictionary: short story
 Alice Walker, “1955”
- W, 27: Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno”
Penguin Dictionary: character, narrator
- F, 29: 12:00: William Carlos Williams, “The Use of Force” (Visiting Professor: Kate Beutner, Candidate for Professor of Fiction Writing)
- 1:00: Tony Earley, “Charlotte”

February

- M, 1: Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno”
Penguin Dictionary: plot, narratology
- W, 3: *English Handbook*: “Chapter 4: Writing in English Studies” (85-111)
- F, 5: 12:00: Denis Johnson, “Emergency” (Visiting Professor: Alicia Erian, Candidate for Professor of Fiction Writing)
- 1:00: Mary Wilkins Freeman, “A New England Nun”
- M, 8: Flannery O’Connor, “Revelation”
Penguin Dictionary: grotesque, satire, allusion

W, 10: Peer Review

F, 12: 12:00 Julian Barnes, "The Stowaway" (Visiting Professor: Mark Behr, Candidate for Professor of Fiction Writing)

1:00: Henry James, "The Real Thing"

M, 15: *English Handbook*, "Chapter 7: Poetry" (175-90)
Penguin Dictionary: Lyric, Epic, Dramatic Monologue
 Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess"

W, 17: *English Handbook*, "Chapter 7: Poetry" (190-96)
Penguin Dictionary: "tenor and vehicle", imagery
 Poems TBA
Essay #1 Due

F, 19: *English Handbook*, "Chapter 7: Poetry" (196-200)
Penguin Dictionary: metonymy, synecdoche, personification
 Poems TBA

M, 22: Public Folder: Helen Vendler, "Writing about Poems"

W, 24: *English Handbook*, "Chapter 7: Poetry" (200-05)
Penguin Dictionary: anaphora, parallelism, chiasmus
 Poems TBA

F, 26: *English Handbook*, "Chapter 7: Poetry" (205-13)
 Poems TBA

March

M, 1: Peer Review

W, 3: *English Handbook*, "Chapter 5: Drama" (117-53) [NOTE: Pay special attention to the sections "Drama, Text and Speech" (121-26), "Character Types and the Unities (140-2), and "Reading Plays" (142-52)]

F, 5: Susan Glaspell, "Trifles"
Essay #2 due

M, 8: Writing about Drama
 Reading TBA

W, 10: Review for the midterm

F, 12: **Midterm**

M, 15: Spring Break: No Class

W, 17: Spring Break: No Class

F, 19: Spring Break: No Class

M, 22: Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*
Penguin Dictionary: Arcadia

W, 24: Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*

F, 26: Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*

M, 29: *English Handbook*, “Chapter 6: Prose Fiction” (164-174); “Chapter 10: The Politics of Reading: Gender, Class and Ethnicity”

W, 31: Peer Review

April

F, 2: Easter Recess: No Class

M, 5: Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

W, 7: Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Essay #3 due

F, 9: Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Critical essays on *Huckleberry Finn*

M, 12: Critical essays on *Huckleberry Finn*

W, 14: Critical essays on *Huckleberry Finn*

F, 16: *English Handbook*, “Chapter 3: Library Research and Scholarly Method” (57-84)

M, 19: Incorporating Critical Sources into your writing
Reading TBA

W, 21: TBA

F, 23: TBA

M, 26: TBA

W, 28: Peer Review