

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introduction to literary studies and to writing in English. Close reading techniques for a variety of literary genres will expose rhetorical strategies and contexts, including ethical and cultural implications. Writing exercises and assignments will develop tone, structure, mechanics, grammar, and artistry for expression and clarity.

We will read poetry by Donne, Keats, Shelley, Dylan Thomas, Dickinson, Adrienne Rich, Langston Hughes, Walt Whitman, Edgar Allen Poe, Robert Frost, and Maya Angelou; short stories and essays by Hemingway, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Joan Didion, and Zora Neale Hurston. We will also read Othello by William Shakespeare.

TEACHING METHODS AND EXPECTATIONS

This class will include both lecture and discussion. Students are expected to engage in active participation, contribute to class discussions, and take notes. The goal will be to achieve comfort in close reading a text and confidence in writing both eloquently and persuasively.

Students should make themselves familiar with the plot of Othello prior to the class.

ASSIGNMENTS

There will be short writing assignments in class, in-class exercises on reading literature and writing, and one essay due each week. Each essay will incorporate methods and terms discussed in class for close reading.

TEXTBOOKS

Shakespeare, William. *Othello* (New Arden series).

I also recommend *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. Any recent edition, such as the eleventh edition (2014) to the most recent, is acceptable.

TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF THE CLASS

Week 1: Introduction to Literary Studies

We will begin with a sampling of short non-fiction and fiction pieces as an introduction to close reading methods. We will focus on critical and rhetorical methods and terms. Primary elements for close reading will include structure, narrative voice, setting, style, character development, and theme. We will also discuss the relationship of language to aesthetics through form and content.

Week 2: Poetry

A variety of short poems across time periods and forms will be read both in class and outside of class. Our readings will focus on rhyme, rhythm, and poetic form. Students will practice identifying rhetorical and linguistic strategies such as consonance, assonance, paradox, antithesis, metaphor, enjambment, caesura, and others, and the class will address how these elements shape the imagery, tone, style, and content of the poetic form. Strategies for approaching poetry will be practiced daily in class, and paper assignments will focus on a deep-reading of one or two poems.

Week 3: Drama

Students will read *Othello* for this week. Elements of drama including monologue, soliloquy, asides, dramatic irony, dramatic arc, stage and linguistic imagery will all be discussed. We will define and recognize dramatic terms such as tragedy, comedy, romance, protagonist, antagonist, and subplot. We will also focus more on the writing process: formulating a topic, writing a thesis statement, and outlining an essay.

Week 4: Fiction

Readings include short stories and reading methods will focus on character, conflict, narrative voice, plot, structure, and dialogue. We will also focus on elements of writing that include editing, revising, and reviewing your own work. There will be time in class to develop your topic, thesis statement, and go through a clearly laid-out process for editing your final essays.

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