

# *ENGL231 – The Interpretation of Literature*

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## Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the close reading of poetry, fiction, drama, and film, emphasizing formal elements such as theme, structure and form, figurative language, and style. It also introduces major critical approaches and focuses on developing the critical, analytical and rhetorical skills necessary to interpret texts of all genres and historical periods.

While this course is not listed “for majors only”, the skills we are practicing are most closely associated with the liberal arts majors: critical reading and interpretive writing. The reading load is heavy, and my standards are high. I’ve taught some courses in which it was relatively easy to get an A; this is not one of them. *If you are trying to fill a Liberal Studies requirement and don’t like reading and thinking about what you’ve read, really and truly, there are easier ways to do it.*

## Learning Outcomes (Goals)

1. To become familiar with techniques of reading, interpreting, analyzing, and discussing literature.
2. To build a critical vocabulary for the study and interpretation of texts.
3. To write acceptable, intelligent essays explicating written texts.

## Required Text

- Kalaidjian, Walter, et al. *Understanding Literature* (rental). Other texts may be placed on reserve.
- *Recommended text:* a good glossary of literary terms! You can order from online bookstores, including ABE.com, which provides used copies at sometimes reduced rates. Two excellent possibilities are M.H. Abrams’ *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (on the dense side, but eternally useful for major, especially English Ed majors) and Cuddon and Preston’s *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*.

## Requirements

- |            |                              |                              |
|------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Midterm | 3. Short (4-5 page) essay #1 | 5. Reading Quizzes           |
| 2. Final   | 4. Short (4-5 page) essay #2 | 6. Participation /Attendance |

- **Participation/Attendance**
  - Since the skills you are required to develop in this class include the ability to discuss material in an intelligent and informed manner, you must attend class to develop and exhibit this skill. This grade will be lowered 10 points for each absence after the first.
  - I do not distinguish between unexcused and excused absences; either you are here to participate and learn or you are not.
- **Quizzes**

Quizzes will be given at the beginning of virtually every class. They will be distributed at the beginning of the class time and collected approximately five minutes thereafter. Late arrivals will receive no additional time. No make-up quizzes will be given for any reason, although I usually drop the lowest 2-3 quiz grades at the end of the semester.
- **Final Grade**

Your final grade will be an average of five of the requirements (i.e. your lowest grade in these six requirements will be dropped and the others will be averaged)

## Grading Policy

You will never receive a lower grade than dictated by your averages, but I reserve the right to raise the final grade for any student whose participation and work in the class is regular, thoughtful, insightful, and productive.

Scale: A (>92); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-66); D- (60-62); F (<60)

## Accommodations For Students With Disabilities

Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Kimberly Marcus for more information. Phone: (828) 227-7234; E-mail: kmarcus@email.wcu.edu.

### Academic Integrity

All work submitted must be your own. Please review WCU policy regarding Plagiarism and the Academic Honesty Policy in the student handbook and in *The Record: Undergraduate Catalog* (<http://catalog.wcu.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=26>).

***If I find a student cheating, fabricating, or plagiarizing another's work from any source (print, media, internet, etc.), that student will receive an "F" for the class, the transgression will be recorded in his or her WCU record, and I will, to the utmost of my ability, urge the administration to expel that student from WCU.***

<b>SCHEDULE</b> (subject to change)		
A regular part of each assignment includes reading the brief introductory passages to the assigned readings.		
R 8/24	Introduction	
<b>Fiction</b>		
T 8/29	Reading Fiction and Formal Interpretation	Ch. 1 & Ch.2 (4-22)
R 8/31	Character and Psychoanalytic Approaches	Ch. 3 (23-67)
T 9/5	Setting and New Historicism	Ch. 4 (68-96)
R 9/7	Plot	Ch 5 (97-120)
T 9/12	Narrative Ambiguities: Gender and Sexuality	Ch 6 (121-154)
R 9/14	Themes – Race and Class: Walker & Baldwin	Ch 7 (155-204) WARNING: long reading
T 9/19	Image and Style: Balzac	Ch 8 (205-230)
R 9/21	Images: Conrad	Ch 9 (only 231-294) WARNING: long reading
T 9/26	Symbols: Woolf	Ch 9 (only 332-344) <b>ESSAY 1 DUE</b>
R 9/28	Style and Tone	Ch 10 (only 345-347; 368-381); CH 11 (396-417)
T 10/3	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
<b>Poetry</b>		
R 10/5	Reading Poetry - Poetic Diction and Imagery	Ch 19 (691-696); Ch 20 (only 697-707) & CH 21 (only 712-723)
T 10/10	Poetic Figures and Symbols	Ch 22 (only 727-740) & Ch 23 (only 749-760)
R 10/12	Prosody	Ch 26 (799-816)
T 10/17	Politics and Poetry: Gender and Sexuality	Ch 35 (1056-1063; 1072-1078); Ch 36 (1119-1136)
R 10/19	<b>Fall Break</b>	
T 10/24	Forms	CH 27 (817-836)
R 10/26	Explication – the Sonnet	Shakespeare (1262-1263); Donne (1207); handout
T10/31	Explication practice	Poems TBA
R 11/2	Explication practice	Poems TBA
T 11/7	Explication practice	Poems TBA
R 11/9	Explication practice	Poems TBA <b>ESSAY 2 DUE</b>
<b>Drama and Film</b>		
T 11/14	Elements of Drama	Ch 41 & Ch 42 (1361-1394)
R 11/16	Elements of Film	Handout
T 11/21		
R 11/23	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
T 11/28	Comedy vs. Tragedy: The Tempest	Ch 43 (only 1395-1405); Ch44 (only 1449-1455); Ch 45 (only 1584-1648) WARNING: long reading
R 11/30	The Tempest con't	
T 12/5	Filmic Adaptation	Prospero's Books (?)
R 12/7	Review	
	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	