

## ENGLIT 0300: Introduction to Literature

University of Pittsburgh / Department of English

Class #11490 / MWF 11:00 – 11:50 am

135 Cathedral of Learning

Spring 2013

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### **Course Overview**

Welcome to Introduction to Literature! This semester we will read a selection of challenging, creative, and slightly strange texts representing a variety of historical periods, socio-cultural contexts, and genres. We will explore short fiction, longer fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, including examples that mix things up by blending poetry with prose, truth with fiction, and new with old. Rather than survey any particular period, place, genre, or author, this course will interrogate literature itself: How do we read literature? What does literature do and how does it do it? How does meaning emerge from literature? And what is meaning anyway?

These are just a few of the complex questions that we will pursue throughout the term, questions that don't have one easy or correct answer but instead, multiple and at times ambiguous answers that warrant our sustained attention. While questions like these may lack correct answers and course texts may support multiple readings, that doesn't mean that every response will be just as good as any other. We will practice strategies of reading and critical inquiry that will help you to ask productive and worthwhile questions of texts and to offer complex and valuable readings of them. Frequent writing assignments will enhance your skills in reading, analyzing, and evaluating diverse texts, both those we read together and those you encounter beyond our course. Throughout the semester, you will experiment with a number of different approaches to writing with and about literature: performing close readings and formal analyses, conducting contextual research, writing collaboratively, and adapting, rewriting, and reusing sample texts.

### **Course Texts and Reading Assignments**

Below are our required course texts, in the order in which we will be using them. You can purchase them at the Pitt Book Center or borrow them from the library.

Snodgrass, W. D. *De/Compositions: 101 Good Poems Gone Wrong*. St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 2001.  
Print.

ISBN 1555973175

Morrison, Toni. *Home*. New York: Knopf, 2012. Print.

ISBN 0307594165

\*Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

ISBN 0199583021

Shields, David. *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*. New York: Vintage, 2010. Print.

ISBN 978-0307387974

\*The Goethe book is available in multiple editions. However, I recommend that you use the same edition as the one listed so that we're all on the same page (literally) during class discussion. You may wish to read library copies, rather than purchased ones, and the library's Get It! and E-Z Borrow services can help you find copies at other libraries. Whether you use the library or Amazon, don't forget to leave enough time to order and receive your book before the first reading assignment is due.

Additional readings will be posted to our Blackboard site and labeled as such on our course schedule and assignment sequences. I expect you to print these and bring them to class, so that you can write notes on them during discussion. Examples of student writing will also serve as occasional course texts. During in-class workshops, I will distribute student writing to the class, so that we can review it in light of the questions and concerns that we're studying. We'll consider the gains and losses offered by individual ideas, approaches, and styles and propose hypothetical revision plans for the documents we examine. Workshop discussions should aid your understanding of course concepts and readings and help you to revise your own work, even if it is not the example under review. I will always remove authors' names from sample student texts, but please be prepared to see your own writing on display at some point this term (and feel free to identify it as your own during class discussion). I expect that all criticism directed toward student writing will be constructive, considerate, and respectful.

If you do not already have one, I recommend borrowing or purchasing a style or grammar handbook that you can use for reference throughout our course. Some suggestions are *St. Martin's Handbook* by Andrea Lunsford, *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker, and *Rules of Thumb* by Jay Silverman, Elaine Hughes, and Diana Roberts Wienbroer. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) is also a great resource for any questions about grammar, style, documentation, and writing strategies. (See the "Resources" page on our Blackboard site for a link.) You should also get in the habit of looking up unfamiliar words from our readings in a good dictionary—preferably, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (or *OED*), which is available online for free via the library's website.

Our reading assignments include weird, complex, and challenging texts that require you to read with care, patience, and an open mind. I don't expect you to understand everything you read on the first or even second attempt, but I do expect you to read all assigned texts thoroughly and thoughtfully, while keeping track of your questions, difficulties, and reactions. Always bring to class the assigned reading materials along with your notes and questions on them, so that you are prepared for lively discussion of specific selections from the texts.

### **Course Website and Email**

Our course has a Blackboard site that you can access at <http://courseweb.pitt.edu>. Log in using your Pitt username and password, and then click on the link to this course. If you have trouble with any aspect of the course website, please call the help desk at (412) 624-HELP. You should get in the habit of checking our site frequently, as I will be posting resources, handouts, and assigned readings there. Blackboard automatically uses your Pitt email account: be sure to check it at least once a day because I will occasionally send email announcements to the class via Blackboard.

The University expects you to read your Pitt email on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve you from knowing and complying with the content of these communications. If you choose to forward your Pitt email to another email address, you do so at your own risk. If email is lost as a result of forwarding, you are not excused from the responsibility of responding to official communications sent to your Pitt email address.

## **Attendance, Participation, and In-Class Activities**

Class time will feature discussions, workshops, in-class writing, and group activities, so attendance and participation are mandatory. Come to class on time, prepared to explore the materials under study. Being prepared for class means having all your materials with you at the start of class: reading assignments, any writing assignments due in class, paper, and a pen or pencil. I don't want to use quizzes to ensure that you've completed assigned readings, so please come to class ready to engage in serious investigation of the reading materials. Even if a reading leaves you puzzled, be prepared to discuss your puzzlement and ask questions. If it becomes apparent to me that many students are not adequately preparing for class, I will start giving quizzes.

Active participation in and meaningful contributions to class discussions, group work, and in-class assignments are necessary for earning a strong grade. Your physical presence in class will not guarantee full credit for participation. I will count substantial individual discussion with me about the course, the readings, and/or the assignments as part of your participation grade. Please feel free to stop by during my office hours or make a personal appointment with me. And keep in mind that just as significant and consistent participation can raise your participation grade, disruptive or inattentive behavior can lower your participation grade. All cell phones must be turned off and put away during class. Texting will negatively impact your grade.

## **Absences and Tardiness**

You are allowed **three** absences during the semester, though I strongly recommend that you strive for perfect attendance. You should save these freebie absences in case of an emergency or illness. Because class involves discussion, it is often difficult to summarize what you have missed during a given period; thus, it is best to attend every class. Each additional absence after three will lower your final grade by **one-third** of a letter grade—that is, a B will drop to a B-, a B- to a C+, etc. After six absences, you are subject to failure and may wish to withdraw from the course and retake it under better circumstances.

Coming late to class three times is equivalent to a full absence. If at the beginning of the term you anticipate having difficulty making it to class on time (due to another class or responsibility), please see me as soon as possible. Tardiness of twenty or more minutes qualifies as a full absence. Leaving class early will also count against your attendance record.

If you are absent, please refer to our Blackboard site (handouts distributed in class will be posted there), ask a classmate for a recap, and then see me with any questions or concerns. Even if you are not in class, your assignments must be submitted on time. It is your responsibility to make sure that I receive them, either by emailing them to me or placing them in my department mailbox (in CL 501). I will do my best to accommodate extenuating circumstances, so please communicate them to me as soon as possible. Documented excuses, such as doctors' notes, must be submitted to me on the day that you return to class after your absence.

## **Writing Assignments, Late Submissions, and Grading**

This course is writing-intensive, so you should expect to do a lot of writing throughout the semester. We will practice writing in several forms, some creative and experimental, some analytic, some short, and some long(er). Assignments will include discussion board (DB) posts, writing experiments, essays, and in-class activities. Some assignments will require revision. You must meet

an assignment's minimum length requirements in order to receive an adequate grade on it. You are always welcome to write more than the minimum, but keep in mind that more writing does not necessarily mean stronger writing. Here is a general breakdown of your grade for the course:

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Discussion Board Posts (5 total) | 20% |
| Writing Experiments (3 total)    | 15% |
| Essays (4 total)                 | 50% |
| Participation and In-Class Work  | 15% |

DB posts and in-class activities are designed to help you prepare for class discussion and essay assignments. I encourage you to use them to ask questions and to brainstorm ideas and strategies for essays. Devoting time and care to them will pay off as you move onto the essay assignments; you can even reuse and revise pieces from your DB posts and in-class writing in your essays. You will often complete DB posts before we have fully discussed a reading together in class, so they are likely to be exploratory and somewhat tentative. I welcome questions and possibilities, rather than entirely developed positions. Still, I want to see careful attention to the reading materials: critical thinking, quotation, and attention to detail rather than broad generalizations. I expect you to read or at least skim several of your classmates' posts before class, and I encourage you to respond to a classmate's ideas in your own post. DB posts must be at least 300 words. They are always due to Blackboard by 10:00 pm on the night before the class in which they will be discussed. I ask that you also print out each DB post and submit it in class the day after it is due, so that I can provide comments. (You can print it from Blackboard or Word). If I do not receive a hard copy from you, I will not provide feedback on your post.

Several days before an essay is due, I may ask you to bring some planning work to class, such as some notes outlining your ideas. These assignments count as in-class writing and will usually be accompanied by some brainstorming work during the period, often in groups. Again, devoting time and care to these assignments will better prepare you to compose your essays. In addition, several experimental writing assignments will offer you new ways of understanding and relating to our reading materials. These too may help you plan your essays and other writing assignments.

You will receive detailed information about each assignment in separate handouts. You must complete all writing assignments in order to pass this course. All writing must be submitted on time: late submissions cannot become part of discussion, nor can I return them promptly with feedback. Late assignments, including rough drafts, will be docked a full letter grade for each calendar day that they are late. Again, please communicate any extraordinary circumstances to me as soon as possible.

I follow Pitt's guidelines for letter grades:

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| A | superior attainment    |
| B | meritorious attainment |
| C | adequate attainment    |
| D | minimal attainment     |
| F | failure                |

Please note that "meritorious" means commendable or praiseworthy: a B, in other words, reflects well-written work, not an average result. Part of our work in this course will be to locate pieces of writing that deserve praise and to identify reasons why.

I encourage you to discuss your writing with me at any point during the semester, whether you are planning for an upcoming assignment, composing a draft, or wondering about a grade that you earned. You will receive my feedback on drafts of your first two essays, as well as feedback from your peers. Although I will not grade your drafts (just your revisions), they still must meet minimum requirements or else will negatively affect your essay grade. During the second half of the semester, you will not receive formal feedback from me on your drafts, though again, I encourage you to discuss your writing with me in-person. If you are not satisfied with your grade on a revision, you may continue revising it and resubmit it to me **within two weeks** of receiving the grade. I will then grade the revision and average it with the previous grade.

### **Academic Integrity**

Remember to cite whenever you write about another person's text, even if you are paraphrasing and not quoting it directly. Use MLA style to document all sources, including those that we read together as a class. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to document your sources, please speak with me or a consultant at the Writing Center, refer to your guidelines on MLA style, or visit this website: [http://www.englishlit.pitt.edu/lit\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.englishlit.pitt.edu/lit_plagiarism.html). Students suspected of violating Pitt's Policy on Academic Integrity will be required to participate in a procedural process that I will initiate. Students who plagiarize will receive a failing grade on the assignment, and the Dean's office may impose additional consequences.

### **English Department Policy on Multiple Submissions**

Without written permission from each instructor, you may not submit a paper or project—or versions of a paper or project—to fulfill the requirements of more than one course. If you plan to substantially revise a project or paper from one course to fulfill the requirements in a subsequent course, you must first ask permission of the instructor who would receive the revision.

### **Writing Center**

The Writing Center, in 317B of O'Hara Street Student Center (at 4024 O'Hara Street), is an excellent (and free) resource for working on your writing with an experienced consultant. Although consultants will not "correct" your writing for you, they can offer guidance and support in helping you to brainstorm, organize, edit, and revise your writing. Consultants can work with you on a one-time basis, or they can work with you throughout the term. You can schedule appointments at <http://www.rich36.com/pitt/>. The Writing Center has a website at <http://www.composition.pitt.edu/writingcenter/index.html>.

### **Additional Services**

Pitt offers a number of services to help students who are struggling either academically or personally. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact me as well as the Office of Disability Resources and Services (in 140 William Pitt Union or at 412-648-7890) as early as possible in the term. Pitt also offers free counseling at the Counseling Center in 334 William Pitt Union (412-648-7930), for students who are experiencing personal or emotional difficulties.

## Schedule of Readings and Major Assignments

**Note:** This schedule may change with advanced notice. If you are ever unsure when an assignment is due, please contact me. You will receive detailed information about each assignment in a separate handout, and you may occasionally receive additional homework. \* indicates that a reading is available on Blackboard.

### 1. Introduction & Reading Poetry with *De/Compositions*

| Week | Date      | Readings & Assignments Due   |
|------|-----------|--|
| 1    | Mon. 1/7  | --   |
|      | Wed. 1/9  | *Williams, "Literature"<br>Prepare your literary/non-literary lists (see assignment sequence for details)          |
|      | Fri. 1/11 | In Snodgrass: Foreword, Introduction, Spires p. 8-11, Creeley p. 26-27   |
| 2    | Mon. 1/14 | DB Post #1 due Sun. 1/13 by 10:00 pm<br>In Snodgrass: Ransom p. 50-51, Shakespeare p. 52-53, Hardy p. 68-69        |
|      | Wed. 1/16 | In Snodgrass: Dickinson p. 80-81, Cummings p. 114-117, Fulton p. 124-125   |
|      | Fri. 1/18 | In Snodgrass: Stephens p. 178-179, Williams p. 208-209, Larkin p. 232-233<br><b>Last day to add/drop</b>           |
| 3    | Mon. 1/21 | <b>MLK Jr. Day: no class</b>   |
|      | Wed. 1/23 | DB Post #2 due Tues. 1/22 by 10:00 pm  |
|      | Fri. 1/25 | Bring to class your chosen poem and any materials needed to start planning your Essay #1 (see assignment sequence) |
| 4    | Mon. 1/28 | Essay #1 draft due Sun. 1/27 by 10:00 pm via email   |
|      | Wed. 1/30 | Bring a hard copy of your Essay #1 draft to class for peer review  |
|      | Fri. 2/1  | *Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"  |
|      |           | <i>Essay #1 revision + reflection will be due Mon. 2/4 in class</i>  |

### 2. Toni Morrison, *Home*

| Week | Date      | Readings & Assignments Due   |
|------|-----------|--|
| 5    | Mon. 2/4  | Essay #1 revision + reflection due in class<br>Bring your copy of <i>Home</i> to class |
|      | Wed. 2/6  | <i>Home</i> p. 1-37  |
|      | Fri. 2/8  | DB Post #3 due Thurs. 2/7 by 10:00 pm<br><i>Home</i> p. 38-69                          |
| 6    | Mon. 2/11 | <i>Home</i> p. 70-116  |
|      | Wed. 2/13 | Bring a laptop or tablet to class and prepare your list of references & contexts       |
|      | Fri. 2/15 | Finish <i>Home</i><br>Bring to class your planning work for Essay #2                   |
| 7    | Mon. 2/18 | Essay #2 draft due Sun. 2/17 by 10:00 pm via email                                     |
|      | Wed. 2/20 | Bring a copy of your Essay #2 draft to class for peer review                           |
|      |           | <i>Essay #2 revision + reflection will be due Mon. 2/25 in class</i>                   |

### **3. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther***

| Week | Date      | Readings & Assignments Due  |
|------|-----------|---|
| 7    | Fri. 2/22 | <i>Werther</i> p. 1-23  |
| 8    | Mon. 2/25 | Essay #2 revision + reflection due in class<br><i>Werther</i> p. 23-44  |
|      | Wed. 2/27 | <i>Werther</i> p. 44-68   |
|      | Fri. 3/1  | DB Post #4 due Thurs. 2/28 by 10:00 pm<br><i>Werther</i> p. 68-88   |
| 9    | Mon. 3/4  | Finish <i>Werther</i>   |
|      | Wed. 3/6  | --  |
|      | Fri. 3/8  | Bring to class <u>two</u> copies of a partial draft (at least 2 pages) of Essay #3<br><b>Deadline for monitored withdrawals</b> |
|      | 3/11 - 15 | <b>No classes: Spring Break ☺</b>   |
| 10   | Mon. 3/18 | --  |
|      | Wed. 3/20 | Essay #3 revision + reflection due in class   |
|      | Fri. 3/22 | Bring your copies of <i>Home</i> <u>and</u> <i>Werther</i> to class   |
| 11   | Mon. 3/25 | Writing Experiment #1 due in class  |

### **4. Reality Hunger, (Un)Originality, and Textual Reuse**

| Week | Date      | Readings & Assignments Due  |
|------|-----------|---|
| 11   | Wed. 3/27 | <i>Reality Hunger</i> p. 1-44   |
|      | Fri. 3/29 | DB Post #5 due Thurs. 3/28 by 10:00 pm<br><i>Reality Hunger</i> p. 45-80          |
| 12   | Mon. 4/1  | <i>Reality Hunger</i> p. 81-125   |
|      | Wed. 4/3  | Writing Experiment #2 (first annotation) due by class time                        |
|      | Fri. 4/5  | <i>Reality Hunger</i> p. 126-165  |
| 13   | Mon. 4/8  | Writing Experiment #3 (second annotation) due by class time                       |
|      | Wed. 4/10 | Finish <i>Reality Hunger</i>  |
|      | Fri. 4/12 | Bring to class 2 planning paragraphs for Essay #4 (see assignment sequence)       |
| 14   | Mon. 4/15 | --  |
|      | Wed. 4/17 | Essay #4 draft due Tues. 4/16 by 10:00 pm via email                               |
|      | Fri. 4/19 | Bring your draft of Essay #4 to class for peer review                             |
|      |           | <i>Essay #4 revision + reflection will be due Wed. 4/24 by 10:00 pm via email</i> |

Class will not meet during finals week. Have a wonderful summer!