

ENG-L 202
Literary Interpretation
TR 8:30 to 9:45am (KO 101)
Fall 2015
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Instructor: Dr. Paul Cook
Office: KO 238-D¹
Office Hours:
Tuesdays, 10:00am to 12:00pm or virtually any time by appointment, Canvas, e-mail, etc.



Literary Interpretation (ENG-L 202)

Literary Interpretation introduces students to the major theoretical movements, thinkers, and concepts of 20th and early-21st century critical and literary theory, with a special focus on how what we call “critical theory” has impacted the production, reception, and interpretation of “capital-L” Literature since the mid-20th century.

The focus of this course is different from a traditional theory course. Rather than obsessing over individual theorists, thinkers, and schools of thought (i.e., deconstructionists and the New Critics versus Marxists feminists and Roland Barthes or Michel Foucault or whatnot), this course is organized around concepts and sites—life, politics, texts, difference/s, culture, space, and ideology. The idea is to show students how scholars in literary studies, rhetoric and communication, and even the broader arena of the humanities and social sciences have colonized, poached, expanded, domesticated, and even radically altered the insights and advances of critical theory.

So, what does all of this mean?

For starters, it means that in addition to learning about different ways of approaching and interpreting literary texts, you will also learn different ways of *understanding*. That is, we will explore non-traditional perspectives on such familiar concepts as life and (self-)identity; gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality; politics and competing visions about what is good and just; and even space and time. To that end, we will read literature, but this is not exactly a Literature course. Rather, this is a course in which literary texts are only as important as their capacity to function as a window onto different means of exploring the world.

By the end of the semester, you will be able to

Your proficiency with these skills will be assessed through

¹ I actively encourage all of my students to visit me during office hours as often as they like. I look forward to meeting each of you and talking about your drafts and your performance in the course—whether in person or online. My office is located on the second floor of the front side of the Main Building (KO). As you walk in the front doors (the main entrance), take a hard right and ascend the stairs. At the top of the stairs, simply turn left and walk all the way down the corridor to the Main Office for the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. My office is right inside the Main Office on the right—**KO 238-D**.

▪ read literary and theoretical texts in a more active, engaged, and scholarly way;	▪ course readings, exams, discussion posts, quizzes
▪ apply different critical and theoretical lenses to literary texts;	▪ course readings, exams, discussion posts, quizzes
▪ demonstrate proficiency in close readings of varied forms of art and texts;	▪ course readings, exams, discussion posts, ICWs
▪ trace and discuss the development of major concepts in critical theory and literary studies;	▪ course readings, exams, discussion posts, ICWs
▪ use critical thinking, research, analysis, and synthesis to construct a cogent, well-written argument.	▪ course readings, exams, discussion posts, ICWs

Textbooks

Nealon, Jeffrey and Susan Searls Giroux. *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. Print.

Kelly, Joseph, ed. *The Seagull Reader: Literature*. 2005. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 2015. (Purchase all three volumes.)

I will post **required** readings and handouts to Canvas. Everything I hand out in class will also be posted to Canvas, and these readings typically will be in .pdf format. Print out all readings and *always* read actively with a pen or pencil in hand.

As soon as possible, you will also need...

*to set up your [IU Box account](#) so you can save readings, research, and drafts of your work in safe, secure cloud storage. If you've never used IU Box before, simply click on the hyperlink in the previous sentence (hold down the Ctrl key and click with your mouse) and log in to your IU Box account with your IUK username and passphrase. This will take you right to your IU Box account. From there, it's fairly self-explanatory: you can create new folders and upload files just as in Windows or MS Word.

** a sturdy notebook, lots of paper, good pens and pencils, and access to a reliable computer. Also, I assume that you will have a *basic* working knowledge of (and access to) MSWord, PowerPoint, e-mail, Canvas, and Adobe Reader. For a detailed user's guide to Canvas, go to <https://kb.iu.edu/d/bcll>.

***access to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The *OED* is available for all IUK students through our [library](#). Simply go to the "Databases A to Z" link and click on the letter "O."

Assignments and Grading

Exams (50%)

We will have one midterm exam in Week 8 and one cumulative final exam at the end of the semester covering all sixteen weeks of material. Each exam is worth 25% of the final grade.

Quizzes (15%)

Most weeks you will complete a short quiz, either in class or on Canvas. These will typically be brief, five-item quizzes designed to test your reading comprehension and to reward those who are keeping up with the readings *and* reading actively. Active, engaged reading is key to your success not only on quizzes and ICWs, but also in terms of your overall development as a student-scholar.

Class Participation (15%)

You will receive two class participation grades: one at around midterm (Week 8) and the other at the end of the semester (Week 16); this way, if necessary, you can work to bring up your midterm participation grade by actively participating in the second half of the semester.

Baseline (“C”-level) participation requirements are that you come to class every time we meet, complete ICWs, take notes, and complete all assigned readings and in-class activities. Contributing thoughtful comments and asking questions will raise your participation grade to a “B.” Consistently contributing interesting and insightful comments and ideas and providing leadership in class discussions will earn an “A.”

Discussions, ICWs (in-class writings), & ICAs (in-class activities) (20%)

We will have frequent discussions via Canvas on whatever concept or issue we’re covering for a specific class, unit, or set of readings. For detailed information regarding discussion posts, length, format/style, and other requirements, please see the handout “Guidelines for Discussions” in the Files tab in Canvas. For due dates, prompts, and other information, please see the schedule below. ***All out of class work is due in Canvas before 11:30pm EDT on the due date.***

Readings

The weekly reading assignments in this course will be challenging and occasionally quite long. We will be reading texts ranging from contemporary academic scholarship on critical theory (e.g., *The Theory Toolbox*, as well as handouts and supplemental readings) to what I call “capital L” Literature (e.g., short stories, poems, and plays) and even some pretty “far out” stuff. These readings are fun and exciting, but they will require you to practice a mode of patient, careful, *attentive* reading to which you may not yet be accustomed.

For instance, when you come across a word you don’t understand, look it up in an online dictionary (the *Oxford English Dictionary* is best and free for IU students through iuk.edu/library); when you find a concept or reference with which you’re unfamiliar, look it up on Wikipedia and read the entry until the passage you’re wrestling with starts to make sense. Mark any and all passages in your books that you would like to discuss in class, that you think are particularly noteworthy, or that don’t make sense to you. We will discuss these passages in class. In short, you will need to read closely, carefully, and *slowly*.

You should expect to *read*—in the manner I’ve just briefly described—between 50 *and* 75 pages for each class meeting. And a few times the reading load will be heavier. Please get into a weekly if not daily reading habit that works for you and stick to it. This will be key to your success and learning in this course. If ever you have any questions or concerns about our readings, please don’t hesitate to let me know.

*****A final note on the readings and screenings:** Some of the texts and films we’re reading and viewing this semester contain explicit language, frank discussions and depictions of sexuality and violence, as well as challenges to religion, tradition, and the status quo. Further, almost everything we read this semester will challenge dominant or traditional ways of looking at the world. If you think you might be offended or put-off by this content, then this course may not be for you. You will have many other opportunities to fulfill your English and critical thinking GenEd requirements.

Attendance and Participation

While there will be some lecture in this course, this is definitely *not* a lecture-only course. Ongoing, stimulating class discussions and in-class group activities are vital to the success of this course and to your overall learning experience. In short, it's important that you come to class regularly, complete all assigned readings each week, take time to reflect on what you've read (and then go back and re-read), take careful notes on the readings (in your notebook and textbook), ask questions, and participate actively and enthusiastically in class discussions and in-class exercises.

When you miss class, you miss important information, activities, ideas, ICWs, instructions, videos, interactions, etc. that simply can't be "made up." (It's sort of like missing a birthday party or celebratory dinner and then asking everyone to reconstruct the experience for you in words or e-mails. Like other social phenomena, classroom learning just doesn't work that way.)

Furthermore, when you miss class, your classmates and I miss your input and ideas. **If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what we covered in class and for submitting in advance any assignments due on that day.** I reserve the right to change the course schedule at any time, and it is your responsibility to stay on top of these changes. If ever you do miss class, you should use the "Questions about the Course" Discussion in the "Discussions" tab in Canvas to find out what you missed. See "**Getting in touch with me...and each other**" below for more information.

Your course grade will drop by one letter grade (10%) if you miss *more than 10%* of our classes (or **4 class periods**; the penalty is exacted on the *fourth* absence); you will automatically fail the course if you miss *more than 20%* of our classes (or **8 class periods**). If an emergency or some other significant, unplanned life event forces you to miss several class periods, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss your options. Just to simplify: you can miss up to **3 class meetings for any reason** without receiving a penalty. Beyond that you will receive a penalty for another absence *for any reason*. Please don't miss more than 3 class meetings.

Phones, Technology, and Other Distractions

Here's the straight dope on mobile phones, folks: *be courteous and sensible* with your smart phones, laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices. You might think you have to be imminently available to everyone in your social network, family, neighborhood, whatever, or that you constantly have to be checking your e-mail, texts, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, or whatnot, but you really don't.

There are important, practical advantages to be gained by "unplugging," by experiencing the passage of time as well as conversation and interaction the way previous generations did: face-to-face and in real-time. Opportunities to unplug from the matrix are increasingly rare; let's pledge to use our time together this summer for discussion, reflection, and exploration, not Candy Crush Saga and idle Facebook stalking.

Late Assignments

Late work will not be accepted under most circumstances. If a *bona fide* emergency forces you to miss class, please let me know as soon as is reasonable so that we can discuss your options.

Getting in touch with me...and each other

You will have several avenues of communication for this course:

- If you have **general questions about the course** (assignments, due dates, course policies, etc.), please post your questions on the "Questions about the Course" Discussion in the "Discussions" tab. I will check this Discussion

regularly (usually twice a day from Monday through Friday and at least once on the weekend) and answer any questions you may have. If you have a question that concerns the entire class, please use this space.

- “The Coffee House Lounge” site in the Discussions tab will be an **informal space for you to meet your fellow students** and get to know one another over the course of the semester. This is a **social gathering place**. I will not monitor this site on a regular basis unless students express concern to me about the content being posted.
- If you have questions of an **individual or personal nature** that you do not wish to share with the rest of the class, you can contact me by sending a message through the message center in Canvas (in the “Messages” tab). ***This is the best way to get in touch with me.*** You are also always welcome to visit me in my office (during and outside of office hours), call me in my office during office hours (765/455.9229), or call me at home on my cell (803/479.6597) before 9:00pm on weekdays. I want to discuss the class and your work with you, and utilizing office hours is an excellent way for us to address any concerns you might have about the class, your progress or performance, and/or any of your questions about the course material and your projects and interests.

Technical Requirements and Troubleshooting

This course requires that you have access to the IU Kokomo computer network, access to the Canvas course management system, and some basic familiarity with Canvas. The IU Kokomo Instructional Technology department (IT) provides guidelines for hardware and software for all students. This course requires primarily word processing (MS Word 2007, 2010, or 2013), printing capabilities, and access to Canvas. See <http://iware.indiana.edu> for free downloads and discount prices on hardware and software exclusively for IU students.

IU also offers students, faculty, and staff free access to Lynda.com tutorials on everything from MS Word 2013 to the latest version of Dreamweaver. To access Lynda.com, follow this [link](#), scroll down and click on the Lynda.com link. This is a subscription service, so you must access Lynda.com through the IUK website.

Students should contact the IU Kokomo Helpdesk with technical questions. The Helpdesk offers technical support to faculty, staff, and students for all IT-related requests. The Helpdesk provides assistance to users, as well as maintains a tracking system that places each user’s request into a queue. You can send an e-mail request to the Helpdesk at kohelp@iuk.edu or call 765/455.9315. Local phone and walk-up support at the Helpdesk in the Library is available Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm. If you’re having any technical difficulties, please contact both me and the Helpdesk right away so we can get your problem solved.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

“A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statements of another person without an appropriate acknowledgement. A student must give due credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever he or she does any of the following: (a) quotes another person’s actual words, either oral or written; (b) paraphrases another person’s words, either oral or written; (c) uses another person’s idea, theory, or material unless information is common knowledge.” Source: Indiana University Code of Student Ethics. (Note that “intent” is not a factor here.)

“Double dipping,” or submitting a writing project for two or more courses (whether they’re IUK courses or not), constitutes plagiarism and will result in a grade of zero and possible disciplinary action. If you have an idea for a writing project from another class that you would like to further develop in this class, please consult with me. I’m more than willing to help you develop your ideas and plan writing projects that will do work for you, but simply *submitting the same essay for multiple classes is not acceptable under any circumstances*.

Knowing the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable uses of other’s work, texts, or ideas can be tricky sometimes, and we will spend some time in class discussing the boundaries of acceptable use, the nature of research, and when, where, and how to appropriately document source materials.

Writing Center (Student Success Center: Library)

Don't forget to utilize the Writing Center that your tuition dollars support! The IU Kokomo Writing Center is open Monday through Thursday, 9am to 7pm, Friday, 10am to 2pm, and Saturday, 12:30 to 4:30pm. Remember, many of IU Kokomo's best students understand that seeking out a response to their writing is a necessary part of the learning/writing process. Several of the staff who presently work in the Writing Center have or are currently working toward teaching credentials, and many are graduate students. Stop by or call for a 30-minute appointment: 765/455.9425, Option #1.

You can now instant message the tutors your quick questions (grammar, citing, etc.) using campus contacts. Visit our [website](#) where you can

- Ask a more detailed question online by using Ask a Tutor email option.
- See a list of *Grammar Girl* podcasts on hundreds of usage and other English language concerns.
- Discover which helpful documents and other sources are available at the Center.
- Find out when your favorite tutor is scheduled to work.

Student Accessibility Services

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities (e.g., mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision neurological, etc.). You must have established your eligibility for support services through the appropriate office that services students with disabilities. Note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place, and are not retroactive; captions and alternate media for print materials may take three or more weeks to get produced. Please contact your campus office as soon as possible if accommodations are needed. Find your office at <http://ada.iu.edu/students/index.shtml>.

Students requiring accommodations for disabilities or special needs should contact the [Office of Accessibility Services](#). Don't wait until the middle or end of the semester to take care of these issues; if you have a documented disability, please don't hesitate to let me know as soon as possible.

Course Schedule

I reserve the right to alter reading assignments and due dates depending on how quickly we're moving and other considerations. I will *always* give advance notice of any changes to the course schedule through a Canvas announcement and, wherever possible, during class meetings.

T, 8/25: Course introductions, ice-breakers, What is theory? How do we know what we know?

R, 8/27: *Toolbox*, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-8)

Unit I: Authorship & Identity ([Short Stories](#))

T, 9/01: "What Are Stories?" (pp. xi-xviii) and Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado" (pp. 390-397)

R, 9/03: "What Are Stories?" (pp. xviii-xxvii) and *Toolbox*, Chapter 2 (pp. 9-20)

T, 9/08: O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (pp. 352-68)

R, 9/10: *Toolbox*, Chapter 3 (pp. 21-34)

T, 9/15: Silko, “Yellow Woman” (pp. 437-47)

*R, 9/17: Library Resources Day: meet in front of IU Kokomo library (KA) at 8:25am

T, 9/22: *Toolbox*, Chapter 4 (pp. 35-50)

R, 9/24: Carver, “Cathedral” (pp. 61-76)

Unit II: History & Culture (Plays)

T, 9/29: “Major Moments in the History of Theater” (pp. xxvii-xxxvii) and Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (pp. 3-12) and *Toolbox*, Chapter 5 (pp. 51-69)

R, 10/01: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (pp. 12-20)

T, 10/06: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (pp. 21-33) and *Toolbox*, Chapter 5 (pp. 70-91)

R, 10/08: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (pp. 33-39)

T, 10/13: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (pp. 39-53) and *Toolbox*, Chapter 7 (pp. 107-20)

R, 10/15: Midterm Exam review

T, 10/20: Fall Recess (no class)

***R, 10/22: Midterm Exam (25%)**

Unit III: Ideology & Difference/s (Poetry)

T, 10/27: Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California” (129-30) and *Toolbox*, Chapter 6 (pp. 93-105)

R, 10/29: Poe, “The Raven” (pp. 248-53) and Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin” (pp. 97-99)

T, 11/03: *Toolbox*, Chapter 10 (pp. 171-89)

R, 11/05: *Toolbox*, Chapter 10 (pp. 189-205)

T, 11/10: *Toolbox*, Chapter 8 (pp. 121-37)

R, 11/12: Olds, “Sex without Love” (pp. 233-34)

T, 11/17: Rich, “Diving into the Wreck” (pp. 259-62)

R, 11/19: Film Screening and Stevens, “The Emperor of Ice Cream” (pp. 308-309)

T, 11/24: Film Screening, continued

R, 11/26: Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)

Unit IV: Life & Biopolitics

T, 12/01: *Toolbox*, Chapter 11 (pp. 207-21)

R, 12/03: *Toolbox*, Chapter 11 (pp. 221-28)

T, 12/08: TBA

R, 12/10: Course evaluations, Final Exam review, Pizza!

Final Exam (25%): Thursday, 12/17 from 8:30 to 9:45am in KO 101