

ENG-L 202 (#1861)  
 Literary Interpretation  
 MW 9am to 12:15pm (KO 105)  
 Summer I 2017  
 paulcook@iuk.edu

Dr. Paul Cook  
[Office: KO 238-D](#)  
 Office Hours:  
 W, 1 to 3pm  
 and anytime by appointment.



*Pic credit: Critical-theory.com*

## Literary Interpretation (ENG-L 202: #1861)

**Literary Interpretation** introduces you to the major theoretical movements, thinkers, and concepts of 20th and early-21st century critical and literary theory, with a special focus on how key concepts like authorship/originality, textuality/reading, history, and even identity are useful for analyzing literary works. We also cover the “basics” of literary interpretation: theme, plot, character, setting, narrative style, metaphor/simile/metonymy, literary devices, figurative language of all kinds, and much more. Last but not least, we read and explore the three “classic” genres of Literature: short stories, poems, and plays.

The organizational focus of this course is different from a traditional theory or "intro to literary interpretation" course. Rather than obsessing over individual theorists, thinkers, and schools of thought, this course is organized around concepts—author/ity, politics, texts, difference/s, history, culture, and ideology. The idea is to show you how scholars in literary studies, rhetoric and communication, and even the broader arena of the humanities and social sciences have colonized, expanded, and even radically altered the insights and advances of critical theory.

*So, what does all of this mean?*

First, it means that in addition to learning about different ways of approaching and interpreting literary texts, you will also learn different ways of *understanding*. We will explore non-traditional perspectives on such familiar concepts as life and (self-)identity; gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality; and even politics and competing visions about what is good and just. 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 our “windows” to 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***

▪ 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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use critical thinking, research, analysis, and synthesis to construct a cogent, well-written argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ course readings, exams, discussion posts, ICWs</li> </ul>
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## 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.

Lawn, Beverly, ed. *40 Short Stories: A Portable Anthology*. 5th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. Print.

Frequently, I will post **required** readings and handouts to Canvas in the Files tab and via regular announcements. 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.

## Assignments and Grading

### Discussions, ICWs (in-class writing), and ICAs (in-class activities) (20%)

We will have frequent discussions via Canvas and in-class writings and group activities 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.

**\*Important reminder: All out of class work is due in Canvas before 11:30pm EDT on the due date.**

### Final Exam (30%)

We will have one cumulative final exam at the end of the semester covering all six weeks of material. Be sure to start out on the right foot by taking good notes and participating actively in class discussions, activities, and readings.

### Quizzes (15%)

Most class meetings starting with Day 2 you will be asked to complete a short quiz, either in class or on Canvas. These are 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. For more information on active reading, see the handout in the Files tab in Canvas and the section below on "Readings and How to Read Actively."

### Class Participation (15%)

You will receive two class participation grades: one at around midterm (Week 3) and the other at the end of the semester (Week 6). **Baseline ("C"-level or 70) 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" (80) Consistently contributing interesting and insightful comments and ideas and providing academic leadership in class discussions will earn an "A" (90 or 100).

### Close Reading / Literary Analysis & Presentation (20%)

One of the most valuable skills I can teach you in this brief semester is how to close read (literary) texts and present your interpretation and analysis to others in a professional manner. Our first class meeting will get us started practicing close reading and before long you'll be well on your way.

Starting in **Week 3** (see schedule below), we will be treated to a couple of student presentations per class meeting. Each presentation will take roughly 10 to 12 minutes, including a brief question & answer session. Everyone should notify me of their top 3 preferences for presentation dates via Canvas message no later than **11:30pm EDT on Monday, 5/22**. You must notify me of your choice of text no less than one week (7 days) prior to your presentation date. When you notify me of your choice, also include 2-3 brief paragraphs (3 to 5 sentences per paragraph) explaining (1) why you chose the text; (2) what you already know about the text and what you need to learn about it; and (3) what you plan to do with the text in your presentation. Vague, wishy-washy, or lazy responses will be returned for further elaboration, so take your time with these and be sure to ask questions as they come up. Supplementary handouts and materials regarding this assignment are located in the Files tab in Canvas.

## **Readings and How to Read Actively**

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 at [www.iuk.edu/library](http://www.iuk.edu/library)). When you find a concept or reference with which you’re unfamiliar, look it up on Wikipedia.org and read the entry until the passage you’re wrestling with starts to make sense. (\*Pro Tip: Wikipedia can be a useful active reading resource, but it is not [yet] considered a fully-credible research resource and is in no way a scholarly source.) 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 *25 to 50 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, screenings, and discussions:** Some of the texts and films we’re reading and viewing this semester contain explicit language, frank discussions and depictions of sexuality and violence, political and racial themes, as well as challenges to religion, traditional sources of authority, and the socio-cultural 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, please arrange to speak with me as soon as possible about some options.

## **Attendance and Participation in a Summer Course**

This is a six-week summer course, which means that we meet a grand total of 12 times (11, actually, because of Memorial Day). Since we are covering ***exactly the same material***, completing ***the same number of assignments***, and ***earning the same credit hours (3.0)*** as a traditional, 16-week course, each class you miss this summer is equivalent to missing 3 classes in a regular semester. Tell me something: would you casually miss two weeks of class in a regular semester and then ask your instructor, “Did I miss anything important?” or expect to do well or “catch up”? (I’m hoping the answer is “no.”)

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 each time we meet, 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 2 class meetings**); you will fail the course if you miss more than 25% of our classes (**3 class periods**). If a *bona fide* emergency forces you to miss several class periods, or if you have a nonrefundable vacation package or something, you need to speak with me as soon as possible. Excessive, annoying lateness will not be tolerated.

## Phones and other distractions

Here's the straight dope on mobile devices, 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. [Research suggests](#) that students who leave their mobile devices and laptops in their bags actually perform better academically. 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) or even call me in my office during office hours (765/455.9229).
- I want to discuss the class and your work with you, and using my 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 Student Accessibility Services

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 or newer), printing capabilities, and access to Canvas. See <http://iware.iu.edu> for free downloads and discount prices on hardware and software exclusively for IU students.

Students should contact the IU Kokomo Helpdesk with any and all technical questions. The Helpdesk offers superb 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](mailto: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.

Students requiring accommodations for disabilities or special needs should contact the [IU Kokomo Office of Accessibility Services](#). If you have a documented disability on file, it is imperative that you let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss arrangements for your success in this course.

## Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

The Indiana University Code of Student Ethics states, “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.” (Note that “intent” is not a factor here.)

**“Double dipping,”** or submitting a writing project for two or more courses (whether they’re IU Kokomo 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 (Library)

Don't forget to utilize the Writing Center! The IU Kokomo Writing Center is an excellent resource for any writing assignment from any class at any stage of the writing process. The Writing Center is open this summer on Mondays and Tuesdays from 10am to 5pm—[check the website](#) for more detailed information. Remember, many of IU Kokomo's very best students understand that seeking out a response to their writing is a necessary part of the learning and writing process. Stop by or call for a 30-minute appointment: 765/455.9425, Option #1.

## 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 face-to-face class meetings.

### Unit I: Why “Theory”? What Is Theory?

**Monday, 5/15:** Close reading, reading actively, and the five analytic moves (handouts), course introductions, ice-breakers. What the heck is theory? Why do we love stories so much? Preview Ch. 1: “Why Theory?” in *The Theory Toolbox* (you will read this for Wednesday’s class meeting). Time-permitting: [“Believe” \(The Oatmeal\)](#) and “the interpretive situation.”

Homework:

- ***If you haven't yet, get the textbooks!***
- Read Ch. 1 (“Why Theory?”) in *The Theory Toolbox*.
- Read “The Emperor of Ice Cream,” by Wallace Stevens. Click [here](#) for a link to the poem. Look up any and all unfamiliar words or references and jot down a brief definition on your handout.
- Start reading through the short stories in Beverly Lawn’s *40 Short Stories* and think about a short story you would like to close read, analyze, and present for your Close Reading Literary Analysis & Presentation assignment.
- Read “Guidelines for Discussions” (Canvas, in the Files tab)
- **\*Discussion#1:** Post your completed close reading activity to the appropriate Discussion space in Canvas before 11:30pm EDT on Tuesday, 5/16.

### Unit II: Authors & Author/ity

**Wednesday, 5/17:** What is an author, anyway?

Homework:

- Read “Reading Short Stories Closely” on pp. 481-487 in *40 Short Stories*
- Read O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” in *40 Short Stories*
- Read Ch. 2 (“Author/ity”) in *The Theory Toolbox*
- **\*Discussion#2:** Working Question on p. 15 in *The Theory Toolbox* (post to Canvas before 11:30pm EDT on Sunday, 5/22).

**Monday, 5/22:** Analyzing Literature, literary terms, the writing process, and in-class workshop on Close Reading Literary Analysis & Presentation assignments (20%)

Homework:

- Listen to the TED podcast [“What Is Original?”](#) (Be sure to listen to the entire podcast and take good notes!)
- Read handout/article on Flannery O’Connor (Canvas)
- Review and re-read Ch. 2 in *The Theory Toolbox*
- Read Ch. 3 (“Reading”) in *The Theory Toolbox*

**Wednesday, 5/24:** More short fiction!

Homework:

- Read Ch. 4 (“Subjectivity”) in *The Theory Toolbox*
- Read Marquez, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”
- Read Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues”
- **\*Discussion#3:** Proposal for Close Reading Literary Analysis & Presentation (see Canvas for more details; post to Canvas before 11:30pm EDT on Friday, 5/26).

## **Unit II: Subjectivity & Difference(s)**

**Monday, 5/29: No class (Memorial Day)**

**Wednesday, 5/31:** Short Fiction wrap-up, Close Reading Literary Analysis & Presentations (20%) begin today.

Homework:

- Read Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”
- Read Carver, “Cathedral”
- Read Ch. 10 (“Difference/s”) in *The Theory Toolbox*, pp. 171-84 only
- **\*Discussion#4:** Working Question on page 180 in *The Theory Toolbox*

**M, 6/05:** Intro to reading poetry, poetic terminology and devices, gender criticism

Homework:

- Read Ch. 10 (“Difference/s”), pp. 184-205
- Read Ch. 5 (“Culture”), pp. 51-70 only
- **Discussion#5:** \_\_\_\_\_

**W, 6/07:** More poetry!

Homework:

- Read Ch. 5 (“Culture”), pp. 70-91 in *The Theory Toolbox*
- Read Ch. 6 (“Ideology”) in *The Theory Toolbox*
- Read Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California” (Canvas)
- Read Hughes, “Theme for English B” (Canvas)
- **\*Discussion#6:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Unit III: Culture, Ideology, & History**

**M, 6/12:** Ideology: How do you get your opinions? Where do beliefs and ideas come from? [How do they spread?](#)

Homework:

- Read Ch. 7 (“History”) in *The Theory Toolbox*
- [Read August Wilson, Fences](#)
- \***Discussion#7:** \_\_\_\_\_

**W, 6/14:** Culture: A very big term with a long history. . .

Homework:

- Read August Wilson, *Fences*
- \***Discussion#8:** \_\_\_\_\_

**M, 6/19:** Culture, continued

Homework:

- Prepare for Final Exam review session: review all short stories, poems, and concepts in *The Theory Toolbox*

## **Unit IV: Bringing it all back home... (Semester Review & Exam)**

**W, 6/21:** Review for Final Exam, Film screening ([Fences, Dir. Denzel Washington, 2016](#)), semester wrap-up, course evaluations.

**\*M, 6/26:** Final Exam (30%) from 9:00am to 11:00am in our usual classroom (KO 105).