

English 420 – 001- Approaches to Literature

Spring 2014

Dr. Donna Dunbar-Odom

10-10:50, MWF

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Office: Hall of Languages 224

Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday, 9:30-10, 11-12 or by appointment

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Instructor Information: I love reading. I love books. I love talking about reading and books. This class is an introduction to the ways we structure our talk about what we read in the field of English Studies. We'll start by reading a book together, next we'll read a fun book about interpreting what we read—applying it to the book we've already read, and we'll finish up by talking about theoretical lenses used to interpret literature.

Required texts:

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (2nd edition) – Bedford/St. Martin's (2000)

How to Read Literature like a Professor by Thomas C. Foster – Harper (2003)

Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Culler – Oxford (1997 and 2011)

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Develop a repertoire of interpretive strategies to deepen your reading of literature.
- Be able to identify at least two common theoretical approaches to literary criticism.

Grading Policy

Your grade will be determined by your performance on weekly reading quizzes, participation in our discussion, 3 tests, attendance, and a final project.

At any time of the term, if you want to know where you stand grade-wise, just email me or come by my office. I'll be happy to give you a ballpark grade. And if you're in any kind of trouble grade-wise, you can be sure I'll let you know.

Grading Criteria

Weekly reading quizzes	30%
Class participation	15%
Attendance	15%
3 tests	30% (10% each)
Final project	10%

Course Policies and Procedures

Classroom activities:

The work we do in this class depends on your coming to class, every day, prepared to work. I count on you all to teach and learn from each other and to each be an important presence in our discussions.

I will do everything I can to make the atmosphere of our discussion a comfortable one; I do not tolerate disrespect, so you can rest assured that at no time will your comments be ridiculed or made fun of by me or anyone else in the class. I want this to be a place where intellectual inquiry is the norm. And if at any time you feel that someone has exhibited disrespect, let me know immediately. We should be able to challenge each other's reading and ideas in professional ways that stimulate discussion, not shut it down.

I'm always nervous that my humor will come across wrong or mean because I can be a tad on the sarcastic side. Let me know if you think I've been caustic or mean because I am never intentionally either of those—at least not in my classroom. :-)

Attendance: "Attendance" is mandatory. Do not disappear on me and then reappear without contacting me. I will not let you make up the work unless you experience something dire--and I don't wish that on anyone. If something is going on that's getting in the way of your class time, please let me know.

Late assignments: You must keep up with the reading. I will not accept late assignments unless you have received PRIOR permission from me. If you miss a weekly reading quiz, I will expect, in its place, a 4-page interpretive summary of that week's reading assignment—typed, double-spaced, carefully edited. Trust me: the quizzes will be MUCH easier. Missing other assignments such as the tests will result in similar (but longer) written assignments. If you experience truly exceptional circumstances (e.g. car wrecks, fires, and the like--God forbid), please contact me immediately.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of someone else's work. If I find a student has intentionally made use of another's work without giving that person credit, that student will fail the course. We will talk about this some in class because I want everyone to be clear on this. It's a big deal in my world.

It will be tempting to cut and paste from the internet for some of your responses. Do not. To do so without correct citation will result in an F for the entire course.

If at any time you find yourself overwhelmed by the work required or you find yourself confused, please contact me. Don't feel miserable all by yourself. Share the misery with me!

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for

reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library, Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Department: Apparently student behavior in some classes has deteriorated to the point that we have been asked to include statements about appropriate behavior in our course descriptions. Therefore, it is expected that you will be a civil and productive member of this class. Disruption of the class or the interference with other students' learning will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what is expected of you, please talk to me immediately. As I said above, disrespect of one's colleagues or of me will not be tolerated.

Tentative syllabus:

Week 1 – Jan. 13-17 – Introductions; what does it mean to do “close reading”; *Frankenstein* 28-40 (Letters I, II, III, IV)

Week 2 – Jan. 20-24 – Read *Frankenstein* 40-90; reading quiz

Week 3 – Jan 27-31 – Read 90-144; reading quiz

Week 4 – Feb. 2-7 – Read 144 – 189; reading quiz; Test 1

Week 5 – Feb. 10-14 – Read *How to Read Like a Literature Professor* xi-56; reading quiz; be ready to make applications to *Frankenstein*

Week 6 – Feb. 17-21 – Read *How to Read*. . . 57-124; reading quiz

Week 7 – Feb. 24-28 - Read *How to Read*. . . 125-200; reading quiz

Week 8 – Mar. 3-7 –Read 201-277; reading quiz; Test 2

Week 9 – Mar. 10-14 – SPRING BREAK!!

Week 10 – Mar. 17-22 – Overview of literary theory

Week 11 – Mar. 24-28 – *Literary Theory* 1-42; reading quiz

Week 12 – Mar. 31-Apr. 4 – *Lit Theory* 43-82; reading quiz

Week 13 –Apr. 7-11 – *Lit Theory* 43-82; reading quiz; Test 3

Week 14 – Apr. 14-18 – *Frankenstein* 262-295; reading quiz

Week 15 – Apr. 21-25 – *Frankenstein* 296-333, 334-349; reading quiz

Week 16 – Apr. 28-May 2 – Catch up; final project

Week 17 – May 5-9 – EXAM WEEK - Final project due