

English 295

Methods of Advanced Literary Studies

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Combs 335

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Office hours: MWF 12:00-1:00

TR 8:30-9:30

and by appointment

Fall 2013

Combs 111

section 05: 9:30-10:45 TR

section 06: 11:00-12:15 TR

Course Description

English 295, a required course for the English major, is an introduction to the rewarding complexities of studying literature. This course will introduce you to what literature scholars do and how we do it by immersing you in literary theory and its applications, offering a framework for understanding the historical evolution of literary studies, and introducing you to a range of approaches to the study of texts. Additionally, it will begin to provide you with skills for upper-level English classes such as appropriate library research, flexible analysis of genre, and writing commentary on literature. English 295 is, to be frank, a tremendous amount of work. But it also can be a fascinating inquiry into complex and fruitful ideas.

Like all courses that are designated **Writing Intensive**, English 295 works to reinforce the following learning goals:

Though preferred writing styles, formats, and tasks vary from one discipline or field to another, the faculty has agreed that effective formal writing emerges from attention to the following features (Learning Outcomes):

- **Ideas** (focused, substantial, clearly presented, sufficiently and appropriately elaborated with explanations, supporting details, and/or reasons or evidence)
- **Organization** (recognizable structure, logical sequence, clear transitions, purposeful)
- **An appropriate writer's voice** (tone, word choice, and degree of formality fit the context, communicates confidence in addressing readers' expectations, establishes credibility, a recognizable "persona" who "speaks")
- **Conventions of correctness and presentation** (editing reflects knowledge of conventions of punctuation, spelling, formatting, fair use of sources, documentation, etc.)

Our course will develop in two spaces: the classroom and our collaborative website, which can be accessed at <http://scanlon295f13@umwblogs.org> . Additionally, Canvas will be used for assignments and grades.

Required Texts

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*. Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Donald J. Gray. Third Edition.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. (Preferred edition: Scribner, preface by Matthew Brucoli.)

Murfin, Ross, and Supryia M. Ray. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. Third Edition.

Ruhl, Sarah. *Passion Play*.

Tretheway, Natasha. *Native Guard: Poems*.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. Second Edition. Routledge.

Course Requirements

Assigned Readings: This course has a demanding and constant reading load, often from very challenging texts. You should have completed assigned readings before class and should bring the necessary works to each meeting, including those from the blog (printed or on laptop). “Completing” the reading does not mean simply skimming your eyes over an assigned number of pages; it means beginning the process of critical engagement with the ideas in those pages, even if you only feel prepared to formulate a few sophisticated questions. You should expect that the critical and theoretical readings will need to be read slowly and carefully to be comprehensible, and you should do that reading actively, with a pen in hand to make notations, jot down questions, underline important points, etc.

Class Participation and Free Blogging: This course asks you to respond thoughtfully in several ways to our readings. A primary way is through discussion, which will be our principal format for class meetings. You needn’t be an “expert” to participate. Remember that asking a good question is as—or sometimes more—valuable than offering a completed thought. Some of the readings we do this semester may evoke strong responses; I should not need to say that I expect respect and civility even in disagreement, and this applies equally to the blog.

In addition to acting as our course management system with announcements, assignments, etc., the blog will function as a place to develop threads we begin in class; to introduce topics of interest we didn’t talk about; to supplement our knowledge with outside materials, links, or information; to respond personally to the literature and theory we read; and more. Original posts and comments on posts are equally valuable; this should emerge as a dialogue, not a series of disconnected monologues. Occasionally I may give a prompt for blog posting, but most of the time the writing will be done on your own initiative. All class members should be reading the blog on a regular basis, and you should plan on posting and commenting quite regularly.

An unusual feature of the blog is that it is a site you will share with my other section of English 295. I understand that the danger in this is that part of your audience will be students you don’t know intimately, and that may shift the way you frame your writing or develop your voice in complicated, but not necessarily negative, ways. The benefit is that you will have the intellectual power of two times as many students supporting your own learning this semester; since class discussion and interests are somewhat fluid and student-centered, the blog posting done by the other section may expose interesting threads of analysis that never came up in your own class.

I don't want you to think about class discussion or the blog chiefly as a time to impress me; this class's success depends on our commitment to one another as a community of learners, and being willing to take risks and able to listen are essential for this dialogue to flourish. You will need to revise any sense you have of the classroom and blog as a place for passively receiving knowledge. Instead, these are places where we will think, write, share, and learn together collaboratively.

Participation is required in both forums and will be assessed for frequency and quality. To some degree, this portion of your grade is up to you—your engagement with the course material, your commitment to sharing ideas verbally and in writing. **If you miss three or more classes (except in extraordinary circumstances), the portion of your grade for participation will be substantially lowered.** Chronically tardy arrivals are not acceptable. It is your responsibility to find out what you have missed when you are absent.

►► **Extra Credit (huzzah!)** ◀◀

You may earn extra credit for class participation in the following way:

- Attend a production of one of UMW's fall plays. The schedule is [here](#) and the plays are *The Miss Firecracker Contest* (September 19-29) and *Spring Awakening* (November 7-24).
- Afterward, write a response to or analysis of the play and performance that is about 500 words. This is not a straightforward review; rather, I ask you to think about the play in terms of the concerns, themes, theories, and questions that inform our reading in 295. Your analysis may consider both the play itself (that is, the language and themes of the text) and the performance or production (for instance, how lighting, movement, costuming etc. affects the presentation of the subject matter or the audience). Your response is due within two weeks of your seeing the play.
- You may do extra credit for both productions if you want to.

Bridge to the Blog: Each student will be assigned a day for which s/he must post to the blog a piece containing some follow-up questions, a thought-provoking implication of our discussion, an articulation of underdeveloped ideas or readings that started in class but need more consideration—in other words, a bridge specifically linking oral class discussion to the blog and designed to prompt further development/discussion. We will determine assigned dates early in the semester and a schedule will be posted on the blog. It is absolutely fine for you to respond to the bridge from the other section of 295 as well as the one from your own section.

Time due: no later than midnight on the assigned day

Post title: [Your Name]'s Bridge to the Blog (e.g., "Cleanth's Bridge to the Blog")

Submission: Post to the course blog AND drop the url for your post into the Bridge assignment in Canvas.

Length: about 400 words (longer is okay)

Applied Theory Post: In the course of the semester we will be reading about a number of schools of critical theory from the book by Lois Tyson. Each student will be assigned to one specific theoretical movement early in the semester and a schedule will be posted on the blog.

On the day we read about that theory, you will post to the blog an analysis of a film, song, or children's book that is clearly informed by the theoretical questions and vocabulary for that critical group.

Time due: by midnight on the assigned day

Post title: [Your Name]'s [Theoretical] Analysis of [Text Title] (e.g., "Sigmund's Psychoanalytic Analysis of *James and the Giant Peach*")

Submission: Post to the course blog AND drop the url for your post into the Applied Theory assignment in Canvas.

Length: 500-750 words

Quizzes: [Use this link](#) to complete the online introduction to library services, including the worksheet. The librarian will confirm your completion of the assignment for me. This assignment must be submitted by midnight on September 19. In addition, you will also take quizzes throughout the semester to test your comprehension of the reading and your mastery of the critical vocabulary. Quizzes are unannounced and will be given during the first ten minutes of class. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes, but I will drop at least one quiz grade for everyone.

Collaborative Article and Group Presentation: There are some concepts that are theorized in multiple ways or given various definitions and emphases across groups of critical thought. For this assignment, you will be clustered with two or three other students and given a foundational concept of literary study (e.g., the author). Your group will use Google Docs for collaborative writing, and throughout the course of the semester, as you continue to refine your own understanding by reading about different schools of critical thought in the Tyson volume, you will be building an article that explains the definitions, critical controversies, models, etc. that compose our sophisticated understanding of that foundational idea. All students also should carefully review the applicable pages in the *Bedford Glossary* for the concept their group is assigned to cover; you may wish or need to consult the further readings suggested by Tyson too. I anticipate that articles will be approximately 2000 words long.

At the end of the semester, in our final exam slot, the group will have about 15 minutes to present its findings to the class, using whatever audio-visual aids it deems helpful or necessary. All members of the group must participate equally in the oral presentation. You should NOT read your presentations; be ready to speak comfortably, and semi-formally, about your topic. I strongly encourage your group to make an appointment at the Speaking Center before your presentation.

Essays: You will complete three essays, and more guidelines will be posted for each. These may include sub-deadlines that will help refine the writing process. The Carroll essay, focusing on the genre of the novel, will allow you to practice assessing literary criticism, making use of the essays in the Norton Critical edition of *Alice* (October 10). The Ruhl essay, focusing on drama, will ask you to complete a more sustained, competent analysis of a literary text using the concepts of one of the theoretical movements we study (November 12). The Tretheway paper, focusing on poetry, will help hone your skills in close reading and formal analysis (December 3). Essays will all be submitted in Canvas as word documents or pdf files and are due no later than midnight on the assigned day.

Grade Distribution

Participation (oral and blog)	15 pts.
Bridge to the Blog	5 pts.
Applied Theory Post	5 pts.
Quizzes (library, vocabulary, comprehension)	10 pts.
Collaborative article and group oral presentation	20 pts.
Essay #1 (Carroll)	10 pts.
Essay #2 (Ruhl)	20 pts.
Essay #3 (Tretheway)	15 pts.

As College policy makes clear, grades of B and A are reserved for exceptional work.

Policies and Reminders

- All essays should be double spaced, with one-inch margins, in a font similar to this one (Times New Roman 12) with your name, the date, course number, and name of assignment in the upper left corner of the first page.
- Unless otherwise specified, your assignments will be submitted in Canvas as url links, word documents, or pdf files.
- I will use Canvas for returning feedback on graded work and maintaining the gradebook.
- Due dates are not estimates and are not flexible except under extraordinary circumstances (as determined by me). You should contact me as soon as possible if you anticipate a problem with a due date so we can discuss an extension.

Making use of the Speaking Center and Writing Center: The Speaking Center, located on the first floor of Combs Hall, is an excellent resource, and I urge you to use it, either individually or as a group. Experience shows me that there is often a substantial improvement in clarity, organization, nonverbal presentation, group coherence, and more for those who do. Trained consultants can help with planning and can videotape practice presentations and provide feedback. Additionally, they can provide helpful guidance for managing a group presentation, including making the individual reports more cohesive as a whole. You can make an appointment online at <http://elsweb.org/speak/createapp2.php> .

The Speaking Center also has a collection of instructional materials on topics from posture to speaking anxiety to organizing a speech to constructing effective visual aids, found here: <http://academics.umw.edu/speaking/speaking-center/useful-handouts/>.

Additionally, since this class is Writing Intensive, you should be making use of the Writing Center, which is located in Trinkle Hall. The trained tutors at the Writing Center can provide one-on-one tutorials with targeted writing feedback on your work and should also be willing to meet with your collaborative group if you arrange such an appointment. You may call 540-654-1036 to make an appointment. The Writing Center also has numerous reference handouts on writing, grammar, references, and more, which are available here: <http://academics.umw.edu/writing-fredericksburg/printed-resources-and-links/>

A note on academic misconduct: Plagiarism, like all cheating, is a serious offense. It means presenting another person's work as your own--whether that person is a friend, writing center or speaking center tutor, professional, or published author. Copying passages or paraphrasing ideas belonging to another person without acknowledging the source of those ideas is plagiarism. You can avoid this offense if you simply cite and reference the source you use, if any. I am quite willing to help you understand strategies for quotation and citation but I am not willing to be lenient on plagiarism, so please consult with me if you need to. **I expect that you will adhere at all times to the Honor code of the University of Mary Washington.**

Disability services: The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through ODR and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss confidentially your approved accommodation needs and bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and need accommodations, their phone number is 540-654-1266.

Provisional Course Schedule

All readings must be done before class on the day assigned and you should bring the assigned texts to class. It may be helpful to bring the *Bedford Glossary (BG)* every day.

Week 1

T Aug 27

Introductions

R Aug 29

What we talk about when we talk about “literature”: Richter (blog); **BG:** canon, text, periodicity, anxiety of influence, form, genre, novel, poetry, drama, author, authorial intention, representation, discourse, sign, signifier, signified

Week 2

T Sept 3

Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*—yes, I do mean all of it. **BG:** Modern Period

R Sept 5

Tyson, “New Criticism” (135-167); **BG:** aesthetics

Week 3

T Sept 10

Tyson, “Psychoanalytic Criticism” (11-52); **BG reinforcement:** psychoanalytic criticism

R Sept 12

Tyson, “Marxist Criticism” (53-81); **BG reinforcement:** Marxist criticism, ideology

Week 4

T Sept 17

Tyson, “Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Criticism” (317-357); **BG reinforcement:** gender criticism, queer theory

R Sept 19

Tyson, “Reader Response Criticism” (169-207); **BG reinforcement:** reader-response criticism, implied author, implied reader. **Library resources quiz due no later than midnight tonight.**

Week 5

T Sept 24

Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland:* 1-51; **BG:** Victorian Period

R Sept 26

Carroll, *Alice:* 52-97

Week 6

T Oct 1

Carroll, “Humpty Dumpty,” from *Through the Looking Glass*, 157-167; Avery, “Fairy-Tales for Pleasure” (313-15)

R Oct 3

Norton *Alice:* “The Letters of Lewis Carroll, 1840-1857” (251-54), “The Letters...1864-1885” (268-71), “The Letters...1868-1897” (284-89);

“Alice’s Recollections” (265-68); “Dodgson’s Friendships with Women” (295-97); “An Old Bachelor” (299-303)

Week 7

T Oct 8

Tyson, “Deconstructive Criticism” (249-280); **BG reinforcement**: deconstruction, *jouissance*

R Oct 10

Meet in Simpson Library for session on library research skills; Essay #1 due in Canvas by midnight

Week 8

T Oct 15

Fall Break

R Oct 17

Tyson, “New Historical and Cultural Criticism” (277-315); **BG reinforcement**: cultural criticism/cultural studies, new historicism

Week 9

T Oct 22

Ruhl, *Passion Play*: Part One; **BG**: Postmodern Period, postmodernism, aside, chorus

R Oct 24

Ruhl: Part Two; **BG**: performative

Week 10

T Oct 29

Ruhl: Part Three; **BG**: mystery play

R Oct 31

Ruhl and Tyson, “Postcolonial Criticism” (417-449); **BG reinforcement**: postcolonial literature/postcolonial theory

Week 11

T Nov 5

Tyson, “Feminist Criticism” (83-133); **BG reinforcement**: gender, feminist criticism, patriarchal

R Nov 7

Tretheway, *Native Guard*: “Theories of Time and Space” (1) and Part I (3-15); **BG**: figure of speech, stanza, end-stopped line, enjambment, caesura, couplet, quatrain, sestet, octave

Week 12

T Nov 12

Tretheway, *Native Guard*: “Pilgrimage” (19-20); “Scenes from a Documentary History of Mississippi” (21-24); **BG**: alliteration, assonance, consonance, dissonance, rhyme, half rhyme. **Essay #2 due in Canvas by midnight**

R Nov 14

Tyson, “African American Criticism” (359-415); **Tretheway**; **BG**: prosody, free verse, meter, foot, scansion, dactyl, iamb, pyrrhic, spondee, trochee, anapest, pentameter, blank verse, common meter

Week 13

T Nov 19

Tretheway, *Native Guard*: “Native Guard” (25-30); “Again, the Fields” (31); **BG:** sonnet, sonnet sequence

R Nov 21

Tretheway, *Native Guard*: Part III (33-46)

Week 14

T Nov 26

Tretheway

R Nov 28

Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

T Dec 3

Collaborative group work. **Essay #3 due in Canvas by midnight.**

R Dec 5

Collaborative group work.

▶▶▶ F Dec 6 Collaborative Articles due by midnight ◀◀◀

Group Presentations on Collaborative Articles will be given during the Final Exam Periods:

section 05: Thursday, December 12, 8:30-11:00

section 06: Tuesday, December 10, 12:00-2:30