

English 398
Winter 2007
Office Hours: MWF 10-11, 1-2

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Writing for English Majors

Course Description

English 398, "Writing for English Majors," is a required course for the English major and minor involving intensive reading and writing assignments with three primary objectives: (1) to provide students with practical experience in reading and analyzing the kind of texts they will encounter in 500-level English courses; (2) to teach students close reading of texts and various methods of literary analysis, with the aim of producing good critical essays (as well as good critical thinking), and (3) to introduce students to the process of literary research, including the discovery, use, and citation of secondary sources.

We will practice close reading of literary texts, with special attention to literary technique (both poetry and prose), and we will explore a range of theoretical approaches to literary study. We will focus on four literary texts this quarter: John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno," Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. You will read each of the literary texts first and write a relatively short analytical paper on it, and then we will read a variety of critical articles on each text. Near the end of the quarter, you will choose one of the literary texts and apply one of the critical approaches to it, writing a longer research paper incorporating outside critical materials.

Course Materials

The texts for this course are:

Donald Keeseey, *Contexts for Criticism*, 4th ed.

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (with secondary materials)

You should already have a style handbook (for rules on documentation, etc.). If you do not, you should get one. I can order one for you, if you want, or you can get one yourself online. The information is also available online through the Department of English website.

You will also need a good collegiate dictionary, and I recommend that you keep a reading journal to facilitate writing your essays.

Course Requirements

- Attendance—your participation in class discussion and informal exercises is a crucial component of the class. Every absence counts against your grade, with increasing penalties for each additional absence. Absence in excess of two weeks of classes is grounds for failure. Repeated tardiness will also be penalized.
- Class participation—your willing and constructive participation in class discussion and exercises will make the class more successful for everyone, and I will reward it. If you decide to let everyone else do the work of the class, your final grade will reflect that choice.
- Four relatively short essays (500-750 words) on assigned topics.
- One longer research paper (1500-2000 words).
- In-class midterm exam—Feb 5
- Final exam—Monday, Mar 12, 11-1pm.

Grading

Four short essays (10% each)	40%
Research paper	25%
Midterm exam	10%
Final exam	15%
Class participation	10%

Course Schedule

Jan 3—Course Introduction.

Jan 5—In-class reading of Keat's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Ode to a Nightingale" (handout provided).

Jan 8—**"Urn" paper due.** Discussion of papers. Introduction to historical criticism and formal criticism.

Jan 10—Discussion of Austin article (47-57) and Kent article (112-115).

Jan 12— Discussion of Melville's "Benito Cereno."

Jan 15—Martin Luther King Day-no classes.

Jan 17—**"Benito Cereno" paper due.** Discussion of papers.

Jan 19—Discussion of Kaplan article (58-65) and Bickley article (116-120).

Jan 22—Discussion of Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Jan 24—**"Yellow Wallpaper" paper due.**

Jan 26—Discussion of papers and of Knight article (66-73) and Shumaker article (121-127).

Jan 29-Feb 2—Discussion of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Feb 5—*Tempest* paper due. In-class Midterm.

Feb 7—Discussion of Yachnin article (34-46) and McDonald article (99-111).

Feb 9-12—Discussion of Reader-Response articles (163-204).

Feb 14-16—Discussion of Mimetic criticism articles (235-263).

Feb 19-21—Discussion of Intertextual criticism articles (298-339).

Feb 23-26—Discussion of Poststructural criticism articles (374-407).

Feb 28-Mar 2—Discussion of Cultural criticism articles (442-483).

Mar 5-9—Last week of classes. TBA.

Mar 9—Last day of classes—research paper due.

Mar 12—Final Exam, 11-1pm.

Like most attempts at schedules, this one is approximate but probably pretty accurate. You are responsible for coming to class prepared to discuss the assigned texts, so hang on to this syllabus. NOTE: This is a schedule of *class discussion*, not a work schedule. I expect you to read ahead and reread material for class. I also expect you to be thinking about—and working on—your research paper well in advance of the due date. You can turn in work-in-progress at any time for my feedback. You can also consult with me at any time about any part of the writing process—from ideas for paper topics to rough drafts.

None of this is going to be easy, but parts of it will probably be harder for some than for others. If you are having difficulties, you need to let me know. You can ask questions in class or come to my office to discuss things privately or contact me by email. Taking an active interest in the class and the material is in your own best interests.

University Policies:

Federal law requires that the university make all reasonable and necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss those needs. You can also contact the Learning Assistance Center in Hopewell 53 for help and/or evaluation.

Plagiarism is the representation of another's words or ideas as one's own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. If you are at all uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, I strongly advise you to consult with me before handing in work that involves the inclusion of secondary material. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.