

Dr. Janine Utell
ENGL 301: Methods of Literary Study
Spring 2015 – MWF 1-1:50
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Course Description

To have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and the great proof of being alive, and it is not denied to criticism to have it; but then criticism must be sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever widening its knowledge. Then it may have, in no contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity.

~ Matthew Arnold, “The Function of Criticism”

There is a wide range of answers to the question, “Why do we study literature?”. We might say it allows us insight into the mind and its perceptions. It gives us a sense of the range of human experience. It offers a window into history, into other cultures. We study literature as a way into a world of other questions.

The question that drives *this* course, however, is, “*How* do we study literature?”. What do we *do* when we read, when we read well, with care, intelligence, and insight? Our work for the semester in this class is to practice this kind of reading and writing in a workshop setting; we will consider a wide range of concepts and applications in the field of English studies as currently constituted, and we will make cool things with what we learn. We will combine critical practice in reading, writing, and oral presentation with the study of various theoretical approaches and effective research methods. Ultimately, the work you do here will serve you as you produce the scholarship required for advanced level English courses and Senior Seminar. *Note*: This course is only open to ENGL, CRWR, and Ed majors pursuing Language Arts. It is also writing-enriched.

Required Texts

West, *Return of the Soldier*
Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
Cunningham, *The Hours*
Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
Eagleton, *Literary Theory*

Recommended Texts (these books are meant to serve you over the rest of your career as an English major; they are considered indispensable reference works anyone working in literary studies should own)

Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers

Student Learning Outcomes

This course meets the goals and objectives of the English department. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Identify literary genres, terms, and theories, and apply that knowledge to critical analysis, interpretation, close reading.
2. Demonstrate awareness of literary tradition and its relation to the present, particularly in the work of literary criticism and theory.
3. Write with critical insight, offering original interpretations and arguments in conversation with scholarship in the discipline.
4. Exhibit the habits of mind associated with critical thinking.
5. Render aesthetic judgment.

Course Requirements

I have two main requirements for any course I teach:

- Do all the reading and viewing, carefully, critically, with an open mind and a serious effort to enjoy what you're doing
- Participate in the work of the course through active engagement and collaboration, including discussion and written contributions

I believe that a course is created by all the people in it. We spend a semester together collaborating both in written work and in discussion. Your writing, both formal and informal, makes a contribution to the work of the course and the ideas we are shaping; my comments on your papers are part of that dialogue. Likewise, our discussions are part of a collaborative building effort. My goal is to make the classroom a hospitable place for intellectual exchange; I hope you will join in the spirit of that endeavor.

My classes are discussion-based, both face to face and virtually, and I take participation in that very seriously. I don't think of it merely in terms of a "participation grade," where I check off who speaks on which given day, or who "performs" well in answering a question. Three times a week, we come together to share ideas about the work we are doing and try to build something of value that you can take with you. In order to fully join, you are obligated to me and to your colleagues to complete reading and writing assignments, and to take them seriously. Don't think of it as, "I need to take this seriously because the teacher wants me to and I want an A." Think of it as, "I need to take this seriously because I have a responsibility to the community of the class for the time we are here." In the final analysis, it's up to you how seriously you take the course. You will do as well as you choose.

In return, I will take your ideas seriously, try to challenge you by asking interesting questions, and give you feedback that you personally will find useful for what you want to work on and for your particular learning style, which I hope to become acquainted with over the course of the semester through class discussion, writing assignments, and one-on-one conferences.

The work for the course will consist of a series of tasks and challenges asking you to develop expertise in a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, define your critical stance as an emerging scholar, as well strengthen research, writing and critical thinking skills. At the end you will have a chance to synthesize what you've learned, and build on it by imagining areas of further investigation. The variety of assignments is meant to give you multiple, different opportunities to demonstrate your learning through doing, making, and writing, and to allow you to practice multiple modes of enquiry and the use of multiple tools. Please note that this IS a writing-enriched course, so the amount of writing is varied and substantial.

Generating Ideas and Research Questions/Practicing Different Methodologies, Preliminary Research and Reading Scholarly Articles

You'll notice that each assigned text corresponds to a focus; these foci are not the only methods by which to practice work in literary studies, but they are among the most fruitful in terms of concept and application. These are: historicism, narrative theory, adaptation/intertextuality, the archive and digital humanities, and "theory" (here meaning modes of reading informed by philosophy of language and phenomenology). For each focus and text, you'll come up with a research question and a piece of writing meant to offer some preliminary exploration. As we work on a text and discuss the theoretical or practical focus, you'll refine that research question and preliminary exploration into something more substantial, answering your research question AND/OR suggesting areas for further development. Part of this endeavor will include finding one or two scholarly articles that support, elaborate, contradict, your direction.

So:

West/historicism = research question // West/historicism = short position paper + 1 or 2 scholarly sources

Woolf/narrative = research question // Woolf/narrative = short position paper + 1 or 2 scholarly sources

The Hours/adaptation = research question // The Hours/adaptation = short position paper + 1 or 2 scholarly sources

AROO/archive = research question // AROO/archive = short position paper + 1 or 2 scholarly sources

P of A/theory = research question // P of A/theory = short position paper + 1 or 2 scholarly sources

Research questions do not have to be more than a paragraph, laying out the question, why it matters, what your preliminary thoughts are, etc. Position papers do not have to be long, but they should tentatively answer the question, lay out areas for further study, and engage with your 1 or 2 sources in a meaningful way (agree, disagree, note gaps, etc.)

Research questions = 10 points each / 50 points

Position papers = 20 points each / 100 points

After the first research question, you'll always have a new research question due the same day as the position paper for the previous focus, and you'll have to do at least some reading in preparation for writing up your new research question.

Tools You Can Use: Digital Humanities, the Archive

The use of archives has always been an important component of literary study; this work has been transformed in recent years by the tools and methodologies made available to us via digital humanities. In fact, digital humanities has changed the way we do some of our interpretive work. We have three days throughout the semester set aside for in-class activities related to the archive and digital humanities. More details to come, based on class discussion. Each is worth 10 points = 30 points.

Creating Scholarly Community: Crowdsourcing and Collaboration

The generation of a scholarly community wherein ideas are shared and tested is an important part of what we do. We will have two opportunities to practice this and work on creating our own communities, once at the start of the semester and once towards the end. Our in-class activities will serve this purpose as well, as will group work during the semester, and your required attendance at two lectures given by two scholars in the field (Anne Fernald and Jim Donahue).

The first will involve students from Fall 2014 ENGL 360: British Literature 1890-1945 assisting in the teaching of *Mrs. Dalloway*. I will meet with these students to prepare; the class as a whole will contribute their desired outcomes; both groups will reflect.

The second will involve working on our major projects at the end of the semester: we will come up with a way to share resources, ideas, and feedback. More details to come based on needs and suggestions.

Participation in each of these events is 10 points each = 20 points.

Major Project: What Do You Want to Make to Show What You (Don't) Know?

The last month of the semester will be working on a final project, to be determined in consultation with the group and myself. The first stage of this project is a proposal and annotated bibliography, worth 20 points. The next stage is a draft and conference, worth 15 points. The final stage is a final draft, worth 15 points. A required component of this project is some writing discussing directions for future research: the work of studying literature doesn't end with the completion of a paper and the semester! (Note: I'm saying "draft" here, but your final project does not necessarily have to be a paper.)

total possible points = 250

A = 250-225

A- = 224-200

B+ = 199-175

B = 174-150

B- = 149-125

C+ = 124-100

C = 99-75

C- = 74-50

D = 49-25

F = 25 and below

I'm looking forward to working with you, and invite comments, suggestions, feedback, concerns, etc. over the course of the semester.

Course Schedule

Week One: 1/12-1/16

Introductions

Focus on historicism: *Return of the Soldier*

Research question due

Week Two: 1/19-1/23

No class Monday: MLK Day

Return of the Soldier; visit to PMC for WWI exhibit

Modernist Journals Project: in-class activity

meeting with ENGL 360 team

Week Three: 1/26-1/30

Focus on narrative: *Mrs. Dalloway*

Paper due

Research question due

Week Four: 2/2-2/6

Mrs. Dalloway

Week Five: 2/9-2/13

Focus on adaptation and intertextuality: *The Hours*

Paper due

Research question due

Week Six: 2/16-2/20

The Hours

in-class activity on adaptation

Week Seven: 2/23-2/27

The Hours: screening

Week Eight: 3/2-3/6

No class: Midterm Break

read *A Room of One's Own*

Paper due

Research question due

Week Nine: 3/9-3/13

Wednesday 3/11; lecture by Anne Fernald, focus on scholarly editing and Virginia Woolf

Focus on the archive: Discuss *A Room of One's Own*

Week Ten: 3/16-3/20

Finish Woolf and the archive: in-class activity Monday

Focus on "theory": *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Eagleton

Paper due Wednesday

Research question due Wednesday

Week Eleven: 3/23-3/27

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Eagleton

Week Twelve: 3/30-4/3

No class on Friday 4/3: Spring Holiday

Focus on DH: Joyce and Digital Humanities: in-class activity

finish Eagleton

Paper due

Week Thirteen: 4/6-4/10

No class on Monday 4/6; lecture by Jim Donahue, focus on narrative theory
Proposal and annotated bibliography due

Week Fourteen: 4/13-4/17

Working on final projects: crowdsourcing/collaboration/writing boot camp

Week Fifteen: 4/20-4/24

No class: individual conferences -- bring a draft.

Week Sixteen: 4/27-5/1

Sharing projects; final reflection

Policies and Necessary Administrative Type Info

Attendance and Grading policy:

You are permitted six absences for emergencies (Widener policy stipulates that students are allowed to be absent twice the number of times a class meets a week—we meet three times a week, hence six absences). You will receive a warning after five. After the six absence, I will enter a failing grade for you for the course. If something is going on with you that causes you to miss class, please come talk to me about it before it gets out of hand! Note that because this class has a hefty in-class work requirement, if you miss it will impact your grade. You may only miss ONE screening unless there are extenuating circumstances.

I will return your graded work back to you as quickly as possible, and you should *always* feel free to talk to me about the feedback you receive (or would like to receive). You will have the option to receive feedback either in writing or electronically. It is important that you participate in the feedback loop: this means reading through my comments and sharing thoughts in conferences, giving serious consideration to the kinds of feedback you're getting, and telling me what kind of feedback you need.

Late policy:

Work will not be accepted beyond the class meeting immediately following the meeting in which the work is due. In other words, if a paper is due on a Monday, you have until we meet for Wednesday's class to turn it in if it has to be late. Email papers are always fine, of course, but NOT after we begin class the meeting after the due date. No late in-class writing will be accepted. The reason for this is once too much time has elapsed, you lose the thread and import of whatever it is you're writing about in relation to the course moment that generated it, and your chances for success are diminished. Especially for the longer projects in this class, the drafting and revising process will not work if you fall behind on turning in your work and getting feedback. Simply put, it's not fair to you to allow you to follow your worst impulses, and you won't get as much out of assignments if they are not completed on time. Informal writing will not be accepted late, ever; the whole point is that they are meant to contribute to class discussion, and turning them in late defeats the purpose.

Cell phone policy:

I certainly understand the desire to stay connected to other aspects of your life, but I would like to keep the multitasking to a minimum so that we can pursue our work with limited distractions and the fullest engagement possible. So, devices should be put away unless you are expecting something really important. If you do mess with the device, you will be asked to surrender it. This policy will be waived in emergencies, or if we ever need to Google something. NOTE: If there is a serious event happening in your life (family member in the hospital, sister about to go into labor, amazing job opportunity about to come your way), talk to me about it BEFORE class starts. If you need to take a call, you may leave the room and deal with it, and I won't embarrass both of us by yelling at you because I didn't know.

Textbooks and e-Readers:

Purchasing the books, reading them, and bringing them to class is required. No exceptions. If you do not have the text, you will be marked absent. If you have no intention of getting the books you need by the time you need them, you may as well drop the course. The text is necessary for our work; it would be like trying to have lab without the proper equipment. If you must use e-texts (i.e., Google Books, Bartleby.com, Project Gutenberg), print them out and bring them to class—AFTER you check with me to make sure the text is correct (send me the link so I can make sure). For now, e-readers, like a basic Amazon Kindle, are acceptable; laptops and tablets are not. All I should see on your desk are your notebook, a writing implement, the required text for the day, and (where applicable) your cell phone.

Email/Social Media/IM policy:

I believe technology can be a valuable teaching tool. Social media is a part of the professional world, so learning to use it appropriately in a work context is important. These tools allow us to continue a class discussion outside of class hours. They give students who might be shy about speaking up in class a chance to contribute their thoughts. They make it easier for me to comment on your drafts and ideas as you work on your papers, and to answer quick questions you might have about readings and assignments. Finally, if you have a problem with the way class is going, or a concern you don't feel comfortable raising in person, they can make it possible for us to work through those issues. I am happy to talk about class with you over a chat app, social media, or—if you can't make it to the office but prefer something face-to-face—Skype. I encourage you especially to take advantage of virtual office hours. And I use email A LOT, so please remember to check Campus Cruiser every day. It will be a forum for disseminating assignments and weekly wrap-ups.

BUT: it is important that these tools be used appropriately. I want to be accessible, but I would also like to be treated with courtesy, the same courtesy I hope I show to you. All of these tools in this context should be viewed as a *professional* communication. You should write to me the same way you would write to a colleague in a work environment. So, here are a few ground rules for professional and reasonable use of e-communication:

- Please use “please” and “thank you,” especially if you are writing for help with something like a paper or assignment. It is my job to help you, and I want to help you – but good manners never hurt anybody.
- Please identify yourself clearly – name, course, etc. – and use appropriate salutations and closings. This is just good sense for professional communication; your future employers and colleagues will appreciate you getting into this habit now, if you are not already.

- Please use language appropriately. As with any professional correspondence, you should avoid language that is too informal. You should write grammatically correct sentences. You should check for spelling. You should avoid IM and texting-type usage and abbreviations. (These can be relaxed a bit for IM communication, since it's more casual—clarity is the most important thing.)
- If I send you something, like a draft with comments, please write back to confirm receipt. I will do the same for you when you send me something. If you do NOT get a confirmation from me, feel free to remind/nudge!
- If you send papers via attachment, please use MS Word. If you do not have MS Word, please save in “.txt” or “.rtf” format. Please do not cut and paste into the body of the email.
- Please be reasonable when emailing/IM-ing with questions about papers, exams, etc. Leave yourself enough time when working to email questions or drafts. If you email me at 3 a.m. the night before a paper is due, I cannot help you. I try to answer email as promptly as I can, and I do have a smartphone, but I usually stop dealing with email by 9 p.m. except for emergencies, and start up again at around 7:30 a.m. after I am sufficiently caffeinated. Weekends are usually fine for emailing and getting a prompt response; if it's not fine, I'll let you know.
- If you have a serious problem with me – the way I run class, the way I've graded your paper, anything – I absolutely encourage you to come talk to me. But please do not send me an angry, invective-filled email in the heat of the moment. Take a deep breath and think, “How would I feel if somebody sent me an email like this?” It can be too easy to send things in anger you might regret later, especially when there is no face-to-face contact.
- I do not go back and forth over email regarding grades. Those conversations should take place in person. If you have a problem with a grade, you can email me to set up an appointment to talk about it, and we'll go from there.

Academic Integrity policy:

Widener University regards dishonesty on the part of students as unacceptable behavior. This includes but is not limited to plagiarism, handing in another's (either a student's or a professional's) work as your own, or cheating.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. It is the unattributed use of another's work. In essence you are stealing someone else's thoughts or words. Every word you write must be your own. If you use someone else's ideas, you must give that author credit through correct documentation. We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it in class; I expect that you will uphold the integrity of the academic community here at Widener and your discipline more broadly. Unintentional plagiarism is just as bad as intentional plagiarism.

If plagiarism does occur, however, the university has policies to deal with it: My minimum penalty for individuals who have committed academic fraud will be **failure in the course** and a memo turned in to the Provost's Office and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences detailing the infraction for your permanent record. For a second offense, the penalty will be failure in the course and expulsion from the university.

I take plagiarism very seriously, because I take ideas very seriously. To steal someone else's work is an offense to what we are doing here, and I will deal with it as such.

Learning Accommodations:

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any student has the right to request reasonable accommodation of a disability. Accommodations can be requested through Academic Support Services, Disabilities Services (520 E. 14th St., 610-499-1266). Disabilities Services is the office that authorizes all accommodations on campus. Please note that you will need to present documentation of your disability to Disabilities Services. It is important to make this request as soon as possible so that we will have time to make any necessary arrangements.