

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE COLLEGE: ARTS AND SCIENCES
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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: ENGL 300: Writing About Literature

2. Credit Hours 3

3. Course Description

An intermediate writing course that introduces students to a variety of critical practices in the study of literature and that teaches the conventions of writing about literature by focusing on reading and writing as interrelated activities.

4. This course is (check one):

an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)

an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)

a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)

5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.

Effective Communication

Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)

Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)

Perspectives on a Diverse World

Global Awareness

U.S. Diversity

Knowledge of the Disciplines

Arts

Humanities

Science

Social Science

Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)

Self and Well Being

Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership

- Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- Career and Professional Development
- International and Multicultural Experience
- Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students.

In ENGL 300 students will develop effective reading and writing strategies for the study of literature in its multiple forms (fiction, drama, poetry). As a Writing Intensive course focused on strengthening students' skills to become scholars and potential teachers of literature, the goals of the course are threefold: to study and practice the primary forms of writing employed by professional scholars of English literature; to acquire methods of literary research; to learn about the rich diversity of approaches to literary criticism and apply such approaches in written analyses of literary and cultural works.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.

A. General education outcomes for intensive writing courses and how this course meets them

Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline.

In ENGL 300 students will:

- Explore and practice writing in a range of genres, such as theoretically informed analytical essays, response papers, and critical essays drawing on outside sources.
- Become aware of the distinct activities involved in reading literary and theoretical works
- Practice the interpretive strategies formulated by a range of critical approaches to literature

Use writing strategies that achieve the purposes for writing and address the expectations of audience(s) within a disciplinary context.

ENGL 300 will teach students to:

- Understand and practice the conventions of writing in the discipline of literature
- Develop writing strategies that employ literary terms and theoretical concepts in the exploration of literary works
- Develop writing strategies that address the expectations of readers within the discipline

Formulate research questions and employ strategies for researching and responding to those questions.

ENGL 300 students will learn to:

- Research and discuss various writings about literature in the class
- Formulate their own interpretive questions
- Use outside sources to help them develop responses to those questions
- Acquire disciplinary methods of inquiry

Use discipline-specific genres to communicate information.

ENGL 300 students will:

- Study a range of scholarly and critical essays to acquire a sense of disciplinary conventions

- Practice writing in a variety of critical genres

Understand conventions for communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information within a discipline.

In ENGL 300, students will:

- Analyze the scholarly practices modeled in the critical essays of professional scholars of Literature
- Practice the primary forms for communicating, disseminating, and interpreting ideas in the discipline of English studies both in writing and orally during class discussion and/or presentations.

B. Methods of evaluation and how they assess the General Education outcomes

While different instructors may use slightly different assignments to assess student comprehension and progress, careful attention to the sequencing of assignments to help students build skills over the course of the semester is a characteristic of all sections of this course. The descriptions below discuss assessment in terms both of elements common to all sections of this course and representative examples of the range and types of assignments any given instructor might use for assessment.

1. In frequent writing assignments, ranging from informal, journal-type responses to more formal close readings and critical position papers, students respond to literary and theoretical texts, articulating their understanding of literary elements and theoretical concepts while practicing a range of interpretive strategies. These assignments assess students' ability to comprehend theoretical concepts and to apply them to analyses of complex literary texts and/or cultural contexts, including the pedagogical one, and to articulate their own critical positions.

2. Writing and editing workshops help students practice the basic elements of the analytical essay, from formulating a thesis about a literary work to developing the thesis using close reading techniques and theoretically informed methods of inquiry. These workshops help assess and strengthen students' familiarity with the conventions of communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information within the discipline of English.

3. Multiple types of assignments help develop—and enable instructors to assess—students' abilities to perform theoretically-informed analyses of literary texts. A typical sequence might include: Classroom discussions that model these processes and give students time to practice these skills; short and less formal paper assignments that ask students to write from a particular perspective or practice one portion of the complex process of making an argument; and, later, one or more formal critical essays in the 4-6 page range that requires students to interpret a text from a particular theoretical perspective, employing close reading techniques to develop an original argument. While different instructors might employ slightly different specific assignments, the focus on a careful sequence such as this enables instructors to help foster while assessing students' ability to describe the formal elements of a specific literary genre, their familiarity with a given theoretical approach, and their ability to use the critical practices and reading strategies associated with that approach in writing about a work of literature.

4. The course is designed with one or more culminating projects, which bring together the critical reading and writing skills the course aims to develop. Such projects may include, but are not limited to, a longer researched essay (typically 8-10 pages), a collaborative presentation, and/or a final exam. Some examples of how such projects may be conceptualized and would function to assess student progress include:

- In a researched, critical essay focused on a play, novel, or short story, students are asked to formulate an essay topic employing an explicitly theoretical framework; devise a thesis about a literary work; and develop it using both outside sources and internal textual evidence according to MLA conventions for research papers. This assignment evaluates students' ability to formulate research questions within a theoretical framework; to employ discipline-specific strategies for researching and responding to those questions; and to adopt the conventions for interpreting and communicating information within the discipline of English.
- A collaborative presentation on a particular theoretical approach gives students a chance to immerse themselves in one theoretical approach and to communicate what they have learned to members of the class. This assignment evaluates students' ability to comprehend and articulate key concepts of a given theoretical approach, and to communicate their knowledge in an effective way to other students. Alternative versions of such a project may include a research component or a formal, written, researched

paper to accompany the presentation, depending on whether the instructor has assigned any other long researched paper.

- A final exam requires students to define literary and theoretical terms and, in a substantial essay question, to apply at least two of them to a given literary work. The exam assesses students' fluency with the literary and theoretical terminology that they acquired throughout the course, and their ability to apply them in an impromptu analysis of a literary work. Alternatives to a final exam, that would similarly measure the more objective elements of student understanding of schools of literary theory might include periodic short quizzes over the course of the semester; in-class exercises in which small groups collaborate to develop and articulate working definitions of terms or statements of theoretical practice; or whole-class discussions that formulate a reading of a literary text through the application of specific theoretical terms.

8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods of evaluation detailed in #7 above.

Syllabus is attached below signature block.

Please submit all materials in electronic form.

Action of the Department/College

1. Department

Vote of department faculty: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Department Head _____ Date

2. College

College Dean _____ Date

Action of General Education Advisory Committee

Vote of General Education Committee: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Chairperson, General Education Advisory Committee _____ Date

Approval

Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum _____ Date

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Engl 300: Writing About Literature

Rationale

In ENGL 300 students will develop effective reading and writing strategies for the study of literature in its multiple forms (fiction, drama, poetry). As a Writing Intensive course focused on strengthening students' skills to become scholars and potential teachers of literature, the goals of the course are threefold: to study and practice the primary forms of writing employed by professional scholars of English literature; to acquire methods of literary research; to learn about the rich diversity of approaches to literary criticism and apply such approaches in written analyses of literary and cultural works.

Course description

ENGL 300 is a course in which we explore the ways we think about and approach literature. We'll begin our journey with the question, what is "literature"? and follow it with many others, such as: does literature matter? If so, how? What does it mean to read? How do we know what a literary work "means"? Who gets to decide? How do external and internal forces—such as gender, class, sexuality, specific fears and desires—affect the way we read and the way a work is written? While investigating these and other questions, we'll immerse ourselves in different "discourses": you'll acquire a literary vocabulary that allows you to describe both how texts are put together and how they affect readers; you'll also acquire a critical vocabulary that will allow you to understand the debates that have shaped literary studies over the last decades and, ultimately, to articulate your own critical stance.

In addition to all this, ENGL 300 is also supposed to prepare you for writing analytical papers in upper level literature courses. So don't be surprised that we'll focus intensively on writing skills—including crafting a critical argument, drawing on evidence from a variety of texts to support that argument, and developing a sophisticated critical vocabulary—and on research skills that go beyond browsing the internet. By the end of this course, you should be able to write a persuasively argued and carefully crafted literary analysis, using MLA style conventions.

This is a demanding course. You will be asked to read and write about complex literary works and critical texts; you will also write or post responses virtually every week in addition to two longer papers. For the course to succeed, your regular participation and preparation is essential.

Course texts and materials

- Charles Bressler, Literary Criticism: an introduction to theory and practice, 3rd edition (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003)
- William Shakespeare. The Tempest: A Case Study in Critical Controversy, ed. by Gerald Graff and James Phelan (Boston and New York: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2000)
- Aime Cesaire, A Tempest (Theatre Communications Group)
- A coursepack, available at McKenny Union bookstore
- A good composition handbook of your choice
- A glossary of literary terms such as M. H. Abrams' A Glossary of Literary Terms
- A ringbinder in which you keep the coursepack and writings

Webcaucus support

I have created a joint caucus discussion group for both ENGL 300 and LITR 511: Literary Criticism. Make sure you check this website at least twice a week. You'll find a copy of our syllabus and assignments; announcements; and a place for posing questions and swapping insights and useful resources. I am setting up discussion topics for you and my graduate students in LITR 511, who are dealing with many of the same theoretical approaches to literature as you. Like you, they are also required to prepare presentations on particular approaches. To facilitate on-line exchanges between you and my graduate students, I'll set up discussion items focused on particular schools of criticism. It's easy to get to our discussion site: Go to

www.caucus.emich.edu, register (all you need is your emich ID and password), and find our conference, Literary Theory. From then on, everything is self-explanatory.

Requirements:

1. Regular attendance and preparation. Attendance is absolutely crucial. If you miss class, your grade will suffer. According to department policy, any student missing more than two weeks of classes, has to expect a lowered grade and might, with additional absences, fail the course. Coming to class late or leaving early will count as a half absence. Friday classes are not optional.
2. Responses and other assignments: There will be weekly responses, in-class or take-home, many of them posted on webcaucus. These will focus on the interpretation of assigned readings, the exploration of critical concepts, the development of your own critical and interpretive position, and tactics for generating persuasive literary interpretations. In place of grades, these assignments will receive points to be counted toward your participation grade. Late work will be accepted until a week after the due date. It will, however, receive fewer points (two fewer points for each day it is late). Be prepared to read your writings to the class or have classmates read it.
3. Collaborative presentation: Later on during the semester, you will prepare a collaborative presentation on a particular critical approach (Feminism, Marxism, Cultural Criticism, Lesbian/Gay criticism, Postcolonial Theory) or on Aime Cesaire's A Tempest. You can receive a maximum of 20 points toward your participation grade for the presentation.
4. For two weeks during the semester, we'll work closely on your developing essays. We'll do so in writing workshops, where you will read and comment on classmates' drafts. This is important work. Make sure not to miss the writing workshops scheduled on the syllabus.
5. One short essay (4-6 pages) interpreting a poem of your choice from a particular theoretical perspective. A draft of this paper is due on February 7. A final draft of the paper is due on February 14. If you do not submit a draft with your final essay, your overall grade for the paper will be lowered by a third of a letter grade (from B to B- for instance). Be sure to submit paper #1 on time.
6. One critical essay (8-10 pages) on a literary work of your choice. You might find it most convenient to choose a work we are covering in class, such as Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Hurston's "Sweat," Shakespeare's The Tempest, or any of the poems included in the course pack. Yet you are welcome to choose a different work, perhaps one that you are studying in another literature course this term. Choose your topic early and discuss it with me. A prospectus for the critical essay is due on March 23; and a draft on April 4. A final draft is due on April 18. No late work please!
7. A final exam on Friday, April 22, 11-12:30am.
8. Grammar and editing. Every student in class is expected to own a composition handbook. If you do not own one, please purchase one right away. You will need it to work on the style and mechanics of your writing. I will help you locate areas for improvement and expect you to use the handbook systematically to work on these. You will also need the handbook to edit the work of your classmates. So please bring both to editing workshops and conferences.

Grading

Participation and short writing assignments:	30%
4-6 page essay:	20%
8-10 page essay:	40%
Final exam	10%

Schedule of classes:

Jan. 5: Introduction to course: Why study literature?

Jan. 7: **What is literary criticism and how do you write about literature?**

Assignment #1, posted on webcaucus: discuss why you think it's valuable to study literature. (If you're interested in what others think about the value of studying literature, check the short essays in our coursepack, "Why Study Literature." But only do so after you have articulated your own thoughts)

Read Whitman's "There Was a Child Went Forth."

- Jan. 10: Bressler, "To the Reader" and chapters 1 and 2
Make sure you understand all the bold terms, and choose two that you will be prepared to explain in class.
Assignment #2, to be posted on webcaucus: Discuss your working definition or philosophy of literature and the questions you feel are most important to ask of a text when developing an interpretation about it.
- Jan. 12: **Ways to approach poetry**: find out about *speaker* and *tone* in a glossary of literary terms. Choose one of Shakespeare's sonnets and be prepared to discuss its speaker and tone.
- Jan. 14: **Ways to approach poetry**: find out about *metaphor*, *imagery*, and *symbol* in a glossary of literary terms.
- Jan. 17: MLK Day.
- Jan. 19: **The music of poetry**: find out about *meter*, *rhythm*, *rhyme* in a glossary of literary terms. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (CP).
- Jan. 21: Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (CP)
Assignment #3: Compose a 2-page essay in which you describe your response to the poem. (this needs to be typed, double-spaced, and well proof-read)
- Jan. 24: Assignment #4: research one allusion in Eliot's poem and, using MLA conventions, document the sources you consulted. In addition to giving me a hardcopy, post a brief summary of your research on webcaucus.
- Jan. 26: **New Criticism**
Read Bressler, chapter 3. Make sure you take a close look at all the bold terms.
- Jan. 28: Performing new critical readings.
- Jan. 31: **Reader-Response Criticism**
Read Bressler, chapter 4. Make sure you take a close look at all the bold terms. Be prepared to explain two of them in class.
- Feb. 2: Read Norman Holland" (CP) and David Bleich's and compose at least three questions or comments in response to it. Post your questions/responses on webcaucus.
- Feb. 4: Assignment #5: In two pages, discuss some of the advantages and limitations of either New Criticism or Reader Response criticism. Use Eliot's "Love Song" or a poem of your choice to illustrate your position
- Feb. 7: **Writing Workshop**: Please bring three copies of your draft for essay one
Read: Warhol's "Writing Critical Essays" (coursepack).
- Feb. 9: **Writing Workshop**
- Feb. 11: **Psychoanalytic Criticism**
Read Bressler, chapter 7. Be prepared to explain two of the bold terms in class.
- Feb. 14: Read Hurston's story "Sweat" (coursepack) and compose three questions about the story from a psychoanalytic perspective. Post your questions and/or comments on the story on webcaucus.
Final draft of essay one

- Feb. 16: **Structuralism**
Read Bressler, chapter 5. Make sure you understand all the bold words. Be prepared to explain two of them in class.
- Feb. 18: Read Barthes' "The Structuralist Activity." Compose three questions about Barthes' essay. You may also use Hurston's story for this assignment.
- Feb. 21: class is cancelled
- Feb. 23: **Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction**
Read Bressler, chapter 6. Make sure you understand all the bold words. Be prepared to explain two of them in class.
Assignment #6: Compose a two page essay in which you discuss the advantages and shortcomings of either Psychoanalytic or Structuralist criticism, using any of the literary texts we've read so far for the purpose of illustration.
- Feb. 25: Read Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (coursepack)

WINTER BREAK

- Mar. 7: Jeanette Winterson, excerpt from Written on the Body (handout)
Assignment #7, to be posted on webcaucus: respond to assigned excerpt as an illustration of post-structuralist criticism. Ask yourself: to what extent does the text validate or undermine deconstruction?
- Mar. 9: **Approaching drama**: find out about *protagonist*, *antagonist*, and *plot* from a glossary of literary terms. Read The Tempest, Acts 1 and 2.
- Mar. 11: Read The Tempest, Acts 3 and 4. Choose one character and study him or her in detail. Be prepared to perform a few lines from that character for class.
- Mar. 14: Read The Tempest, Act 5.
Assignment #8: Compose a 2-page essay in which you describe your response to a specific character or any other aspect of the play (such as plot, symbolism, language, or something that really puzzles or intrigues you).
- Mar. 16: Read "Why Study Critical Controversies about The Tempest?" and "Literary Study, Politics and Shakespeare: A Debate" (Tempest). Post your own position in the debate on webcaucus.
- Mar. 18: **Feminism**
Read Bressler, chapter 8. Make sure you understand the bold terms.
The students responsible for Feminism will give a presentation and explore The Tempest from a feminist perspective.
- Mar. 21: **Marxism**
Read Bressler, chapter 9. Make sure you understand the bold terms.
Students responsible for Marxism will give a presentation and explore The Tempest from a marxist perspective.
- Mar. 23: **Cultural Criticism and New Historicism**
Read Bressler, chapter 10. Make sure you understand the bold terms. Students responsible for Cultural Criticism will give a presentation and explore The Tempest from the perspective of cultural criticism. Be prepared to explain two of them in class.
Assignment #9: In two pages explain the advantages and shortcomings of either Feminist, Marxist, or Cultural Criticism. Use The Tempest or another text for the purpose of illustration.

Detailed prospectus for essay # 2

- Mar. 25: Spring Recess
- Mar. 28: **Post-Colonial Criticism**
Read Takaki's "The 'Tempest' in the Wilderness" (Tempest)
Read Paul Brown, "This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine"
(Tempest). Students responsible for Post-Colonial Criticism will give a presentation.
- Mar. 30: Writing Back to The Tempest
Aime Cesaire, A Tempest
Students responsible for Cesaire's play will guide class discussion
- April 1: Aime Cesaire, A Tempest
Students responsible for Cesaire's play will guide class discussion
- Apr. 4: **Writing workshop: draft of essay #2**
- Apr. 6: **Writing workshop**
- Apr. 8: **Writing workshop**
- Apr. 11: Read Nussbaum's "The Narrative Imagination" (CP). Compose three questions or comments about the essay. Would any of the other critics we've read this semester agree with her position? Do you agree with her position on the place of literature in a civic society?
- Apr. 13: Study preparation for Final Exam
- Apr. 15: Study time; class is cancelled
- Apr. 18: **Final draft of essay #2**
- Apr. 22: Final Exam: 11:00-12:30am