

# INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY STUDIES

ENGL2900 – H1 Hybrid

Spring 2021 M/W/F 10:00-10:50 (MW in-person in Dunlap 313; F by Zoom)  
[Zoom Link for Friday Meetings](#) – Passcode: 000000

**Prof.** Ian Afflerbach

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**Office Hours:** MW 3-5 using [this Zoom Link](#) - Passcode: 000000

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

What's the value of reading and writing about literature? You wouldn't be taking this course if you didn't believe—and probably, believe quite fiercely—that literature matters, that it has real value in your life and in the lives of others. And yet rarely do we have the opportunity in our courses to slow down and ask just what forms that value might take. As a gateway for upper-level coursework in literature, this class allows us precisely such an opportunity. We have three major aims this semester:

- 1) To understand the history of literary studies, what makes a class like this possible, what critical debates and interpretive schools have come and gone over the last hundred years.
- 2) To survey a variety of major critical theories and reading practices you can use to enrichen your relationship to literary studies and complicate your sense of what “literature” means.
- 3) To practice thinking, speaking, writing, and researching about literature with serious professional standards, and to recognize the portable value of these practices in our lives.

Unlike most literature courses, we will not cling to one nation or period or genre; instead, we will focus on building an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the value of literature. We'll begin with the foundations of literary study in formalism and the New Critics, then complicate their ideas by introducing questions of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Finally, you'll have a chance to think about and explain which contemporary forms of literary study matter most to *you*.

### Learning Objectives:

- Recognize literature's relevance to many social issues within and outside academia.
- Understand major critical conversations about literature and their continued relevance.
- Learn to see literary studies as problem-solving and learn ways to problematize literature.
- Drawing effectively on primary and secondary sources in argumentative writing.
- Develop an effective oral presentation explaining and defend your literary insights.
- Read a wide selection of guided and self-selected pieces of literary theory and criticism.
- Demonstrate grammatical, mechanical, and stylistic effectiveness.

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Two books, available at the [bookstore](#); if purchased elsewhere, must be same editions:

- Nella Larsen *Passing* (Norton Edition)
- Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness* (Norton Edition)

One film: Francis Ford Coppola *Apocalypse Now*, to be viewed on your own time.

Many shorter readings available as PDFs on D2L (Content/Readings).

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Project 1: Close Reading Paper** (15%)

**Project 2: Ideology Critique Paper** (15%)

**Project 3: Literary Talk** (15%)

**Active Participation** (25%)

**Final Portfolio** (30%)

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

**Literary History:** You will gain familiarity with major works in the African American literary tradition and with the historical contexts to which they were responding.

**Writing:** Through our assignments, you can expect to work on (a) clear, concise expression of your ideas in prose, (b) detail-driven argument (c) readerly engagement, and (d) citation practices.

**Speaking:** During our discussions, you will be able to work on (a) building comfort in fluid group conversation, (b) preparing questions to contribute (c) eliminating verbal fillers.

## HOW TO APPROACH THIS COURSE

**Active Participation:** Because our course will be driven by discussions, it is vital that you show up ready to be actively involved. This means volunteering your ideas and questions, commenting on and challenging our readings, and drawing upon your individual interpretations and experiences.

**Active Reading:** All of our online readings must be printed, marked up, and brought to class with you. Marking up, or “annotating” a text, means taking notes, creating questions, and just recording places that interest, confused, amuse, or otherwise move you.

**Professionalism:** The classroom is a professional space and demands the same forms of etiquette as you would bring to a workplace. Your participation grade will decrease—or I may mark you absent—if you cannot (a) be on time each day, (b) come prepared each day with readings and notes, (c) respect your peers by refraining from any background chatter.

**Technology in the Classroom:** We will conduct discussions without laptops. At all times, cell phones should be kept out of sight (and silent); failure to do so will lead to lowered participation grade, or even an absence for the day.

## COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance:** Students can miss **three** classes over the course of the semester, for any reason, without penalty. Each of the next three additional unexcused absences will deduct half a letter grade from the student’s final grade. Missing **seven** classes results in automatic failure. Absences can only be exempted by the provost or vice president (e.g., participation in official athletics, religious observance, other campus activities). Students who have not done the pre-writing required or who sleep during class or who arrive late may be counted absent.

**Late Work:** If you anticipate a situation that will prevent you from finishing a project, you need to e-mail me *before* your due date, explain the situation, and propose a new deadline.

**Plagiarism:** Whether you intend to do so or not, passing off the words or ideas of others as your own is a serious academic offense. Pleading ignorance is no defense. If you are the least bit unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me and/or check [this website](#). Please also consult UNG’s [Student Code of Conduct](#).

## FINDING SUPPORT

**Instructor Contact:** Please try to visit office hours. If you have a scheduling conflict, let me know and we can find another time. Even one meeting per unit can have an enormous impact on your purpose and goals going forward. Email is the best way to reach me for any simple questions; I try to respond within 24 hours.

**Outside Help:** Students should have a basic understanding of English grammar and a familiarity with the rules of standard English. If you are concerned about your basic grammar and mechanics, or would simply like [additional support](#) for your writing, please contact the [Writing Center](#) or Gainesville's Academic Computing Tutoring and Testing Center ([ACIT Center](#)). I also wholeheartedly recommend the grammar, citation, and style guide offered by the [Owl at Purdue](#).

**Disability Services:** University of North Georgia is committed to equal access to its programs, services, and activities. Students who require accommodations must register with Disability Services and submit supporting documentation. Disability Services provides accommodation memos for eligible students to give to their instructors. Students are responsible for making arrangements with instructors, and must give reasonable prior notice of the need for accommodation

**Feeling Overwhelmed:** College can be a stressful time; don't hesitate to ask for help if you're feeling overly anxious, stressed, or depressed. UNG has two main ways to seek support: through the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) and through the counseling services offered by the [Student Center](#).

Please consult [UNG's Supplemental Syllabus](#) for campus-wide regulations.

**Course Pre-Requisites: ENGL1102 with a C or higher and one 2000-level ENGL course with a B or higher**

### **H1 HYBRID STATUS**

As an H1-hybrid course, we are required to have a mixture of in-person and online work. Our class enrollment is small enough that we do not need to divide into two groups to meet safely in Dunlap 313. For this reason, **we will meet Mondays and Wednesdays in person in Dunlap 313.**

**However, on Fridays we will be meeting by zoom;** these are required meetings, but should allow you a little more freedom (travel times, etc). If you have internet issues or other complications with our Zoom meetings, please just let me know and I promise I will do my best to be accommodating. You can find the links for our meetings (and my office hours) at the top of this document.

**Make sure you have read and understood this information!**

## COURSE CALENDAR

|  |        |  |
|--|--------|--|
| Week 1   | Jan 11 | Introduce Course   |
| <b><u>UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONS OF LITERARY STUDIES</u></b><br><b><u>Theories:</u></b> Humanism, New Criticism, the “Myth and Symbol” School<br><b><u>Practices:</u></b> Close Reading, Quotation, Composing Sentences   |        |  |
|  | Jan 13 | Bertens, “Reading for Meaning: Practical Criticism and New Criticism”  |
| (zoom)   | Jan 15 | Brooks, “Keats’s Sylvan Historian” and Keats, “Ode to a Grecian Urn”   |
| 2  | Jan 18 | <b>HOLIDAY</b>   |
|  | Jan 20 | Brooks and Warren, selections from <i>Understanding Poetry</i> (including poems by Dickinson, Donne, and Frost)                    |
| (zoom)   | Jan 22 | Brooks and Warren, selections from <i>Understanding Fiction</i> (including stories by Hemingway and Joyce)                         |
| 3  | Jan 25 | Williams, <i>Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace</i> (selections)  |
|  | Jan 27 | Harvey, “Flow”; Goscik/Hutchinson “Attending to Style”; Gordon “The Creation of Sentences” and “The Comma”                         |
| (zoom)   | Jan 29 | Hurley “The Sonnet” and Sonnets by Wyatt, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Wordsworth, Yeats, and Millay                               |
| 4  | Feb 1  | <b>Project 1 Discussion</b>  |
|  | Feb 3  | Foster, “When in Doubt, It’s from Shakespeare,” “...or the Bible,” “Hanseldee and Gretledum,” and “It’s Greek to Me”               |
| (zoom)   | Feb 5  | Marx, “Sleepy Hollow, 1844” and Toomer, “Reapers” and Pound, “In a Station of the Metro”<br><b>Project 1 Due Sunday at 11:55pm</b> |
| <b><u>UNIT 2: THINKING ABOUT HISTORY AND POLITICS</u></b><br><b><u>Theories:</u></b> Critical Race Theory, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Class and Intersectionality<br><b><u>Practices:</u></b> Historicism, Using Secondary Sources, Structuring an Argument |        |  |
| 5  | Feb 8  | Bertens, “Political Reading”   |
|  | Feb 10 | Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (Part I 1-43)   |
| (zoom)   | Feb 12 | Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (Part II 43-82)   |
| 6  | Feb 15 | “Reviews” (Larsen Part III 83-102) and “Contemporary Coverage of Passing and Race” (Larsen 105-129)                                |

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|  | <b>Feb 17</b> | Washington, "Mystery Woman of the Harlem Renaissance" (350-56), Davis, "Nella Larsen's Harlem Aesthetic" (379-387) and Various authors, "Selected Writings from the Harlem Renaissance" (Larsen 285-332)         |
| <b>(zoom)</b>  | <b>Feb 19</b> | Brody, "Clare Kendry's 'True' Colors" (393-409) and Crenshaw "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"  |
| <b>7</b>   | <b>Feb 22</b> | Lynn, "Gendering the Text"   |
|  | <b>Feb 24</b> | McDowell, "Black Female Sexuality in Passing" (363-79) and Butler, "Passing, Queering: Nella Larsen's Psychoanalytic Challenge" (417-35)   |
| <b>(zoom)</b>  | <b>Feb 26</b> | <b>Project 2 Discussion</b>  |
| <b>8</b>   | <b>Mar 1</b>  | Graff/Birkenstein from <i>They Say I Say</i>   |
|  | <b>Mar 3</b>  | Hayot, "The Uneven U"  |
| <b>(zoom)</b>  | <b>Mar 5</b>  | Samuel Delany "Aye, and Gomorrah..."<br><b>Project 2 Due Sunday at 11:55pm</b>   |
| <p><b><u>UNIT 3: CRITIQUE IN OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD</u></b><br/> <b><u>Theories:</u></b> Ecocriticism, Postcolonial/Global Studies, Deconstruction and Adaptation<br/> <b><u>Practices:</u></b> Research, Building a Bibliography, Engaging Critics and Theories</p> |               |  |
| <b>9</b>   | <b>Mar 8</b>  | Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (3-34) and Watt, "Impressionism and Symbolism in <i>Heart of Darkness</i> " (320-26)  |
|  | <b>Mar 10</b> | Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (34-54)   |
| <b>(zoom)</b>  | <b>Mar 12</b> | Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (54-77)   |
| <b>10</b>  | <b>Mar 15</b> | Ashcroft et al <i>The Empire Writes Back</i> "Introduction" and Achebe "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i> " (306-20) and Said, "Two Visions of <i>Heart of Darkness</i> " (361-69) |
|  | <b>Mar 17</b> | Lewis, "Basics of Online Searching" and "Scholarly Journals"   |
| <b>(zoom)</b>  | <b>Mar 19</b> | <b>No Class</b>  |
| <b>11</b>  | <b>Mar 22</b> | Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses"   |
|  | <b>Mar 24</b> | McCarthy, "A Choice of Nightmares: The Ecology of 'Heart of Darkness'"   |
| <b>(zoom)</b>  | <b>Mar 26</b> | Ammons, selected poems   |
| <b>12</b>  | <b>Mar 29</b> | Coppola <i>Apocalypse Now</i> (film)   |
|  | <b>Mar 31</b> | Kinder, "The Power of Adaptation" and Elmore, "Conrad and Coppola: Rendering Empire Visible"   |
|  | <b>Apr 2</b>  | <b>HOLIDAY</b>   |

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| 13   | Apr 5  | <b>Project 3 Discussion</b>  |
|  | Apr 7  | Murphin, “Deconstruction and ‘Heart of Darkness’” and Meisel “Decentering ‘Heart of Darkness’”   |
| (zoom)                                     | Apr 9  | Stevens, “The Idea of Order at Key West” and “The Snow Man” and “Anecdote of Men by the Thousands” and “Anecdote of a Jar”<br><b>Project 3 Due Sunday at 11:55pm</b> |
| <b>UNIT 4: WHAT LITERATURE MEANS TO US</b> |        |  |
| 14   | Apr 12 | Thomson, “Culture Wars and Warring About Culture”  |
|  | Apr 14 | Reed “The Way We Read Now”   |
| (zoom)                                     | Apr 16 | Worth, “The Benefits of Reading”   |
| 15   | Apr 19 | <b>Writing Time (no class)</b>   |
|  | Apr 21 | <b>Writing Time (no class)</b>   |
|  | Apr 23 | <b>Writing Time (no class)</b>   |
| 16   | Apr 26 | <b>Literary Talk Presentations</b>   |
|  | Apr 28 | <b>Literary Talk Presentations</b>   |
|  | Apr 30 | <b>Literary Talk Presentations (if needed)</b>   |

**FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE on D2L**  
Tue May 4<sup>th</sup> at 1pm