**English 200: Introduction to English Studies**

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*“The greatest patriots in our time will be those who explore our ideology critically, with particular attention to the gaps between mythology and practice. Above all, we must start with our most beloved icons, not the ones we profess allegiance to, but those that really have the power to move and shake us.”*

*-* Robert Scholes, *Protocols of Reading*

*“The job of an intellectual is to push at and question what has been said before, to rethink and reinterpret the texts he or she is dealing with.”*

-Joseph Harris, *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*

**The Course Texts**

You are not required to purchase a textbook for this course. All readings will be accessible on Blackboard. That said, you should budget for printing costs, and you will be expected to print, read, and annotate all assigned readings.

**The Course Description**

English 200 is designed as the Department’s gateway course to the undergraduate English major. As such, English 200 is a broad survey course designed to introduce you to the diverse discipline of English Studies, its subfields, and the critical and methodological approached used within and across these subfields. This section of English 200 is focused on developing the critical habits of mind associated with “reading” in the humanities. In doing so, we will explore a variety of theoretical perspectives on what it means to read and interpret multiple types of texts, and we will discuss debates surrounding the value and usefulness of the skills, practices, and habits of mind associated with work in English and the humanities more broadly.

**Critical Questions We Will Explore**

* What is “English”? What (and whose) purposes does it serve?
* What does “literary” mean? What rules have governed (and do govern) inclusion in or exclusion from literary canons?
* What does it mean to do “research” in English? What are the essential methods and standards of research in the discipline?
* How can we best study and articulate the relationships between and among writers, texts, readers, and contexts?
* What is the nature of authorship? What (and whose) purposes does it serve? How does context affect/effect authorship?
* What reading strategies are appropriate and effective for different kinds of texts and contexts?
* What writing strategies are appropriate for different kinds of texts and contexts?
* How do we negotiate our different understandings and interpretations of texts?
* How do gender, race, class, sexual orientation and other cultural markers inform our study of texts and textual practices?
* How do new technologies inform our study of texts and textual practices?

**Learning Objectives**

Introduction to English Studies is a required course for English majors and recommended for minors. Non-majors are discouraged from enrolling.

The course will:

1. Introduce students to the variety of areas within the field of English Studies, particularly those represented within our department,
2. Enable students to appreciate their opportunities for pursuing particular areas of study within our department, as well as informing them of enhancement activities such as internships, contests, *Laurus*, Literary League, visiting scholars and writers, and other opportunities to participate in the general social and intellectual life of the department;
3. Introduce students to the habits of mind and basic research and writing methodologies in the various areas of English Studies, including practice in locating and incorporating secondary sources into their writing and documenting sources using the MLA Style;
4. Engage students in reading and writing activities which explore the complexity of relationships between and among writers, readers, texts, and contexts;
5. Encourage students to explore the opportunities and challenges presented by multiple critical perspectives;
6. Encourage students to study a variety of texts and textual practices with cultural, historical, and rhetorical awareness.

**Course Components**

**Reading**

A large part of any English course is reading*.* It is my hope that the readings I have chosen will allow us to gain insights into the methodological approaches of English Studies, that they will allow us to explore some of fierce debates about the nature and value(s) of the field, and that they will help inspire, feed, and complicate your work and thinking in the class. I have specifically chosen readings I hope will complicate your conceptions of what English is and which will hopefully work to expand your notions of textuality and what is “fair game” for analysis. It is my hope that by the end of the semester you will see that you are surrounded by complex texts and that everything from the items you buy at HyVee to the clothes you wear, to the television shows you watch are texts that can be read and analyzed.

**In-Class Participation and Attendance**

Every class meeting will require your involvement in class discussion. Sometimes our discussions will be about the ideas in the texts we read, sometimes they will be focused on analyzing texts that your or I have brought into the class, and sometimes they will center on some of the debates from inside and outside of the field. You are expected to be engaged and to make an effort to participate. It is my goal to create an atmosphere that invites comments and questions. If participating in class conversations is a struggle for you, talk with me, and we will work to brainstorm other ways for you to participate.

Because this is a course requirement for the major, attendance is very important. More than three absences will lower your grade. More than six will make it impossible to pass the class.

**Thinking Work**

English 200 is a class where we use writing to discover and learn instead of just writing to show others what we know. Every day I will be asking you to write in and out of class. In between formal drafts of class projects, you will complete *thinking work* which allows you to respond to readings and practice various literary and critical strategies. This thinking work is typically brief (typically no more than a two pages) and is graded on a check/check plus/check minus system. Students who attempt the assignment, demonstrate effort and thinking, and follow the directions are guaranteed a check.

**“This is so cool!!” Shares**

Once during the semester, each of you will bring in some sort of text to share with the class. Don’t think of these as formal presentations. Rather, they are an opportunity for you to bring in something that is interesting, offer a quick analysis and interpretation of what you think is going on, and then lead the class in a quick discussion. These shares are designed to help assure that our class practices the skills and methodologies of English Studies on a daily basis, and they are also an opportunity for us to explore the incredible diversity of types of texts which English Studies analyzes. While you might choose to bring in a poem or song lyrics or a music video, you might just as easily bring in a shopping list you found on the sidewalk, an advertisement, a piece of product packaging, a meme, or a screen shot of a Facebook conversation.

**Writing Projects**

In addition to the informal thinking work that you will be completing over the course of the semester, there will be three textual explication essays, an ekphrastic/translation project, and a final research essay which investigates the debates surrounding the purpose and value of the English major. While I provide some basic information about these projects below, you will be provided with more detailed assignment sheets and evaluation criteria as they approach in the semester. If you have any concerns or want to start brainstorming about topics earlier in the semester, please do not hesitate to let me know.

**Required Office Hour Visits**

Each of you will be required to meet with me **THREE TIMES** during the semester to chat about the class. When you schedule these visits is up to you. Maybe you want to schedule an initial meeting to talk about your concerns or fears about the class. Maybe you will want to conference over a draft of one of the larger writing projects. Maybe you will just want to discuss a reading further or chat about how you see your career in English developing. You shape these conferences. The goal for these is to help you get into the practice of setting up appointments and meeting with professors; this is a valuable and important skill and helps foster relationships which are incredibly important.

**Major Writing Projects**

In addition to the daily work of the class, there are three main types of major writing projects you will complete over the course of the semester. You will receive more detailed assignment sheets on these projects as they approach during the semester, but brief descriptions are also provided below:

**Three Textual Analysis Projects**

Over the course of the semester, you will write three 4-5 page textual analysis papers. Much like the “This Is So Cool!!” shares, these textual analysis projects are pretty open in terms of the type of “text” you might analyze (and you could even extend your shares into one of these analyses). Whatever you do, though, I would encourage you to write about multiple types of texts throughout the semester (i.e. don’t write all three as poetry analyses or all three as advertisement analysis); work to develop critical dexterity and the ability to write about multiple types of texts. The goal for these projects is to practice and demonstrate your developing ability to analyze and write about texts. Though the evaluation of writing is always complex, I will be asking myself three main questions when I grade these: 1) How has the writer worked to establish the importance or significance of analyzing this text (exigency). 2) How is the writer attending to formal features of the text and making links between these formal features and their argument (close reading and theorization)? And 3) How is the writer making an interpretive claim about the meaning of this text, and how does the writer articulate the value and importance of that claim? (claim + “so what?”)

**Ekphrastic Project and Analysis**

For this assignment, you will engage in the critical and creative practice of ekphrasis, the description or re-presentation of a text through another medium or genre. Classically, we usually think of ekphrasis as poetry written about art (as is the case with “Ode to a Grecian Urn” by John Keats), but that isn’t necessarily the only means of producing an ekphrastic piece. Ekphrasis, in Greek, means “to speak out,” and so refers to a practice whereby one provides voice to something seemingly static and unable to speak further. For this project you might write a traditional ekphrastic poem, or maybe you will choose to think about how one might reimagine a short story or a movie as a poem. Or, maybe you want to go the opposite way, perhaps you want to look at a poem and write a more extensive story surrounding it. Your creative piece will be accompanied by a 3-4 page reflection which discusses your formal and narratological choices made in re-presenting this material.

**“What Are You Going to Do with That?” Research Paper**

The final project is a 5-7 research essay that invites you to reflect on the social and cultural value of the English major. As many of you likely know, we are at a cultural and historical moment where the value of the humanities and majors like English is under a great deal of scrutiny. Enrollments are decreasing, departments’ budgets are being cut, and English majors have to spend more and more time justifying their area of study. As a class of English majors, I am sure many of you have experienced the awkward moment where someone asks you what you study, and when you respond with “English,” they are likely to say “What are you going to do with that?” or “So you are planning to teach?” or bizarrely “Oh, I’d better watch my grammar around you!” This paper invites you to engage in multiple types of research. You will be expected to do some work to come to terms with the history of the English major, to discuss the current debates surrounding the majors value, and finally, to offer an argument about what, if any, value the major has. You might also think about how curriculum might be revised to be more useful, or you might question the cultural imperative for a field of study to be “useful.” In addition to pulling together relevant published scholarly and popular perspectives on this issue, I would like you to interview two people in the process of writing this paper; one person should be an expert within the field of English Studies, and one person should be someone from outside of the field. In the paper, I should see you carefully braiding your point of view with those of published writers and your interview subjects. To accompany this essay, you will write a mission statement for what you see as your ideal English department.

**Grading**

**Grade Breakdown**

Participation 10%

“This is so cool!” Shares 10%

Three Textual Analysis (15% each) 45%

Ekphrastic Project and Analysis 15%

“What Are You Going to Do with That?” Paper 20%

**Grade Point Equivalent for Projects Grade Scale for Final Grades**

A = 4.0 A = 3.80-4.00

A- = 3.6 A- = 3.55-3.79

B+ =3.3 B+ = 3.25-3.54

B = 3.0 B = 2.90-3.24

B- = 2.7 B- = 2.55-2.89

C+ = 2.4 C+ = 2.20-2.54

C = 2.0 C = 1.90-2.19

C- = 1.7 C- = 1.55-1.89

D = 1.00

Course Policies and Service Statements

**Late Work**

I do not accept late work. Late work is annoying, and it makes me think less of you. **If you know that you will be unable to complete an assignment on time, contact me, and we can possibly adjust the due date.** If you are unable to come to class, email the homework to me the same day before the end of the class period (we have class from 12:30-1:45pm). Otherwise, it will be considered late and will not be graded at all.

**Use of Electronic Devices**

I understand that we live in a society with seemingly ubiquitous wireless devices, and I understand the temptation to constantly check email, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and other social media. However, I ask that you please avoid using your electronic devices during the class period. In order to facilitate this, I would recommend you turn devices off or to silent for the duration of the class. If there is an emergency or reason you need to have a specific electronic device on, please speak to me. Also, know that though I rarely see it worth my time to scold a student for using a cell phone or tablet during class, these are rhetorical acts, and as such, they shape how I view you as a student and human being.

**Academic Accommodation**

Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) provides individualized academic support for students with documented disabilities. Support services can include extended test time, textbooks and handouts in alternative formats (electronic texts, Braille, taped texts, etc), classroom notes, sign language interpreters, and transcriptionists. SSD not only accommodates students who have visible disabilities, but also students with other types of disabilities that impact college life. If you have a documented disability that is impacting your academic progress, please call SSD at 472-3787 and schedule an appointment with the Director, Veva Cheney, or the Assistant Director, Barbara Woodhead. If you do not have a documented disability but you are having difficulties with your coursework (such as receiving low grades even though you study more than your classmates or find you run out of time for test questions when the majority of your peers finish their exams in the allotted time), you may schedule an appointment with Veva Cheney or Barbara Woodhead to discuss the challenges you are experiencing.

**The Writing Center at UNL**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing. Please check the Writing Center website at www.unl.edu/writing for locations, hours, and information about scheduling appointments.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Discourse conventions of the Western academy expect you to conduct yourself with academic integrity. All work you turn in during this course is expected tobe your own work written for this course during this semester. Passing another’s work off as your own is grounds for failure in this course. You should also properly cite texts (digital or print) that you use for this course using correct MLA citation to be sure you are giving proper credit to ideas, words, and passages that are not your own. If you have any questions about plagiarism or about how to properly cite your sources, please feel free to come to me with those questions. UNL policies for academic dishonesty are elaborated in your Bulletin.

**Tentative Course Calendar**

(Will almost certainly change)

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| **Week** | **Tuesday** | | **Thursday** | | **Notes** |
| 1 | 8/26 | Syllabus and Course Introduction: What is English, and why study it? | 8/28 | **Have Read:** Scholes, “The English Apparatus”  **Thinking Word Due:** Scholes discusses several binary oppositions shaping the field of English Studies; choose one, discuss how you think this binary came about, why it persists, the dangers it presents, and what might be done to complicate it. |  |
| 2 | 9/2 | **Have Read:** Barthes, “The Death of the Author” and Foucault’s “What Is an Author?”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 9/4 | **Have Read:** Abrams, “Orientations of Critical Theories”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | Labor Day Sept 1  Last day to drop Sept 5 |
| 3 | 9/9 | **Have Read:** O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 9/11 | **Have Read:** Walker’s “Everyday Use”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 4 | 9/16 | **Have Read:** Moore’s “How to Become a Writer” AND Williams’s “This is Just to Say”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 9/18 | **\*\*Draft of Textual Analysis 1 Due\*\***  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 5 | 9/23 | **Have Read:** Eliot’s “Lovesong for J. Alfred Prufrock AND Pagh’s “Lovesong”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 9/25 | **\*\*Textual Analysis 1 Due\*\*** |  |
| 6 | 9/30 | Film Viewing: *Fight Club*  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 10/2 | Film Viewing: *Fight Club*  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 7 | 10/7 | **Have Read:** Bordwell, “Principles of Narration”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 10/9 | **Have Read:** Scholes, “How to Read a Video Text”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 8 | 10/14 | **Have Read:** Eco, “Blue Jeans” and selections from Barthes *Mythologies*  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 10/16 | **\*\*Draft of Textual Analysis 2 Due\*\***  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | Last day to change to pass/no pass Oct 17 |
| 9 | 10/21 | **\*\*No Class-Fall Break\*\*** | 10/23 | **\*\*Textual Analysis 2 Due\*\*** | Fall Break Oct 20th and 21st. |
| 10 | 10/28 | **Have Read:** Bordo’s from *Unbearable Weight*  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 10/30 | **Have Read:** Poetry Selections from Waite and Pagh  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 11 | 11/4 | **Have Read:** DuCille’s “Dyes and Dolls”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 11/6 | **Have Read:** Medhurst’s “Batman, Deviance, and Camp”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 12 | 11/11 | **Have Read:** Waggoner’s “Videogames, Avatars, and Identities”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 11/13 | **\*\*Draft of Textual Analysis 3 Due\*\***  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | Last day to withdraw Nov 14th |
| 13 | 11/18 | **Have Read:** Sconce, “Trashing the Academy”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 11/20 | **Have Read:** Songtag’s from *Illness as Metaphor*  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 14 | 11/25 | **\*\*Ekphrastic Project and Reflection Due\*\*** | 11/27 | **No- Class-Thanksgiving Break** | Thanksgiving Break Nov 26th-30th. |
| 15 | 12/2 | **Have Read:** Two Responses to “Do We Need More Humanities Majors?” in the *Washington Post* AND Brooks’s “The Humanist Vocation”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 12/4 | **Have Read:** Fish’s “What Colleges Should Teach” and watch interview with Harold Bloom  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA |  |
| 16 | 12/9 | **Have Read:** Kristof’s “Don’t Dismiss the Humanities” AND Strauss’s “Why I Hire English Majors”  **Thinking Work Due:** TBA | 12/11 | **\*\*Draft “What Are You Going to Do with That?’ Paper Due by 3pm\*\***  Evals and Celebration |  |
| 17  FINALS | 12/16 |  | 12/18 |  | **\*\*Final “What Are You Going to Do with That?’ Paper Due by Friday at 3pm\*\*** |