

English 200 (05 & 06)  
 Fall, 2011  
 S. Slote

Office Hrs: TTh 9:00-10:30, MWF 2:30-3:30  
 and by appointment  
 ODDF 229, x4327 (sslote@allegheny.edu)

## *Reading Literature: "Where You Are Is Who You Are"*

Clearly, "place"—descriptions of location or landscape--matters in literature. Even the seemingly simple choice of setting can be richly significant in aesthetic or psychic ways. A setting can also force readers to confront preconceptions about an area and its inhabitants. Yet beyond the artistic advantages provided by a choice of setting lie larger philosophical questions about the relationship between geography and identity for all of us. To what extent are any of us in part created by the environment or community in which we live? To what extent are we limited by that environment? What happens when "where we are" is hostile or oppressive? We will be exploring questions such as these in the literature we read this semester.

Concurrently, we'll focus on the fundamental but crucial question of what it means to be a reader of literature. What expectations do we, as readers, bring to a text? What demands might a text make of us, its audience? As we become increasingly self-aware as readers of literature, we will work to meet the 5 goals articulated by the English department for English 200:

1. To master basic terms of literary study
2. To use close reading as a primary skill of literary analysis
3. To recognize the conventions of different genres
4. To develop interpretive arguments in writing and discussion
5. To understand the significance of historically underrepresented perspectives and traditions

### EXPECTATIONS/GRADING:

In order to meet the goals outlined above, your active presence, preparation and participation is essential. I will expect you to prepare reading assignments thoroughly, to attend and participate in class discussion regularly, and to complete your written work in an intelligent and timely fashion. Please note that failure to attend class meetings and to participate actively in class will lower your final grade. ***Additionally, you must complete all written work in order to qualify to pass the course.*** Your grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

- 3 short essays (15% each)
- Final Exam (15%)
- Informal Assignments (15%)
- Poetry Quiz (10%)
- Class Participation (15%)

*A note on plagiarism:* Of course, all written assignments in the course must be your own original work. Any information that you take from other sources must be properly cited according to MLA guidelines, which we will review in class. If you have any questions about the proper use and acknowledgment of sources, please ask me. You and I are both bound by the Honor Code. Any writing that makes unacknowledged us of the work of others, including material from the Internet, will be sent to the Honor Committee.

***Please note:*** Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at (814) 332-2898. Disability Services is part of the Learning Commons and is located in Pelletier Library. Please do this as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

A list of criteria for evaluating class participation is appended to this syllabus.

Required Texts:

Willa Cather, *My Antonia*

Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom's Children*

James Joyce, *Dubliners*

Brian Friel, *Translations*

Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*

Ferguson, et al., *The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Shorter 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*

Murfin and Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*

**Note: Readings from the course packet are marked (P); poetry readings from the Norton Anthology are marked (N) followed by the appropriate page number. Readings marked (H) are handouts.**

Schedule

9/2 F Introduction

*Landscape and the Self*

9/5 M No Class

9/7 W Frost, "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things" (H); Reading your writings  
**(place description due electronically Monday, 5 p.m.)**

9/9 F Heaney, "Digging" (N1179); Bishop, "Five Flights Up" (H)

9/12 M Steinbeck, "Chrysanthemums" (H); **close reading 1 due**

9/14 W Looking at close Readings; Begin Cather, *My Antonia*

9/16 F Cather

9/19 M Cather

9/21 W Cather, **close reading 2 due**

9/23 F Cather

9/26 M Writing about literature; Wilbur, "Blackberries for Amelia" (H) and sample essays (H)

9/28 W Writing Workshop **(draft paragraphs due, Tuesday, 5 p.m.)**

9/30 F The Romantic Tradition; Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up" (N478);  
Scansion Workshop; **essay 1 due**

10/3 M Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight" (N488); Bedford, "romanticism," "Romantic Period (in English Literature)"

10/5 W Wordsworth, "The Solitary Reaper" (484); "The World is Too Much with Us" (N484)

10/7 F Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale" (N582); "To Autumn" (N587)

10/10 M Frost, "Mending Wall" (N795); Wilbur, "Advice to a Prophet" (N1022);

10/12 W Historical Documents Workshop; Bedford, "the new historicism," "the New Criticism"

10/14 F **Poetry Quiz**

10/17 M **Fall Break**

*Travels Home*

- 10/19 W Jewett, "A White Heron" (H); Bedford, "local color fiction"  
 10/21 F Chesnut, "The Goopher'd Grapevine" (H)
- 10/24 M Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" (H)  
 10/26 W Glaspell, *Trifles* (H); introduction to drama terms; **scene study 1 due**  
 10/28 F Glaspell, *Trifles*

*Geography and Alienation*

- 10/31 M Hughes, "Theme for English B" (N915); Walcott, "A Far Cry from Africa" (N1132);  
**Essay 2 due**
- 11/2 W Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" (in *Uncle Tom's Children*)  
 11/4 F Wright, "Big Boy Leaves Home" (UTC)
- 11/7 M Wright, "Long Black Song" (UTC)  
 11/9 W Camus, "The Guest" (H)  
 11/11 F Lahiri, *The Namesake*
- 11/14 M Lahiri  
 11/16 W Lahiri  
 11/18 F Lahiri
- 11/21 M Lahiri  
 11/23&25 **Thanksgiving Break**
- 11/28 M Joyce, "The Dead" from *Dubliners*; **essay 3 due**  
 11/30 W "The Dead"  
 12/2 F "The Dead"
- 12/5 M Friel, *Translations*  
 12/7 W *Translations*  
 12/9 F *Translations*
- 12/12 M *Translations*; **scene study 2 due**  
 12/14 W Course Review

**Final Exam: (05) Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.; (06) Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.**

**Criteria for grading class participation:**

While it is difficult to quantify the success of a student's contributions to class discussion (at our best we all contribute differently), here are the general standards I will use to grade participation:

**A range:** Participation at this level is marked by its active nature, its consistency, and its quality. When A participants read an assignment, they prepare to participate in a class discussion; they read the assignments fully, carefully and critically enough to be ready not just to respond to my questions but also to initiate discussion with comments and questions of their own. Such participants will also come to class ready to make and argue assertions about the reading and to think out loud about a text's relation to its

contexts; they will attend to the comments of others in class, agree, elaborate or civilly disagree with them, bring our attention to passages from the reading to make their point and at times connect such thinking with earlier readings or previous class discussion. In short, students who by their engagement in class discussion throughout the semester show themselves to be true students of the course material—persistently conscientious and inquiring—will get an **A** for their efforts. They will also make the course a lot better. (By the way, substituting quantity of participation for quality will not work.)

**B range:** Students who come to every class, have almost always done all the reading, and consistently respond to the questions of others in a way that demonstrates their command of the reading will earn a **B** participation grade. What separates this effort from an **A** one is not so much quantity (teachers are remarkably good at detecting bs) as the level of preparation—one's reading and thinking—that has gone on before one gets to class, especially the kind that enables students to *initiate* discussion. But you can't get a **B** participation grade by just showing up, either, or by talking every once in a while.

**C range:** A **C** participant comes to almost all the classes (no more than four unexcused absences), usually has done most of the reading most of the time, but not with the energy necessary to demonstrate through participation their ongoing engagement with the material. Such a discussant contributes infrequently, maybe one time every other class.

**D range:** Automatic pilot mode. You were physically there most of the time, spoke a few times maybe, but that was it.

**F:** Not coming to class is the traditional route.