

# Introduction to Literature

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LIT2000-1F75

MWF Period 5, RNK 0225

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**Office Hours:** MWF Period 6 and by appointment

## Course Description:

This course examines the role literature has played in individuals' lives and in society. It is centered on three questions: What is literature? Why do we write literature? And why do we read literature? It introduces you to a range of literary genres, from different countries and historical periods.

Among the primary aims of this course is to help you develop the critical skill of analysis and interpretation. You will also learn how formal and stylistic elements as well as historical contexts shape the meaning and significance of literature. By becoming more skillful readers of literature and its contexts, you will become better readers of the worlds that literature addresses, develop your ability to decipher meaning from language, and better understand your own relationship to science, technology, media, commerce, and politics.

## Required Texts to Purchase/Rent:

*(in reading order)*

- William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine) (Simon & Schuster) [ISBN:0743477561]
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Vintage) [ISBN:1400033411]
- Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis* (Pantheon) [ISBN:0375714839]

*Shorter readings will be available on Canvas. Additional scholarly criticism or critical theory may be added throughout the course of the semester.*

**Complete reading assignments appear on the Course Schedule below (page 7).**

## Goals:

In addition to gaining a deeper appreciation of the expressive potential of language and the varieties of literature, you will develop a broader cultural literacy and an understanding of the changing definition and role of literature in society.

Therefore, by the conclusion of the course you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the content of specific literary works and the structures and conventions of different literary genres.
2. Produce original, critical readings of literary texts, using different methods of interpretation and analysis, while identifying and interpreting formal and genre-related elements in the texts.
3. Critically assess the variety of roles that literature has played historically and continues to play in the human experience.
4. Draw connections between literary texts and their biographical, historical, and cultural contexts of authorship and reading.

Grading Scale:

A =	93-100 =	4.0	C =	73-76 =	2.0
A- =	90-92 =	3.67	C- =	70-72 =	1.67
B+ =	87-89 =	3.33	D+ =	67-69 =	1.33
B =	83-86 =	3.0	D =	63-66 =	1.0
B- =	80-82 =	2.67	D- =	60-62 =	.67
C+ =	77-79 =	2.33	E =	0-59 =	0.0

**Note:** A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

Assignments

**All assignment deadlines appear on the Course Schedule below (page 7).**

- Attendance & Participation (200 points)
- 4 Brief Responses (150 points)
- 1 Close Reading (200 points)
- 1 Contextual Analysis (250 points)
- 1 Take-Home Exam (200 points)

**1. Attendance & Participation (200 points)**

**Attendance:** Attendance is *required*. You are allowed **three absences** without any direct effect on your grade. Your final grade will drop by 5 points with each subsequent absence after your first three. If you reach six absences, you will automatically fail the course. If you are facing unusual circumstances that affect your ability to abide by these expectations, please schedule a conference with me.

Similarly, tardiness will not be tolerated. **Three tardies will be considered as an absence.**

Absences for events and obligations recognized by UF as excused absences are not counted against your attendance record for this course. When possible, please discuss

such absences with me *prior* to the date that will be missed. This course complies with [UF's official attendance policies](#).

*If you are absent, it is your responsibility to be aware of all due dates/classwork. If absent due to a scheduled event, you are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.*

**Participation:** Participation includes completing assigned readings, conferences, homework, in-class writing activities, presentations, and discussions. I expect you to come to class prepared to actively participate in class discussions and other in-class activities. This means having completed any reading or homework assigned for that day. Our classroom acts as a safe environment where you can air your opinions and consider those presented by your classmates, so take advantage of this and see how something you are thinking of writing a paper on, for instance, flies in general discussion.

*If something prevents you from actively participating in class, please schedule a conference with me early in the semester to make other arrangements.*

## 2. **Brief Responses (150 points)**

Four times over the semester, you are required to write a brief (300 word) response to the day's reading. These responses must be uploaded to the appropriate Canvas discussion board by **8:00AM** on the due date. We will begin class by discussing your responses, so you might want to bring an electronic or physical copy to class.

In general, these responses raise either *interpretive* or *critical* questions concerned with textual meaning. The various prompts will ask you to comment on issues in the narrative like: themes, figurative language, or symbolism. The prompts may also ask you to make judgments regarding the period, history, politics and ethical questions that are relevant to the text. The open-endedness of interpretive and critical responses indicates that there may well be neither simply "right" nor simply "wrong" answers; the success of a response is based on the evidence and reasoning you employ to support their analysis and judgment.

Each of these responses is worth 50 points. The lowest response grade will be dropped.

## 3. **Close Reading Assignment: 750 words (200 points)**

This assignment will test your skills in close reading, especially as that skill pertains to works of poetry and short fiction. You will be expected to analyze a text carefully and develop an argument regarding the whole of the text through a close reading. No outside sources may be used for this assignment.

## 4. **Contextual Analysis Paper: 1,500 words (250 points)**

This assignment asks you to combine close reading skills with critical concepts or historical information introduced in class or supplemental readings. The goal is for you to produce a strong conceptual argument supported by textual and contextual evidence. Although you will work within the framework of concepts or ideas introduced in class, this assignment is not a research paper.

### 5. *Exam (200 points)*

This take-home exam will be distributed on-line (via Canvas). The exam will be comprised of short essay questions based on readings, lectures, and discussion. Submitted exams will be assessed for evidence of cheating.

#### General Assessment Rubric

Here is the meaning behind the grades I assign to your papers (use the Grading Scale on page 2 to convert between points and letters as necessary); you can use these statements to determine how you might work toward a higher grade:

**A-range papers—Insightful:** Your paper is thoughtful, carefully developed, and clearly presented. You demonstrate strong comprehension of the materials under discussion, clear engagement with course themes and contexts, and offer a sustained reading that successfully illuminates the text or texts under discussion. A-range papers are well-organized, well-supported, and well-developed. They are written in an engaging, polished, and clear prose style.

**B-range papers—Proficient:** Your paper is solid, competent, and capable; it would clearly benefit from **either** more complex development, fuller explanation or examples, stronger organization, increased risk-taking (including subtler or more original examples), **or** clearer presentation (structure, prose style, grammar/mechanics).

**C-range papers—Satisfactory:** Your paper is passable, even promising, but has **multiple** key areas that require **considerable** improvement: a more rigorous topic, a stronger thesis, stronger development of ideas, improved focus (in identifying the issue or guiding the reader through your analysis), fuller explanation of examples, increased risk-taking (including subtler or more original examples), **and/or** clearer presentation (structure, prose style, grammar/mechanics).

**D papers—Poor:** Your paper is not yet adequate. D papers are often off track, superficial, have a non-viable thesis (or struggle to narrow down a viable topic), or they struggle to organize and sustain a persuasive reading in readable prose.

**E papers—Fail:** F papers fail to meet the basic criteria of argument, organization, and mechanics, or they fail to respond in a meaningful way to the assignment, or they contain passages that are plagiarized.

## Course Policies

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the [Student Honor Code](#). The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- b.) Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire [Student Honor Code](#).

All the work submitted on Canvas will be passed through Turnitin.com, a website that compares your paper to other papers on the Internet, any published work, and the Internet itself. If you plagiarize, you will be caught, which could result in an automatic E for the assignment, the course, or a disciplinary measure from the university, depending upon the gravity and frequency of the matter.

### **Classroom Civility**

Please keep in mind that you and your classmates come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

### **Grade Appeals**

You may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, Department of English. Appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade.

### **In-Class Work**

You will be expected to work in small groups and participate in group discussions, writing workshops, and other in-class activities. You must be present for all in-class activities to receive credit for them. In-class work cannot be made up. In general, you are expected to contribute constructively to each class session.

### **Instructor Evaluations**

You are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based. These evaluations are conducted online at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but you will be given

specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available at <http://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

### **Mode of Submission**

All papers (other than Brief Responses) will be submitted as MS Word (.doc or .docx) documents to Canvas **by 11:00AM**. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. File names will be your last name\_assignment name (like: Smith\_Critical Definition.docx).

All papers must follow MLA format. They should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and pages numbered. Your last name should precede the page number (like: Smith 1). Your name, my name, the course number, the date, and the word count should appear in the upper left-hand corner of the document. Every paper should have a title centered at the top of the document, but after your name, etc. All of this information, like the body of your paper, will be double spaced with no additional extra spaces.

**Papers are due at 11:00AM. Late papers will not be accepted.** Failure of technology is not an excuse.

### **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities**

You are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the your responsibility to have and to make available this material.

### **Phones, Computers, etc.**

Out of courtesy for your fellow classmates, and myself, it is expected that you silence your cell phone/other gadgets off before class. If you are using a laptop in class, it should only be used for taking notes or accessing the reading.

### **Sexual Assault and Harassment**

Students, faculty, and staff of the University of Florida are protected under [UF policies](#) that mandate an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

### **Students with Disabilities**

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Should you need any accommodation, contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202. That office will provide you with documentation that you will then present to me when requesting accommodation.

Tentative Course Schedule:*Reading is due the day it appears on the calendar.*

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week One (1/6-1/8)	<b>No Class</b>	Course Overview	Eagleton, "Introduction: What is Literature?"
Week Two (1/11-1/15)	<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	<b>Response Due</b> <i>Oedipus Rex</i>
Week Three (1/20-1/22)	<b>Holiday-No Class</b>	Writing Workshop	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
Week Four (1/25-1/29)	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
Week Five (2/1-2/5)	Browning, "My Last Duchess"	Joyce, "The Dead"	<b>Response Due</b> Joyce, "The Dead"
Week Six (2/8-2/12)	Bishop, "The Fish" and "The Roosters"	O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"	<i>Beloved</i>
Week Seven (2/15-2/19)	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Beloved</i>	<b>Response Due</b> <i>Beloved</i>
Week Eight (2/22-2/26)	<i>Beloved</i>	Exam Review	<b>Midterm Exam Due</b>
Week Nine	<b>Spring Break-No Class</b>	<b>Spring Break-No Class</b>	<b>Spring Break-No Class</b>
Week Ten (3/7-3/11)	Bell, "The Space Traders"	Selection(s) from <i>East, West: Stories</i>	Selection(s) from <i>East, West: Stories</i>
Week Eleven (3/14-3/18)	Selection(s) from <i>East, West: Stories</i>	Writing Workshop & Peer Review (full draft)	<b>Close Reading Due</b>
Week Twelve (3/21-3/25)	Conferences	Conferences	<i>Persepolis</i>
Week Thirteen (3/28-4/1)	<i>Persepolis</i>	<i>Persepolis</i>	<b>Response Due</b> <i>Persepolis</i>
Week Fourteen (4/4-4/8)	<i>Persepolis</i>	<i>Persepolis</i>	<i>Persepolis</i>
Week Fifteen (4/11-4/15)	<i>Persepolis</i>	Writing Workshop & Peer Review (full draft)	Currie, "Does Great Literature Make us Better?"
Week Sixteen (4/18-4/20)	<b>Conferences by Appointment</b>	<b>Contextual Analysis Paper Due</b> Course Conclusion	<b>No Class-Reading Days</b>