

Fall 2020

HUM 230-001: Introduction to Literature

Calista McRae

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HUM 230: INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

Mondays 12:30-1:50
By WebEx/Zoom or in Kupfrian 104
Office hours: by phone/video/outside; email me

Instructor: Calista McRae
Office: 408 Cullimore
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0. Course Description

HUM 230 is a writing-intensive introduction to literary studies. It focuses on close reading and critical writing, asking you to become a sharp, imaginative observer and effective communicator. You will read and discuss poems, plays, and fiction; make claims about how the content and form connect in each; and find evidence for your claims. Each section, however, will also be an opportunity for you to consider your *own* writing at a careful, slow pace. You'll write frequent short responses (on Canvas), as well as three longer essays. You'll also each select a short extract from *Macbeth* to "teach" your classmates, in a two-minute multimedia presentation.

1. Course Goals

- Apply the method of "close reading" to multiple genres
- Practice the mode of literary argumentation, by practicing writing as a process by using various brainstorming, invention, revision, and editing strategies
- Make conscious decisions about their writing mechanics, by paying close attention to others' choices in diction, syntax, structure, and tone
- Identify and analyze basic grammatical terms: to discuss how grammar changes meaning, and why a writer might choose one possible construction over another
- Identify and analyze a range of genres and sub-genres, and able to discuss how individual writers handle the expectations within them
- Recognize the contribution of literature to human emotional and intellectual life

2. Prerequisites

HUM 101 and HUM 102 with a C or higher; HUM 102 may be taken concurrently as a co-requisite.

3. What you have to buy

No text required for purchase (the readings will be up on Canvas).

4. Warning!

A fair bit of these readings are disturbing or controversial; a lot of ambitious interesting literature happens to be. There is the typical "adult content" of language, sex, and violence. In discussions, consider your classmates; respect for one another should be a consideration at all times. You are welcome to talk with me further about any text outside of class, at any time.

5. Assignments

<i>optional diagnostic essay (not mandatory), on Teju Cole, due at the start of class Sep. 8</i>	0
<i>Essay 1: 3-4 concise double-spaced pages, on a short work assigned in class; due start of class Oct. 5</i>	15%
<i>Essay 2: 4-5 concise double-spaced pages, on a short work assigned in class;), due start of class Nov. 9</i>	25%
<i>Essay 3: 6-8 concise double-spaced pages, due Dec. 19</i>	25%
<i>Two-to-three-minute multimedia presentation on Macbeth, in late Nov./early Dec.</i>	15%
<i>Online discussion forums</i>	20%

You'll get a specific question for each of the **essays**, and a rubric. I am happy to discuss a draft by phone or video until 24 hours before it's due.

The **participation** grade includes: timeliness, forum posts, informal writing, and thoughtfully giving your attention to classmates' writing. For Canvas posts: each week you write **one short post responding to the week's readings** (100-150 words, due the Friday night before our Monday class), and then **respond to two classmates' posts** (approx. 50 words each, due the Sunday night before our Monday class). Those are firm deadlines, because if you're late in posting, others in the class won't get to read your ideas—which is a loss for you and them, and leads to things feeling stale. So, if you miss a post deadline, just focus on acing the next one; please do not ask about submitting posts late. I do understand that sometimes work or life means that you might have to skip a week; missing one or two posts over the course of the semester won't be penalized. See also the "Tips for strong forum posts" handout.

Participation grades will go up on Canvas approximately every five weeks; check there to see how you are doing.

In one of the last few classes, you'll pick one very small fraction of *Macbeth* (a few lines) to **"teach" your classmates, in a 2-3 minute presentation**. Since presentations happen online, you'll probably use Powerpoint or Google Slides to record an audio voiceover, then post the final product to a Canvas forum. More details and rubric to come.

6. Grading

Work will be evaluated according to the university's grading scale. If you are concerned about a grade, contact me as soon as possible; if you wait until the end of the semester, there won't be much you can do. See the section on revising, just below.

A = 100-90 (superior)	B = 86-80 (very good)	C = 76-70 (acceptable)	F = 59-0 (inadequate)
B+ = 89-87 (excellent)	C+ = 79-77 (good)	D = 69-60 (minimum)	

7. Revising

If you're not happy with your grade on a given assignment, you're welcome to revise it any time before the last week of classes. But you are asked to make at least one appointment with the Writing Center about the revision, before resubmitting the work to me (bring them the work, feedback, and rubric). After that meeting, email me the new essay, and I'll average out your original grade and revised grade.

If you want me to read an early draft of an essay, we need to meet either in-person or by phone to discuss the work. (Please try to schedule this as early as you can, because the days just before papers are due tend to get filled up with meetings.)

8. Attendance Policy

As you know, you do not have to attend in person—attending by video is equally good. But you do attend somehow. You may miss two classes for any reason, without penalty; no need to tell me why you're skipping. Every subsequent unexcused absence will reduce your participation grade. According to university policy, students who expect to miss classes or exams because of religious observance must send their instructors, by the end of the second week of classes, a written list of dates that will be missed. Athletes should submit a list of events. If you cannot make a section due to illness or an academic commitment, etc., and if you wish to have the absence excused, ask the Dean of Students (Campus Center, Room 255) to review the request.

If you miss a section, please contact a classmate to find out what you missed, and if there are lingering questions, make an appointment to speak with me by phone.

9. Submitting Work

Please include your name and an interesting title at the top of your paper. Use 1-inch margins and double-space. Use whatever formal citation style you prefer (like MLA or APA), but be consistent and clear. No need for hard copies; there will be submission links for .doc files in Canvas.

10. Late Work

The discussion posts can't be submitted late—you have to keep up for the course to work. If you miss a post, just start getting ready for the next week.

If you know in advance that you are having trouble completing a **formal assignment**, please see me as soon as possible. Extensions are possible, but require 24 hours' notice. Without an extension, the grade of late work will go down by five points per day (e.g., from an 85 to a 80). Please back up your writing frequently: save copies in Google Docs, in email, on flash drives, on networks, etc.

11. Technology

This class may occasionally meet by video, and you really need a computer screen in order to make it through the readings (it is hard to digest a 40-page pdf on a cell phone).

12. Plagiarism

The NJIT honor code defines plagiarism “*as using or attempting to use written, oral, or graphic work which was authored or prepared by another and submitting it as one's own.*” The full text of the University Code can be found at <https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>

For humanities courses, the most important point is: if your work uses the ideas or language of any other person, make that use clear to your reader by citing clearly and thoroughly.

If your work uses the idea or language of any other person (in a paper, forum post, presentation, or any other work assigned), make that use clear to your reader by citing clearly and thoroughly. If you borrow somebody's wording, put it in quotation marks (always!). If you borrow an *idea* or a fact, give the source credit. An essay that involves plagiarized portions usually gets a zero; it may involve meeting some deans. Almost every semester, someone doesn't internalize this part of the syllabus, and ends up failing the course because they panic and look for ideas online (and then aren't honest in their paper about where the ideas came from). Please don't let this happen to you. Note also that the rules for humanities work are slightly different than the rules for most STEM work: it might be helpful to think of it as a compliance issue rather than as an intellectual honesty issue.

In addition: do not use student essays found online as sources, and do not use Shmoop, Sparknotes, Rapgenius, Wikipedia, etc. as sources (Wikipedia can be a useful start, but you need to track down the original source of whatever useful material you find there).

13. Special Needs

If you are a student with a documented disability, please contact me at the beginning of the semester to discuss accommodations. You can also contact Student Disability Services at (973) 596-3420.

14. The Writing Center

The Writing Center (G17 Central King) is available for 45-minute individual and group appointments with professional writing tutors, probably mostly online for fall 2020. This resource is intended to help you improve your communication and writing skills. Tutors can help with planning assignments, improving your

writing, refining an essay or multimedia project, and so on. To make an appointment, please visit <https://njit.mywconline.com>

Please ask the writing tutor (aka writing consultant) to fill out a Writing Center report and send it to me, so that I know you are going and give you credit. Please bring any and all rubrics/handouts, so the consultant can see how you'll be graded.