

Fall 2021

HUM 230-001: Introduction to Literature

Calista McRae

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HUM 230: INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

Mondays 11:30-12:50

CKB 206

Office hours: M by appointment, T-F by phone/video

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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 two longer essays. You'll also each select one passage of a play, short story, or novel, to "teach" your classmates, in a brief 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 subgenres, 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.

4. Assignments

<i>optional diagnostic essay (not mandatory), on Teju Cole, due on Canvas 5 PM Sept. 7</i>	<i>ungraded</i>
<i>Essay 1: 3-4 concise double-spaced pages, on Hemon; due 5 PM on Oct. 3</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Essay 2: 4-5 concise double-spaced pages, on one of the Week 10 texts, due 5 PM on Nov. 7</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>Essay 3: 6-8 concise double-spaced pages, on new texts TBD, due at 11:45 PM on Dec. 18</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>Two-to-three-minute multimedia presentation on Chiang, Wilson, or Whitehead, late Nov./early Dec.</i>	<i>15%</i>

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 a short story (Chiang, "Story of Your Life"), a play (August Wilson, *Fences*) or the opening of a novel (Colson Whitehead, *Zone One*), and by a "short fraction" I really do mean a couple sentences, to "teach" your classmates, in a **2-3 minute presentation**. Depending on how we are faring with Covid, you might be able to do this presentation live in class, or you might be doing it over WebEx. More details and rubric to come.

5. 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)

6. 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.)

7. Attendance Policy

If you have symptoms that might be connected to Covid, please do not come to class—you do not need to give me any explanation or excuse; just concentrate on doing an especially good job in the week's forum. To accommodate the potential disruptions and uncertainties of this semester, participation will be based largely on your forum posts. If you are unable to make a class meeting, feel free to make an appointment to speak with me by phone/video regarding what you may have missed (but I also always send out emails about changes to deadlines or readings).

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 or complete a forum post 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.

8. Submitting Work

Please include your name and an informative 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.

9. 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.

10. Technology

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), and you should have your readings out in class so you can follow along and participate.

11. 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).

12. Accessibility and Accommodations

If you anticipate any issues related to the format or materials of this course, or if you would like to discuss any accommodations that might be helpful, please contact me at the start of the semester. If you have a documented disability, or if you think you might have a disability, you should also be in touch with Student Disability Services at (973) 596-3420, either to request an official accommodation or to discuss requesting one.

13. The Writing Center

The Writing Center (G17 Central King) is available for 45-minute individual and group appointments with professional writing tutors. 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 the rubric/handout, so the consultant can see how you'll be graded.

14. Outline of the Schedule

Note 1: *This schedule is not set in stone. The readings and assignments, especially the later ones, will very likely change depending on class interests and how things go; email announcements take precedence over its deadlines.*

Note 2: Look at the irregular dates in Week 1. The start of the fall semester is a bit odd at NJIT. In Week 2, we will start on the schedule we'll stay on the rest of the term. Normally, each week you write one short post responding to the week's readings (100-150 words, due the Friday afternoon before our Monday class), and then respond to two classmates' posts (approx. 50 words each, due the Sunday afternoon before our Monday class).

Week 1: LOOKING CLOSELY: September 1-8 (odd schedule)

By Friday, September 3: Read the syllabus and course outline, ask me questions, post in the "introductions" forum.

By Tuesday Sept. 7 at 5 PM: Read and post in the discussion forum on Teju Cole's *small fates*.

Optional: a diagnostic paper on Teju Cole's *small fates*. If you want to get some early feedback on your writing, this essay is your chance, but it's not mandatory. See handout.

Wednesday, Sep. 8. Lecture: on what we'll be focusing on over the semester, via Cole: tone, narrators, diction, syntax, structure, details.

Week 2. WHO IS TALKING?: NARRATORS: **September 8-13**

By Sunday 9/12 at 5 PM: Read week's intro and post on Egan/Davis/O'Connor.

Week 3: DICTION: WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS: **September 13-20**

By Sunday 9/19 at 5 PM: Read week's intro and post on Dickinson.

Week 4: SYNTAX: HOW WORDS ARE ARRANGED: **September 20-27**

By Sunday 9/26 at 5 PM: Read the sentences handout and post on Saki/Hemingway.

Week 5: REVIEW AND FIRST ESSAY: **September 27-October 4**

★ *By Sunday 10/3 at 5 PM:* Read week's intro; write and submit on Canvas an essay on one passage in Hemon, "Exchange of Pleasant Words." See the handout on Essay 1.

Week 6: SYMBOLS AND METAPHORS: **October 4-11**

By Sunday 10/10 at 5 PM: Read week's intro; post on Komunyakaa/Shakespeare/Du Fu/Hayes

Week 7. STRUCTURE: **October 11-18**

By Sunday 10/17 at 5 PM: Read week's intro; post on Otsuka/Munro/Hughes/Parker.

Reminder: sign up for a presentation on "Story of Your Life," *Fences*, or *Zone One*.

WEEK 8: HOW POEMS WORK: **October 18-25**

By Sunday 10/24 at 5 PM: Read week's intro; post on Nashe/Keats/Majmudar/Hayes/Ryan/Mullen

Week 9: PERSUASION: **October 25-November 1**

By Sunday 10/31 at 5 PM: Read week's intro; post on Yeats/Owen/Mura/Brooks/Reed.

Week 10: CONTEXT (AND ESSAY 2): **November 1-8**

★ *By Sunday 11/7 at 5 PM:* Submit on Canvas an essay on one of the poems listed on the handout for Essay 2.

Week 11: REPRESENTING THOUGHT: **November 8-15.**

By Sunday 11/14 at 5 PM: Read the week's intro; post on Chekhov/Joyce/Wray.

Week 12: THE NOVELLA. **November 15-22.**

By Sunday 11/21 at 5 PM: Read the week's intro; post on Chiang.

Monday 11/22: Presentations (1-7) on Chiang.

Week 13: DRAMA. **November 22-29.**

By Sunday 11/28 at 5 PM: Read the week's intro; post on Wilson and watch *Fences*.

Monday 11/29: Presentations (8-15) on *Fences*.

Week 14. CONCLUSION: GENRE FICTION. **November 29-December 6.**

By Sunday 12/5 at 5 PM: Read the week's intro; post on Whitehead.

Monday 12/6: presentations on *Zone One*.

★ Final essay due on December 18, on one of several possible poems or short stories (TBD)

