

# INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE

ENGL:1200:0060, Spring 2019

M/W: 5:00-6:15, 206 EPB

The University of Iowa, Department of English

Instructor: Enrico Bruno

Office Hours: M/W, 3:00-4:30 and by appt., 440 EPB

Department Chair: Claire Fox

Department Main Office: 308 EPB

Course Supervisor: Blaine Greteman

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word *alien* appeared in English writing as early as 1350, when it was used as a verb meaning “To make averse, hostile, or unsympathetic to someone or something.” The term has since taken on a more general meaning to signify something foreign, and surely when we think of the term today, we think of its many common uses, from ongoing debates about immigration to ecological diversity to the belief that life exists outside of our own solar system. But the original connotation of the term—referring to something hostile, strange, and unfamiliar—remains, and alienation is often a process rooted in fear and apprehension.



*Frankenstein*, Viola Niccolai

This course highlights texts in which protagonists experience some form of alienation. Alienation can be felt in various ways and be considered via many interpretative lenses; we'll think about alienation from both inside and outside perspectives, consider what determines meaningful membership in a community, and challenge assumptions about the alienated. We begin with *Frankenstein*, one of the quintessential texts to capture the outsider experience. The other major course texts—James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, and Octavia Butler's *Kindred*—will allow us to consider how feelings of liminality and exclusion can derive from markers such as sexuality, class, and race. As we discuss these texts and other short readings, we will necessarily consider the historical and political moment that produced them, and make connections between past and present.

By allowing you to use and refine your skills of close reading, speaking, and writing to respond thoughtfully and sensitively to literary texts, you will be able to see yourselves as critical and unique readers, recognizing the influence of individual differences (such as gender, ethnicity, geography) and experiences on interpretation. Writing assignments will ask you to engage both critically and creatively with the course materials and regular class participation will allow you to share your own interpretations of the texts and support and/or challenge readings offered by your peers. In addition to this interpretive work, we'll take time to simply appreciate the important lessons these stories have to share, including the dangers of social exclusion, the trauma of self-alienation, and even the joy that can come from living life on the outside.

## WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS

For each semester hour credit in this course, students should expect to spend two hours per week preparing for class sessions. This is a three credit hour course, so your average out-of-class preparation per week is six hours. This will fluctuate throughout the semester; some weeks will be a bit lighter and others more intense.

## COURSE TEXTS

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (Delta, 978-0-385-33458-7)

Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (Beacon, 978-0-807-08369-7)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Penguin, 978-0-141-43947-1)

Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (New Directions, 978-0-8112-1404-9)

Course texts available at the Hawk Shop. All other course readings available on ICON and **should be printed out**, annotated, and brought to class. In addition to these materials, students should have a **notebook dedicated to this course**, which will be collected periodically throughout the semester.

## GRADING

Final grades will be determined on the University's A-F grade scale, with A as the highest possible grade. Course grades depend mainly on a series of major and informal writing assignments. The rest of your grade depends on engaged and respectful participation, misc. assignments recorded in your class notebook, and a midterm and final exam.

### Final Grade Percentages:

15%	Essay #1
20%	Essay #2
15%	Engaged and respectful daily participation
15%	Midterm Exam
15%	Final Exam and Portfolio
15%	Notebooks
5%	Close Reading Assignment

### Accessing Grades:

Grades for major assignments will be posted on ICON under "Grades" approximately two weeks after the due date. Your participation grades will be posted once at midterm and once at the end of the semester. Informal assignments will be mostly recorded in your class notebook, which will be collected at least twice during the semester. Your notebook grade will be posted once at the midterm and once at the end of the semester. **Note that a missed assignment is marked as a zero, so it's important to complete all homework assignments and attend every class to avoid bringing down your grade.**

My detailed grading policy is as follows:

*A grade of C:* You can earn a C by attending class regularly and punctually, completing with competence all of the work assigned and participating regularly in class activities. This requires 1) adequately meeting all criteria for assignments, and 2) completing reading assignments on time and being prepared to share your opinions on the texts in class and during discussions.

*A grade of B:* You can earn a B by fulfilling all of the C requirements while demonstrating a significantly higher level of effort and competence on all work assigned for the class. To earn a B you must show an interest in energetically, creatively, and critically engaging with the material and assignments. B work typically reflects independent thinking. The B student is self-reflexive and often asks questions such as “How can I make my work better? How can I revise this? How can I make my work unique and interesting? How can I help the class have productive and energetic discussions?”

*A grade of A:* To receive an A in the course, you must surpass the requirements for B work as well as demonstrate high-level critical thinking and original analysis. A students interrogate all sides of issues enthusiastically in order to clarify their own opinions. A students don't skip class, fail to honor deadlines for any reason, or show up unprepared to discuss the reading. A students will, instead, be willing to make intellectual discoveries and demonstrate an effort to inquire further into commonly understood issues.

*A grade of D:* You can earn a D by not fulfilling your responsibilities outlined under “Grade of C” criteria, and/or failing to show respect for or interest in your fellow students’ presentations of ideas. A D student is a student who has many excuses but few completed assignments. For example, D students often fail to turn in reading responses or other informal work. D students are generally disinterested students who refuse to take an active role in making the class energetic and productive.

## LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Late work will be **docked one full letter grade** for every day late, beginning as soon as the original due date has passed (e.g. a paper that earns a B will receive a C if it is one day late, a D if it is two days late, etc.). Late essays submitted over four or more days after the due date will receive an automatic F. If the due date for one of these essays is nearing and you do not feel capable of turning in a completed assignment, please set up a meeting with me to discuss potential solutions. If you miss class, you are still responsible for submitting work on time via ICON or email. This policy extends to class notebooks: if you are in class on the day class notebooks are collected, you must turn yours in to me; if you are absent, you will be docked for each day the notebook is late, or you may leave it in my mailbox in EPB 310 on the day I collect without penalty.

## ABSENCES

Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. That said, I understand that occasionally, everyone needs to miss class. Therefore, I will allow each student three unexcused absences without penalty to their participation grade. You do not need to provide any excuse for these absences, though if you know ahead of time you will be missing class, an email is always appreciated.

Absences cause you to miss out on instruction, learning time, and thinking opportunities. Consequently, any absence will negatively affect your grade; **after three absences, each one will reduce your class participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade**. You also cannot earn points for reading notes, participation, or in-class activities on days when you are absent. Being late to class or leaving class early will also negatively impact your daily participation grade. If you need to leave class early for an exam for another course, you must provide official

documentation that shows me the exam time. Please make an effort to be in class on time, ready to participate as soon as class begins. You will earn a zero on any reading quiz given on a day in which you are either absent to class or arrive after the quiz has already been administered.

## TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

**I expect that you will turn off/silence and put away all of your electronic devices (cell phones, iPads, iPods, etc.) before class begins. This includes laptops and e-readers unless otherwise specified.** Inappropriate use of electronics during class time will negatively affect your participation grade. If, for any reason, you have a particular need for iPads, cell phones, or laptops during class time, please come talk to me during office hours. There will be class periods, activities, and peer review sessions for which I allow and often encourage technology use. I will notify you of these moments as necessary.

## CALENDAR OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS

This is a tentative calendar and is **subject to change**. Updates will be posted to ICON and/or shared in class. Students are responsible for tracking course activities, readings, and assignments as the semester progresses.

**A NOTE OF CAUTION:** Many of the texts we are reading depict or discuss violence. Every person in our class brings years of lived experiences with them into the classroom, and all class discussions should be respectful of this fact. If you are at all concerned about reading certain texts, please don't hesitate to discuss your concerns with me. Taking care of yourself is crucial for academic success. I have listed confidential resources beneath the university's "Sexual Harassment" policy.

## SPRING 2019 COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1:

M, 1/14: Introductions to course, readings, and each other

W, 1/16: The Skills of Close Reading

Sherwood Anderson, "Hands"; Eula Biss, "Time and Distance Overcome" (ICON)

### Week 2:

W, 1/23: *Frankenstein: An Arctic Voyage*; and, Victor's Education

Letters I-IV; Vol. 1: Chapters I-IV (pp. 15-57); **Assign Essay #1**

### Week 3:

M, 1/28: *Frankenstein: Creating a Monster*

Vol. 1: Chapters V-VIII; Vol. 2: Chapters I-II (pp. 58-104)

W, 1/30: *Frankenstein: The Monster's Tale*

Vol. 2: Chapters III-IX (pp. 105-151)

### Week 4:

M, 2/4: *Frankenstein: Return to the Arctic*

Vol. 3: Chapters I-VII (pp. 155-225)

W, 2/6: **CLASS CANCELED [SEVERE WEATHER]**

**Week 5:**

M, 2/11: Queer Poetics

Selected poetry from Danez Smith, Pat Parker, Frank O'Hara, etc. (ICON)

Essay #1 Workshop [Bring draft of Essay #1 to class]

W, 2/13: *Giovanni's Room*: the presence of a new barman

Part 1: Chapters 1-2 (pp. 3-43)

**Week 6:**

M, 2/18: *Giovanni's Room*: the longer and lesser and more perpetual murder

Part 1: Chapter 3; Part 2: Chapters 1-3 (pp. 44-118)

W, 2/20: *Giovanni's Room*: a terrific scandal

Part 2: Chapters 4-5 (pp. 119-169)

**Week 7:**

M, 2/25: **Midterm Exam**

W, 2/27: The Alienated Masses: Social Class in America

George Saunders, "Sea Oak" (ICON)

**Week 8:**

M, 3/4: *The Glass Menagerie*: Memory

Production Notes; Scenes 1-2 (pps. xix-18); **Assign Essay #2**

W, 3/6: *The Glass Menagerie*: Movies

Scenes 3-5 (pps. 19-49)

**Week 9:**

M, 3/11: *The Glass Menagerie*: Dinner

Scenes 6-8 (pps. 50-97)

W, 3/13: "the subway heaped in modern myth": Race in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Metropolis

Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman* (ICON)

**Week 10: Spring Break: No Class**

**Week 11:**

M, 3/25: The Feminine Mystique

Susan Glaspell, *Trifles* (ICON)

W, 3/27: The Monstrous-Feminine

Angela Carter, "The Werewolf"; Carmen Maria Machado, "Real Women Have Bodies"

**Week 12:**

M, 4/1: Essay #2 Workshops/Meetings

W, 4/3: (Neo-)Slave Narratives  
Excerpts from Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (ICON)

**Week 13:**

M, 4/8: *Kindred*  
Prologue; The River; The Fire (pp. 9-51)

W, 4/10: *Kindred*  
The Fall (pp. 52-107)

**Week 14:**

M, 4/15: *Kindred*  
The Fight I (pp. 108-154)

W, 4/17: *Kindred*  
The Fight II (pp. 154-188)

**Week 15:**

M, 4/22: *Kindred*  
The Storm (pp. 189-239)

W, 4/24: *Kindred*  
The Rope; Epilogue (pp. 240-264)

**Week 16:**

M, 4/29: The Postplantation Today  
*Thirteenth* (documentary); Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (excerpts)

W, 5/1: The Voyage Out: Final Review

**Final Exam: Monday, May 6, 2019, 8:00 PM - 10:00 PM (203 EPB)**

**CLAS CODE OF ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others, nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled. To find the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Code of Academic Honesty go to the website: <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code>

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES**

The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which include but are not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See <http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/> for information.

## **UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

## **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND DATING VIOLENCE**

All of you in this classroom and all of your classmates, professors, and staff are part of an inclusive community. We intend to provide a safe and nurturing environment for each of you and for us. This community is home to straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students, faculty, and staff, and it is home to every race and many nationalities. But sexual violence strikes at the heart of this community. In collaboration with the University of Iowa Rape Victim Advocacy Program, we faculty wish specifically to repudiate the often-unstated premise that sexual violence of some kind is simply part of the societal status quo.

Sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and other forms of sexual misconduct, including catcalling and other verbal abuse, are serious issues and subvert the mission of the University of Iowa. The only person responsible for sexual misconduct is the perpetrator. It is a violation of university policy to engage in sexual activities without clear consent from your partner. Someone incapacitated due to alcohol or drugs cannot consent to sexual activity.

Perpetrators face consequences that may include expulsion from the university and incarceration.

If you have been the victim of a sexual assault or domestic violence on or off campus or you know someone who has been assaulted and you want to find out more about available resources, please contact the Rape Victim Advocacy Program (RVAP), the Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP), or the UI Campus Police. The RVAP will also provide further guidance and information to any interested member of the community.

Resources: RVAP: (319)335-6000 [rvap.uiowa.edu](http://rvap.uiowa.edu); DVIP: (319)351-1043; Campus Police: (319) 335-5022 <http://police.uiowa.edu/be-proactive/reporting-sexual-assault/>; Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator (OSMRC): <http://osmrc.uiowa.edu/report-problem>; University of Iowa Sexual Misconduct Policies: <http://osmrc.uiowa.edu/policy>; University of Iowa Threat Assessment Team: [uitat@uiowa.edu](mailto:uitat@uiowa.edu); 319-384-2955.

\*\*Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits gender discrimination in all programs and activities of the university. It applies to admissions, financial aid, academic matters, career services, counseling and medical services, employment, and all other programs, events, and activities available at the university. It states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title IX makes it clear that violence and discrimination based on sex and/or gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, or if you want to become better educated about your rights, you can find resources here: <http://diversity.uiowa.edu/policies/title-ix>

## **MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

<http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu>  
<http://studenthealth.uiowa.edu/services/psychiatry>  
<https://www.uihealthcare.org/behavioral-health-services/>



<http://jccrisiscenter.org/pages/what-we-do/24-hour-crisis-line.php>  
24-Hour Crisis Line via The Johnson County Crisis Center  
Hours: Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year  
Phone: (319) 351-0140

### **ADMINISTRATIVE HOME**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

### **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

### **MAKING A SUGGESTION OR A COMPLAINT**

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in English for majors courses, the Director of General Education Literature for GEL courses, or the Director of Graduate Studies for graduate courses, before appealing, if need be, to the Chair of the English Department. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

### **GRADE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS**

Students should always first bring such concerns to their instructor. If no satisfactory resolution is gained from discussing the problem with the instructor, students should contact the General Education Literature Director, Professor Barbara Eckstein, by e-mail to schedule an appointment to discuss the grading concern or complaint. This e-mail should specify the student's section and instructor and should briefly outline the nature of the concern or complaint.

### **CLAS FINAL EXAM POLICIES**

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's website and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam. Final exams may not be rescheduled for any individual student without permission. The scheduled day and time for the final exam for each section may not be changed. The General Education Literature Program requires that the final exam be comprehensive in scope and does not allow take-home final exams.

### **REACTING SAFELY TO SEVERE WEATHER**

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.