



## CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY FORMS Policy Statement and Syllabus: English 2600-090 Online, Summer 2012

**Instructor:** Dr. Alf Seegert

**Email:** [alfseegert@gmail.com](mailto:alfseegert@gmail.com) (To make sure I receive your email message, **always put “ENGLISH 2600” in the subject header.**)

To access this course online, login at [go.utah.edu](http://go.utah.edu) and select this course. (The Canvas page will launch by 1 p.m. of the first day of the semester.)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is an online introduction to literary forms and terminology that English majors—and students with an interest in literature more generally—will use in subsequent literary study. By examining four major literary forms—**short fiction, poetry, drama, and the novel**—you should be able to develop critical skills in reading and writing (we will devote particular attention to “close reading” of literary texts).

Because reading is an interactive, interpretive endeavor, **responding to the material with regular comments and questions through an online forum will be a basic requirement of the course.** This course is **reading- and writing- intensive**, so **regular mini-essays and two full-length critical essays will also be required, along with regular quizzes and a final exam.**

The online medium of this course is built to be flexible. **You are never required to attend anything at any particular time. But to succeed you will still need to actively participate and submit all work in accord with assigned deadlines set for Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. To do well in this course, you’ll need to be self-motivated, well-organized, and focused.** The work required of you will be challenging, but the diversity of texts that we will encounter together—plus the skills you will acquire in reading and responding to literature—should make this course highly rewarding and (I hope) enjoyable.

### PREREQUISITES

Writing 2010 is a **non-negotiable prerequisite** to this course. This course assumes familiarity with academic argument and the basic conventions of academic writing (e.g., proper citation of sources, appropriate use of claims and evidence, clear organization, etc.). Because our course is conducted entirely online, basic computer literacy and typing ability is expected of all students.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

### Books

**PLEASE BE SURE TO GET THESE EXACT EDITIONS OF THE TEXTS INDICATED BELOW—REALLY.** (Check the ISBN. Please do not ask me later if it's OK that you are using a different edition. It's not. We need to be "on the same page"—literally—for discussions and writing assignments!) **Buy texts from the bookstore early in the semester before they get sent back!**

- Kennedy, X.J. and Dana Gioia. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing (SIXTH Compact Interactive Edition)* The individual book's ISBN is 0205686095. (It is sometimes packaged with a useful, but optional, *Handbook to Literary Terms*. If you buy this version, it will have the ISBN 9780558687779.)
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. (Penguin Classics, ISBN: 0141439475/9780141439471)
- Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. (Signet Classic, ISBN: 0451525051/9780451525055)

### Films

All films used in this online class will be available to watch for free online (links will be posted). This semester we will watch these films in full:

- Asquith, Anthony (director). *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952 version).
- Guthrie, Tyrone (director). *Oedipus Rex* (1957 version).
- Scott, Ridley (director). *Blade Runner* (be sure to view the 2007 "Final Cut" version). *Please note that Blade Runner is rated "R" (for violence, language, and brief nudity).*

We will also watch video clips from films including Michael Winterbottom's *Tristram Shandy* (rated "R" for sexuality and language). If seeing R-rated films or film clips concerns you, please read the "Important Note on Potentially Offensive Course Material" included later in the syllabus.

### Electronic Texts

- Online course updates, comments on the material, and electronic readings (PDFs).
- I will provide links to extra web-based materials used for the course, which will include audio and video clips and recordings of authors reading their own works.

## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

### Instructor Resources

- I'm here to help. Email me at [alfseegert@gmail.com](mailto:alfseegert@gmail.com) and put "ENGLISH 2600" in the subject header.

### Writing Resources

The **University Writing Center** helps students improve their writing. You can make an appointment to meet with a tutor for a one-on-one session to help you understand your writing assignments, work through the writing process and polish your drafts, for all the courses in which you are enrolled.

**Sessions are free of charge and you can meet as often as you need.** To make an appointment, visit their website at <http://www.writingcenter.utah.edu> or call 801-587-9122. The Writing Center is located on the main university campus on the second floor of the Marriott Library. ***Please make regular use of the Writing Center this semester!***

---

Improve your writing—and your grade! Read over the writing and punctuation guidelines posted at the **Purdue OWL website**: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

---

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Regular critical mini-essays.** Regularly throughout the semester you will submit a 1-2 page mini-essay on the current texts as a critical response to one of the questions I ask. **These mini-essays are automatically awarded full credit if they fulfill the basic terms of the assignment.** Although they will not be graded based on specific content, they will be marked down if they fail to answer the question provided or if they do not include a suitable title, proper grammar, spelling, textual evidence, and reasoned argumentation. I will assign a “virtual grade” to each mini-essay to give you a rough sense of how your writing compares with the expectations of the course—but again, in the grade book these mini-essays only receive credit based on whether or not they fulfill the basic terms of the assignment.
- **Regular comments, questions and responses.** Because this class does not meet in a traditional classroom, it instead **requires** your active and regular participation through online discussions. Each session you will type at least one short (100-150 word) insight, comment, or question about the current texts that you will share online with your classmates to help spark further discussion. You will **also** be required to regularly respond to other students’ observations and tackle other students’ questions. In addition to these regular postings, you will be required to respond to further questions raised in the assigned lessons. ***Please take this participation requirement seriously. There is a one-point penalty for each posting that you fail to submit (!). If regular, active participation with the rest of the class on the online forum poses a problem for you, then this is probably not the right class for you.***
- **Quizzes.** After each individual section of the course, you will be given a timed, comprehensive quiz online covering the prior material (e.g., literary terms and readings).
- **Full-length Critical Essays.** Two lengthier formal critical essays will be assigned over the semester (4-6 pages each). These essays **will** be graded for both content and form. *For each essay you will be able to choose one of two literary forms on which to write. See the assignment sheets for details.*
- **Final Exam.** The final exam will be timed and requires short answer, passage identification/analysis, and short essay on literary terms, concepts, and texts read or discussed throughout the semester.
- **Due dates.** Assignments are due at 1:00 p.m. on the dates indicated (assignments are automatically time-stamped). If this is not a convenient time for you to submit work, please submit it early. (No specifically assigned time will be ideal for everyone. 1:00 p.m. is merely the cutoff time, not the time you actually need to submit your work.)
- I offer a **12-hour grace period** on all assignments. **Beyond that, no late work will be evaluated** unless you clear this with me for very good reasons such as documentable medical emergencies. If you miss an assignment, please always email me to explain why.
- **Formatting.** College-level writing and presentation are expected throughout. All class assignments must be typed and spell-checked. (Check spelling using both the computer and your own brain: meditate on the slogan “The spell checker is hear to stay” as a reminder of your own crucial role!) Proofread carefully before submitting—I suggest reading your work out loud to detect rough spots. Use an appropriately-sized font (12 point font in Times New Roman works well). Use 1” margins on all sides, double-space, and always include a title and page numbers. Be sure to always include your name with your work! For all essays I require that you use proper MLA guidelines to format your work and document your sources (see 1495-1501 of the *Literature* anthology and the online links I provide as helpful guides). *Improperly formatted work will be downgraded, so please take formatting seriously!*

- **File Formats.** I use MS Word’s “comment” feature to mark up your papers with my responses. As a result, I can only grade work that is submitted in the proper file format. All papers **must** be saved in MS Word format—.doc, .docx, or (if you must) .rtf file format. MS Word is available on all campus computers. If you do not have MS Word on your own personal computer, you can download OpenOffice software **for free** that lets you save in MS Word format: see <http://www.openoffice.org/>
- **One More Reminder on General Participation.** Again, this course is discussion-based and highly interactive, so **your active, regular participation in online discussions is required in order for you to succeed.** *Please read that sentence again. Each semester I get a few students who, no matter how much I remind them, somehow still consider discussion “optional” and their final grade suffers greatly for it. I don’t want that to happen to you!* Although this course is conducted online, it is still required that you be “fully present” (albeit virtually) and genuinely involved on a regular basis. *Please treat the class as a critically-grounded dialog between you, me, and other students. I always enjoy reading the engaged responses of students!*
- **Mutual Respect.** Because this class centers on your responses to literary texts, spirited discussion (and even outright disagreement!) is encouraged. However, disruption and disrespect are a different story entirely—please keep discussions on-topic and be courteous to your instructor and to your fellow classmates.

## COURSE OVERVIEW AND ASSIGNMENTS

Part I: Short Fiction

Part II: Poetry

Part III: Drama

Part IV: Novel

Part V: Film

Full-length Critical Essay #1 (Short Fiction or Poetry) = 20 pts. possible

Full-length Critical Essay #2 (Drama or the Novel) = 30 pts. possible

Mini-Essays – 5 pts. each x 4 required mini-essays = 20 points possible

Quizzes – 3 pts. each x 4 quizzes = 12 points possible

Final Exam = 18 points possible

Discussion Questions/Responses in the online forum:

**Each one late or missing = -1 point (penalty!)**

**Total points possible: 100**

### Letter Grade Values

94-100	A	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	00-59	E
90-93	A-	84-86	B	74-76	C	64-66	D		
		80-83	B-	70-73	C-	60-63	D-		

## COURSE POLICIES

The *Americans with Disabilities Act* requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact the instructor or teaching assistant of this course **at the beginning of the semester** to discuss any such accommodations for this course.

### Incompletes

The English Program offers Incompletes only under extraordinary circumstances.

### Course Withdrawals

See this semester’s *Class Schedule* for deadlines and procedures.

### Plagiarism Policy – **read very carefully!**

Plagiarism consists of using the work of someone else and passing it off as your own. Even if you plagiarize by accident you will still be held accountable, and the penalty is not pretty! **In the age of the Internet it is easy to cheat—and just as easy to get caught cheating.** I continue to be astonished (and pained) by discovering that students have stolen

their work from Sparknotes, Wikipedia, or other sources. Don't do it. **Note: this is not a research-based course, so I don't want you to depend on outside sources, even if you cite them properly. I am looking for your own critical analysis of the texts based on your own close reading of the texts themselves. As a result, the only texts you will need to cite will be your primary sources—you will not need to draw from outside sources.** Read the links posted online on proper MLA citations to make sure you understand how to properly cite your primary sources.

**The English Program's standard sanction for plagiarism is (minimally) a failing grade (E) for the course in question (!!!).** See sections II and V of the Student Code for details. *If you are having trouble with this course, please contact me! I'm sure we can work something out. Cheating is not the answer.*

### Important Note on Potentially Offensive Course Material (!)

Critical engagement with literary, theoretical, and other cultural texts (including R-rated films) sometimes entails encountering material from outside an individual's philosophical, religious, political, or personal comfort zones. **Please be advised that this course may contain such material.** Such material may include—but is not limited to—obscenity, profanity, representations of sexuality, violence, religion, politics, encounters with controversial issues in the media, etc. Students who feel that this may be a matter of concern should consult with the instructor *immediately after the first class session*. Note: I will **not** warn students that an upcoming reading or film might be offensive to some readers or viewers. It is impossible for me to judge what will offend whom, so I include this blanket notice here instead.

### An Important Note in Closing

**I want you to do well in this class!** This semester I will be your guide by directing readings, helping orient you with questions and comments about the texts, and evaluating your written work. Your fellow classmates and I will also be present (virtually) to comment on your responses to the material. **But unlike a physical classroom or traditional lecture-based instruction, your work in this online class will be largely self-directed. Put another way, the number one person you will have to rely on this semester is YOU.**

This course might be more convenient than one conducted in the traditional classroom, but **it will not be easier. Some students find online courses much more difficult than traditional classes. Consider carefully if you are one of these students.** To succeed in an online course like this one, you will need to be highly disciplined, self-motivated, and organized. **Prepare to dedicate significant time and energy into your writing and responses. If you are the sort of student who cannot set personal goals and meet them effectively on your own, or one who needs hand-holding in any respect, then this is not the course for you.**

**Tips for success: read regularly—every day—to keep up with the material. Always submit your work on time! Write your papers slowly over many days, not all at once. Participate thoughtfully in all discussions. Re-read all directions. If you still can't figure things out, email me with questions!**

My past experience with this course has been **highly positive** in large part thanks to the enthusiasm of the students. I'm depending on students like you to make this class come alive through active, thoughtful discussion and participation along with your fellow students. Studying literature is both challenging and rewarding. I teach literature because I love it, and I hope you too love literature already or that you will by the end of this semester. Let me know how I can help.

Thanks!

*Alf*

*Dr. Alf Seegert  
Department of English*

Again, my email is [alfseegert@gmail.com](mailto:alfseegert@gmail.com) – please use it! **Always put “ENGLISH 2600” in the subject header.**

Citations: artwork on page one is by J.R.R. Tolkien

---