

English 295

Methods of Advanced Literary Studies

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Combs 335

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Office hours: MWF 9:30-11:00

TR 1:45-2:15

and by appointment

Spring 2016

TR (01) 8:00

TR (02) 9:30

Combs 114

Course Description

English 295, a required course for the English major, is an introduction to the rewarding complexities of studying literature. This course will introduce you to what literature scholars do and how we do it by immersing you in literary theory and its applications, offering a framework for understanding the historical evolution of literary studies, and introducing you to a range of approaches to the study of texts. Additionally, it will begin to provide you with skills for upper-level English classes such as appropriate library research, flexible analysis of genre, and writing commentary on literature. English 295 is, to be frank, a lot of work. But it also can be a fascinating inquiry into complex and fruitful ideas.

Like all courses that are designated **Writing Intensive**, English 295 works to reinforce the following learning goals:

Though preferred writing styles, formats, and tasks vary from one discipline or field to another, the faculty has agreed that effective formal writing emerges from attention to the following features (Learning Outcomes):

- **Ideas** (focused, substantial, clearly presented, sufficiently and appropriately elaborated with explanations, supporting details, and/or reasons or evidence)
- **Organization** (recognizable structure, logical sequence, clear transitions, purposeful)
- **An appropriate writer's voice** (tone, word choice, and degree of formality fit the context, communicates confidence in addressing readers' expectations, establishes credibility, a recognizable "persona" who "speaks")
- **Conventions of correctness and presentation** (editing reflects knowledge of conventions of punctuation, spelling, formatting, fair use of sources, documentation, etc.)

Our course will develop in two spaces: the classroom and our collaborative website, which can be accessed at <http://scanlon295s16@umwblogs.org>. Additionally, Canvas will be used for assignments and grades.

Required Texts

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*. Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Donald J. Gray. Third Edition.
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*.
Nealon, Jeffrey, and Susan Searls Giroux. *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences*. Second Edition. Rowman and Littlefield.
Ruhl, Sarah. *Passion Play*. Theatre Communications Group.
Tretheway, Natasha. *Native Guard: Poems*. Mariner.
Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. Third Edition. Routledge.

Course Requirements

Assigned Readings: This course has a demanding and constant reading load, often from very challenging texts. You should have completed assigned readings before class and should bring the necessary works to each meeting, including those from the blog (printed or on laptop). “Completing” the reading does not mean simply skimming your eyes over an assigned number of pages; it means beginning the process of critical engagement with the ideas in those pages, even if you only feel prepared to formulate a few sophisticated questions. You should expect that the critical and theoretical readings will need to be read slowly and carefully to be comprehensible, and you should do that reading actively, with a pen in hand to make notations, jot down questions, underline important points, etc.

Contributions in Discussion and on the Blog: This course asks you to respond thoughtfully in several ways to our readings. A primary way is through discussion, which will be our principal format for class meetings. You needn’t be an “expert” to participate. Remember that asking a good question is as—or sometimes more—valuable than offering a completed thought. Some of the readings we do this semester may evoke strong responses; I should not need to say that I expect respect and civility even in disagreement, and this applies equally to the blog.

In addition to acting as our course management system with announcements, assignments, etc., the blog will function as a place to develop threads we begin in class; to introduce topics of interest we didn’t talk about; to supplement our knowledge with outside materials, links, or information; to respond personally to the literature and theory we read; and more. Original posts and comments on posts are equally valuable; this should emerge as a dialogue, not a series of disconnected monologues. Occasionally I may give a prompt for blog posting, but most of the time the writing will be done on your own initiative. All class members should be reading the blog on a regular basis, and you should plan on posting and commenting quite regularly.

An unusual feature of the blog is that it is a site you will share with my other section of English 295. I understand that the danger in this is that part of your audience will be students you don’t know intimately, and that may shift the way you frame your writing or develop your voice in complicated, but not necessarily negative, ways. The benefit is that you will have the intellectual power of two times as many students supporting your own learning this semester; since class discussion and interests are somewhat fluid and student-centered, the blog posting done by the other section may expose interesting threads of analysis that never came up in your own class.

I don't want you to think about class discussion or the blog chiefly as a time to impress me; this class's success depends on our commitment to one another as a community of learners, and being willing to take risks and able to listen are essential for this dialogue to flourish. You will need to revise any sense you have of the classroom and blog as a place for passively receiving knowledge. Instead, these are places where we will think, write, share, and learn together collaboratively.

Participation is required in both forums and will be assessed for frequency and quality. To some degree, this portion of your grade is up to you—your engagement with the course material, your commitment to sharing ideas verbally and in writing. **If you miss three or more classes (except in extraordinary circumstances), this portion of your grade will be substantially lowered.** Chronically tardy arrivals are not acceptable. It is your responsibility to find out what you have missed when you are absent.

►► **Extra Credit (huzzah!)** ◀◀

You may earn extra credit for class participation in the following way:

- Attend a production of one of UMW's spring plays. The plays are [Frozen](#) (February 11-21) and [Tartuffe](#) (April 7-17). Remember that you can go for free if you work as an usher!
- Afterward, write a response to or analysis of the play and performance that is about 500 words. This is not a straightforward review; rather, I ask you to think about the play in terms of the concerns, themes, theories, and questions that inform our reading in 295. Your analysis may consider both the play itself (that is, the language and themes of the text) and the performance or production (for instance, how lighting, movement, costuming etc. affects the presentation of the subject matter or the audience). Your response is due within two weeks of your seeing the play.
- You may do extra credit for both productions if you want to.

Bridge to the Blog: Each student will be assigned a day for which s/he must post to the blog a piece containing some follow-up questions, a thought-provoking implication of our discussion, an articulation of underdeveloped ideas or readings that started in class but need more consideration—in other words, a bridge specifically linking oral class discussion to the blog and designed to prompt further development/discussion; your primary purpose is not to summarize class but to use what happened there to open up deeper dialogue. We will determine assigned dates early in the semester and a schedule will be posted on the blog. It is absolutely fine for you to respond to the bridge from the other section of 295 as well as the one from your own section.

Time due: no later than midnight on the assigned day

Post title: [Your Name]'s Bridge to the Blog (e.g., "Wilfred's Bridge to the Blog")

Submission: Post to the course blog AND submit in Canvas [1) click on the title of your post once it has been published to the blog; 2) copy the url; 3) submit the url in Canvas for this assignment].

Length: about 300 words (longer is okay)

Applied Theory Post: In the course of the semester we will be reading about a number of schools of critical theory from the book by Lois Tyson. Each student will be assigned to one specific theoretical movement early in the semester and a schedule will be posted on the blog. On the day we read about that theory, you will post to the blog an analysis of a film, song, or children's book that is clearly informed by the theoretical questions and vocabulary for that critical group.

Time due: by midnight on the assigned day

Post title: [Your Name]'s [Theoretical] Analysis of [Text Title] (e.g., "Sigmund's Psychoanalytic Analysis of *James and the Giant Peach*")

Submission: Post to the course blog AND drop the url for your post into the Applied Theory assignment in Canvas [1) click on the title of your post once it has been published to the blog; 2) copy the url; 3) submit the url in Canvas for this assignment].

Length: 500-750 words

Quizzes: [Use this link](#) to complete the online orientation to library services, including the quiz. The librarian will confirm your completion of the assignment for me. This assignment must be submitted by midnight on February 5. In addition, you will also take quizzes throughout the semester to test your comprehension of the reading and your mastery of the critical vocabulary. Quizzes are unannounced and will be given during the first ten minutes of class. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes, but I will drop at least one quiz grade for everyone.

Library Research Assignment: Following our formal class on doing library research in literary studies, led by Jack Bales, you will do some practice on your own.

Guidelines:

- 1) Using appropriate research methods, locate FOUR critical articles or books on either *Alice in Wonderland* or *Passion Play*. Remember: one chapter from a collection of essays by different authors counts as one source, but if it is a cohesive book by a single author, the book is one source.
- 2) For each source, give me
 - a. A bibliographic entry using MLA citation. You can find guidelines [here](#).
 - b. A list of all of the SUBJECT TERMS that you find in the source's library entry.
- 3) Choose ONE of these sources that you find most interesting, and include an annotation of it under the bibliographic entry. In 200 words, explain to me what the article (or maybe one chapter of an entire book) is about. Summarize the author's primary argument and purpose, including major threads of development. Step back from it to ask, what are its main and necessary ideas? What details have to be included in order to make it concrete, and which can be left out? How can I present these ideas in the most coherent way to someone who has not read the article?

Collaborative Article and Group Presentation: There are some concepts that are theorized in multiple ways or given various definitions and emphases across groups of critical thought. For this assignment, you will be clustered with at least one other student and given a foundational concept of literary study (e.g., the author). Your group will use Google Docs for collaborative writing, and throughout the course of the semester, as you continue to refine your own understanding by reading about different schools of critical thought in the Tyson volume, you

will be building an article that explains the definitions, critical controversies, models, etc. that compose our sophisticated understanding of that foundational idea. Our readings from Tyson and *The Theory Toolbox* will form the basis of your knowledge, but you may wish or need to consult the further readings suggested by those sources too. I anticipate that articles will be approximately 1800 words long.

At the end of the semester, in our final exam slot, the group will have about 15 minutes to present its findings to the class. Further guidelines on this are forthcoming. I strongly encourage your group to make an appointment at the Speaking Center before your presentation.

Essays: You will complete three essays, and more guidelines will be posted for each. These may include sub-deadlines that will help refine the writing process. The Carroll essay, focusing on the genre of the novel, will allow you to practice assessing literary criticism, making use of the essays in the Norton Critical edition of *Alice* (February 26). The Ruhl essay, focusing on drama, will ask you to complete a more sustained, competent analysis of a literary text using the concepts of one of the theoretical movements we study (April 1). The Tretheway paper, focusing on poetry, will help hone your skills in close reading and formal analysis (April 19). Essays will all be submitted in Canvas as word documents or pdf files and are due no later than midnight on the assigned day.

Grade Distribution

Contributions to discussion and blog	10 pts.
Bridge to the Blog	5 pts.
Applied Theory Post	10 pts.
Quizzes (library, vocabulary, comprehension)	10 pts.
Library Research Assignment	10 pts.
Collaborative article and group oral presentation	15 pts.
Essay #1 (Carroll)	10 pts.
Essay #2 (Ruhl)	15 pts.
Essay #3 (Tretheway)	15 pts.

As College policy makes clear, grades of B and A are reserved for exceptional work.

Policies and Reminders

- All essays should be double spaced, with one-inch margins, in a font similar to this one (Times New Roman 12) with your name, the date, course number, and name of assignment in the upper left corner of the first page.
- Unless otherwise specified, your assignments will be submitted in Canvas as url links, word documents, or pdf files.
- I will use Canvas for returning feedback on graded work and maintaining the gradebook.

- Due dates are not estimates and are not flexible except under extraordinary circumstances (as determined by me). You should contact me as soon as possible if you anticipate a problem with a due date so we can discuss an extension.

A note on academic integrity: All work in this course is covered by the UMW Honor Code, and I expect you to adhere to it at all times. This refers to the promise you made to your fellow students and the UMW community not to lie, cheat, or steal. Details of the UMW Honor System are available [here](#).

Plagiarism, like all cheating, is a serious offense. It means presenting another person's work as your own--whether that person is a friend, writing center or speaking center tutor, professional, or published author. Copying passages or paraphrasing ideas belonging to another person without acknowledging the source of those ideas is plagiarism. You can avoid this offense if you simply cite and reference the source you use, if any. I am quite willing to help you understand strategies for quotation and citation but I am not willing to be lenient on plagiarism, so please consult with me if you need to.

Disability services: The [Office of Disability Resources](#) has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through ODR and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss confidentially your approved accommodation needs and bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and need accommodations, their phone number is 540-654-1266.

The Speaking Center, Writing Center, and Digital Knowledge Center: Don't forget that these educational support centers are located on the 4th floor of the Convergence Center, and I urge you to use them, either individually or as a group.

- Since this class is Writing Intensive, you should be making use of the Writing Center. The trained tutors at the Writing Center can provide one-on-one tutorials with targeted writing feedback on your work and should also be willing to meet with your collaborative group if you arrange such an appointment. You can make an appointment [here](#). The Writing Center also has numerous reference handouts on writing, grammar, references, and more, which are available [here](#).
- At the SC, trained consultants can help with planning a speech or can videorecord practice presentations and provide feedback. Additionally, they can provide helpful guidance for managing a group presentation, including making the individual reports more cohesive as a whole. You can make an appointment [here](#). The Speaking Center also has a collection of instructional materials on topics from posture to speaking anxiety to organizing a speech to constructing effective visual aids, found [here](#).
- The DKC provides peer support for using educational technologies (systems, tools, projects). You can schedule an appointment [here](#).

Provisional Course Schedule

All readings must be done before class on the day assigned and you should bring the assigned texts to class.

Week 1

T Jan 12

Introductions

R Jan 14

What we talk about when we talk about “literature”: Richter (pdf)

Week 2

T Jan 19

Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*—yes, I do mean all of it

R Jan 21

Tyson, “New Criticism” (129-60)

Week 3

T Jan 26

Tyson, “Psychoanalytic Criticism” (11-50)

R Jan 28

Tyson, “Marxist Criticism” (51-78); **Toolbox,** “Ideology” (93-105)

Week 4

T Feb 2

Tyson, “Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Criticism” (302-42)

R Feb 4

Tyson, “Reader Response Criticism” (161-97); **Toolbox,** “Reading” (21-34)

►► **Library orientation quiz should be completed by midnight Friday, February 5** ◀◀

Week 5

T Feb 9

Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland:* 1-51

R Feb 11

Carroll, *Alice:* 52-97

Week 6

T Feb 16

Carroll, “**Humpty Dumpty,**” from *Through the Looking Glass*, 157-167;

Toolbox: “Subjectivity” (35-50) and “Poststructuralism” (145-154)

R Feb 18

Toolbox: “Author/ity” (9-20); **Norton Alice:** Biographical materials (241-

48); “The Letters of Lewis Carroll, 1840-1857” (251-54), “The

Letters...1864-1885” (268-71), “The Letters...1868-1897” (284-89);

“Alice’s Recollections” (265-68); “Alice on the Stage” (276-79);

“Dodgson’s Friendships with Women” (295-97); “An Old Bachelor” (299-303)

Week 7

T Feb 23
R Feb 25

Tyson, “Deconstructive Criticism” (235-66)
Meet in Simpson Library for session on library research skills

►► **Essay #1 due in Canvas by midnight Friday, February 26** ◀◀

Week 8

Spring Break: Read a good book.

Week 9

T Mar 8
R Mar 10

Tyson, “New Historical and Cultural Criticism” (267-301); **Toolbox**,
“Differences” (171-205)
Ruhl, *Passion Play*: Part One and **Toolbox**, “Postmodernism” (139-145)

Week 10

T Mar 15
R Mar 17

Ruhl: Part Two
Ruhl: Part Three

►► **Library Research Assignment due in Canvas by midnight Friday, March 18** ◀◀

Week 11

T Mar 22
R Mar 24

Ruhl and **Tyson**, “Postcolonial Criticism” (398-447); **Toolbox**, “History”
(107-120)
Tyson, “Feminist Criticism” (79-128)

Week 12

T Mar 29
R Mar 31

Tretheway, *Native Guard*: “Theories of Time and Space” (1) and Part I
(3-15)
Tretheway, *Native Guard*: “Pilgrimage” (19-20); “Scenes from a
Documentary History of Mississippi” (21-24)

►► **Essay #2 due in Canvas by midnight Friday, April 1** ◀◀

Week 13

T Apr 5
R Apr 7

Tretheway and **Tyson**, “African American Criticism” (343-97)
Tretheway, *Native Guard*: “Native Guard” (25-30); “Again, the Fields”
(31)

Week 14

T Apr 12
R Apr 14

Tretheway, *Native Guard*: Part III (33-46)
Tretheway and collaborative group work

Week 15

T Apr 19

Collaborative group work. ►► **Essay #3 due in Canvas by midnight.** ◀◀

R Apr 21

ELC Kemp Symposium. Class will not meet. Attend at least one session of the Symposium or an ELC panel of Research and Creativity Day.

►► **Collaborative Articles due by midnight Friday, April 22** ◀◀

Group Presentations on Collaborative Articles will be given during the Final Exam Periods:

section 01: Thursday, April 28, 8:30-11:00

section 02: Tuesday, April 26, 8:30-11:00