

LITR 2341: Literature and Experience

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introductory survey of literary forms across various genres (prose fiction, poetry, and drama) and connects the study of literature to a wide variety of human experiences. Over the course of the semester students will learn about how fiction, poetry, and drama are constructed by reading a wide variety of texts from the classical period to the present, place literary works in social, historical, and cultural contexts, and explore the ways in which we can connect literature to our experiences, and to what it means to be human. We will be particularly concerned with how literary texts engage with social issues, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, which will structure and focus our discussions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- A. Demonstrate general **knowledge of literary tradition and literary genres, and the relationship of literature to human experiences**, assessed by their ability to apply that knowledge to the interpretation of literary texts.
- B. Demonstrate skills in **critical thinking and interpretive reading**, assessed by their ability to create arguments (both verbal and written) about literary texts.
- C. Demonstrate **competent writing skills**, assessed by their ability to create and present arguments and insights, to express their points in appropriate style, and to use correct phrasing, diction, and punctuation.

CORE OBJECTIVES

This course addresses the following core objectives to ensure students develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in their lives. The core objectives meet the Texas Core Curriculum objectives for the Language, Philosophy, and Culture Foundational Component Area.

1. **Critical Thinking Skills:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
2. **Communication Skills:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
3. **Social Responsibility:** to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
4. **Personal Responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

RECOMMENDED READING

- *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, shorter 11th edition, ed. Kelly J. Mays.
- *An Introduction to Literature*, Longman, 16th edition, ed. Sylvan Barnet, William E. Burton, William E. Cain.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Quizzes** that will test knowledge of assigned readings and include a short essay question to stimulate class discussion. Helps students meet Learning Objectives A-C, and Core Objectives 1 and 2.
- **Midterm and final exam** that will test knowledge of primary readings and contextual readings, as well as lecture material. Helps students meet Learning Objectives A-C, and Core Objectives 1 and 2.
- **Short papers** focused on texts in each of the three genres (fiction, poetry, and drama) in relation to social issues, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. Helps students meet Learning Objectives A-C, and Core Objectives 1-4.
- **Participation** in class discussions and group activities. Students will be assessed on verbal communication, cultural awareness, and interaction with peers. Helps students meet Learning Objective B, and Core Objectives 1-4.

Learning Outcomes	CO	Assessment Methods	Criteria/Targets
1. Demonstrate general knowledge of literary tradition, literary genres, and the relationship of literature to human experiences.	CT, SR, PR	Exams (such as midterms, finals, and quizzes) that will test knowledge of assigned readings and lecture materials, as well as student ability to apply that knowledge to the interpretation of literary texts.	70% of students score "satisfactory" or better on exams and papers. "Satisfactory" means a grade of 70 or higher.
2. Demonstrate skills in critical thinking and interpretive reading.	CT, CO	Papers that will test student ability to develop and substantiate analyses that extend or contest familiar interpretations. Participation in class discussions and group activities.	70% of students score "satisfactory" or better on papers and for class participation. "Satisfactory" means a grade of 70 or higher.
3. Demonstrate competent writing skills.	CT, CO	Exams and papers will require students to conceive and present arguments and insights, and to express their points in appropriate style, serial ordering of information, phrasing, diction, and punctuation.	70% of students score "satisfactory" or better on exams and papers. "Satisfactory" means a grade of 70 or higher.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- Course introduction; in-class reading: John Keats, "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer."

Unit One: Fiction

Week 2: Plot, Narration, Character

- Edith Wharton, "Roman Fever."
- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado."
- Toni Morrison, "Recitatif."

Week 3: Setting, Symbol, Theme

- Anton Chekhov, "The Lady With the Dog."
- A. S. Byatt, "The Thing in the Forest."
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings."

Week 4

- Three stories by Flannery O'Connor: "A Good Man is Hard to Find," "Good Country People," and "Everything That Rises Must Converge."

Unit Two: Poetry

Week 5: Defining Poetry

- Thomas Hardy, "The Ruined Maid."
- Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought From Africa to America."
- Emily Dickinson, "The Sky is Low..."
- Bruce Springsteen, "Nebraska."
- Robert Hayden, "A Letter From Phillis Wheatley."

Week 6: Speaker, Situation, Setting

- Robert Browning, "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister."
- Audre Lorde, "Hanging Fire."
- Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress."
- Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach."

- Sylvia Plath, "Morning Song."

Week 7: Theme, Imagery, Symbol

- Adrienne Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers."
- Paul Dunbar, "Sympathy."
- John Donne, "Batter my heart, three-personed god..."
- William Blake, "The Sick Rose."
- Wilfrid Owen, "Strange Meeting."

Week 8

- Midterm.

Week 9

- Harlem Renaissance poetry and contexts.

Unit Three: Drama

Week 10

- Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*.

Week 11

- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Week 12

- *A Raisin in the Sun* cultural and historical contexts.

Week 13: 11/26

- Sophocles, *Antigone*.

Week 14: 12/3

- *Antigone* critical contexts.

Week 15

- Final exam.

