

MOUNT SAINT MARY COLLEGE  
Newburgh, NY 12550

Forms of Literature (ENG-1020-06 / ENG-1020-07)  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00-9:25 / 11:10-12:35  
Aquinas 308

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Office Hours (Aquinas 12-D): M-W-F 1:30-2:30, T-TH 9:45-11:00, or by arrangement.

### COURSE OUTCOMES

ENG-1020 is an introductory literature course required by the college of all students. My approach to teaching it emphasizes two outcomes above all others: first, reading literature more critically than you might normally be inclined to do and, then, writing about it as a natural extension of the reading process, a method of working through ideas. Each assignment is designed with these particular outcomes in mind.

Among the specific skills you can expect to practice, the following are the most essential:

- \* putting the works we read in context, culturally as well as historically
- \* distinguishing the elements that matter to a reading from those that do not
- \* developing a critical vocabulary with which to articulate what you know
- \* conveying your ideas logically, coherently, and succinctly
- \* using sources responsibly

### REQUIRED TEXT

Gardner, Janet E., et al. Literature: A Portable Anthology. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

### EVALUATION

Your final grade will be based on the following factors:

**THREE SHORT PAPERS (FORTY-FIVE POINTS):** You will have an opportunity to write as many as nine papers this semester. I will count your best three grades, weighted equally. Each paper is closely tied to the readings we will then be doing and may be categorized as analysis, research, or imitation. The number and type of papers you do will be up to you. However, I do require that you turn in at least one paper by February 24th and at least two papers by April 7th. For a description of each paper, its due date and type, as well as a short gloss on the readings it accompanies, see the handout "Schedule of Assignments."

**A MID-TERM AND A FINAL (THIRTY POINTS):** Both the mid-term and the final will cover material gone over in class and will consist of short essay questions that I will provide you with in advance together with questions repeated from our quizzes. The final will not be cumulative. As an incentive for doing well, I'll weigh your more successful grade twice as heavily as your less successful grade for a 20:10 ratio.

**PERIODIC QUIZZES (TEN POINTS):** Quizzes will be objective in format and generally unannounced. Their purpose is twofold: to ensure that you are doing all the required reading and to provide useful prompts for our subsequent discussion. Quizzes may not be made up.

PARTICIPATION (TEN POINTS): I expect you to participate in our class discussions to the best of your abilities. Mere attendance and a lack of tardiness will earn you, at best, five points. If you appear to be prepared and attentive but hardly open your mouth when given the opportunity, you will earn an additional two or three points. To earn nine or (especially) ten points, you will need to do more, demonstrating that your absence from class would be lamented by the rest of us.

**IMPORTANT: CELL PHONE USE, TEXT-MESSAGING, ETC. IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED. IF I HAVE TO TELL YOU TWICE TO PUT YOUR DEVICE AWAY, YOUR PARTICIPATION WILL BE ZERO.**

CRITICAL THINKING ASSESSMENT (FIVE POINTS): This is an institution-wide assessment that will be administered during the final exam period to all students currently enrolled in this course. The first part (fifteen minutes) is the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI). The second part (up to forty-five minutes) is the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST). Both may seem familiar, since you were given similar tests during your first-year orientation. The points you may earn here are for participation only. Individual results will not affect your grade. If you would like to have more information, including some sample items and questions, please see <http://www.insightassessment.com/>

In general, the Division of Arts and Letters adheres to the following grading scale:

POINTS	GRADE EQUIVALENT	QUALITY POINTS	MEANING
100-95	A	4.0	SUPERIOR
94-90	A-	3.67	OUTSTANDING
89-87	B+	3.33	EXCELLENT
86-83	B	3.0	VERY GOOD
82-80	B-	2.67	GOOD
79-77	C+	2.33	ABOVE AVERAGE
76-73	C	2.0	AVERAGE
72-70	C-	1.67	BELOW AVERAGE
69-65	D+	1.33	POOR
64-60	D	1.0	PASSING
59-0	F	0.0	FAILING

### OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS

ATTENDANCE: To my way of thinking, there is no such thing as an "excused" absence. Ideally, you'll be present for every class. Of course, this isn't an ideal world, and so my policy is to permit two absences (one week of class time) without penalty. For every absence above these two, I will subtract one and one-half point from your final grade. Frequent absences will put you at risk, then, not necessarily of failing, but of coming away with a lower grade for the course than you may think you deserve. When frequent absences are combined with missing or substandard work, the results can be devastating. Eventually, I have no choice but to write such students off. Obviously, those who have good reason to be absent, who keep me apprised of their situations, and who keep up with the work have nothing to worry about.

LATE PAPERS: Because no individual paper is a required assignment, late papers should not be an issue. If, on the day a paper is due, you do not turn it in, I will assume you do not intend to, even if you happen to be absent from class. If you do plan to turn in a paper, and it's not going to be on time, it is your responsibility to clear that with me beforehand. I will not chase after papers I suspect you ought to be doing, and I will not allow you to "make up" papers you discover, belatedly, you wish you had done.

REVISING: I encourage you to revise the essays you write for me, if there is need for it and if your schedule permits. But I must ask that you do so within two weeks of having the essay returned to you and that you submit your original essay along with the revision. It's also a good idea to consult with me first, in person, if there's any chance at all that the two of us aren't communicating. I'll allow, at most, one revision per essay. The better of the two grades will be the grade that figures into your average.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: I will not tolerate academic dishonesty of any kind. If you attempt to earn credit for someone else's work, you will fail the course. I am also bound to report the incident to the Division Chairperson, the Registrar, the Dean of Students, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Early in the semester, you will sign a "Contract on Plagiarism," stating that you understand what plagiarism is and that you accept the consequences I've mentioned. You will also register, when invited to, with turnitin.com, a plagiarism-detection database, and upload your essays as directed. More details will follow.

The above paragraph outlines the Division of Arts & Letters' policy on academic dishonesty. You should be aware that, as of January 5, 2009, a college-wide policy goes into effect. Under the college-wide policy, the Registrar will keep a record of all instances of academic dishonesty. Students identified in this way for a second time who have accumulated fewer than thirty credits will have their cases referred to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students who have accumulated more than thirty credits who are found guilty of a second infraction will automatically fail the course, regardless of the sanction the instructor had decided on. Students engaging in dishonest behavior for a third time will be dismissed from the college.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

T 1/20 COURSE OVERVIEW / PLAGIARISM CONTRACT / IN-CLASS WRITING ("SONNET")

### UNIT ONE: "ALL WE NEED IS FOURTEEN LINES, WELL, THIRTEEN NOW"

TH 1/22 Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 ["That time of year thou mayst in me behold"] (466), Wordsworth's "The world is too much with us" (496), Shelley's "Ozymandias" (500), Hopkins's "God's Grandeur" (540), McKay's "America" (569), Millay's Sonnet XXVII ["I know I am but summer to your heart"] (handout), and Collins's "Sonnet" (handout).

T 1/27 Williams's "This Is Just to Say" (handout), Pound's "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter" (559-60), Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" (581-82), Plath's "Metaphors" (631), Ai's "Why Can't I Leave You?" (672), Ríos's "Indentations in the Sugar" (692-93), and Doty's "Tiara" (700-01).

TH 1/29 Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (554), Toomer's "Reapers" (573), Crane's "My Grandmother's Love Letters" (573-74), Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" (587), Young's "A Dance for Ma Rainey" (654-55), and Ortiz Cofer's "Cold as Heaven" (697-98).

### UNIT TWO: THE COMPLEX OEDIPUS

T 2/3 Oedipus Rex (733-76).

TH 2/5 Oedipus Rex.

T 2/10 NO CLASS HELD. COLLEGE FOLLOWS MONDAY SCHEDULE.

**UNIT THREE: INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE**

TH 2/12 Updike's "A & P" (300-05) and Bambara's "The Lesson" (347-53).

T 2/17 Faulkner's "Barn Burning" (185-99).

TH 2/19 Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" (318-32).

**UNIT FOUR: FORGET-ME-NOTS**

T 2/24 Bishop's "One Art" (585-86), Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night" (591-92), Wong's "Grandmother's Song" (handout), and Fulton's "You Can't Rhumboogie in a Ball and Chain" (691-92).

TH 2/26 O'Hara's "The Day Lady Died" (607-08) and "A Step Away from Them" (handout).

T 3/3 REVIEW DAY FOR EXAM.

TH 3/5 MID-TERM EXAM.

T 3/10 NO CLASS HELD. SPRING BREAK.

TH 3/12 NO CLASS HELD. SPRING BREAK.

**UNIT FIVE: UM . . . WHAT WAS THE QUESTION AGAIN?**

T 3/17 Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (777-805).

TH 3/19 Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (805-55).

T 3/24 Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (855-98).

TH 3/26 Parks's "Hamlet/The Hamlet" (1172-73).

**UNIT SIX: HOW TO BECOME A WRITER**

T 3/31 Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" (66-68) and Chekhov's "A Blunder" (68-70).

TH 4/2 Kincaid's "Girl" (403-04), Cisneros's "The House on Mango Street" (414-15), and Moore's "How to Become a Writer" (432-38).

**UNIT SEVEN: EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING**

T 4/7 Whitman's "Song of Myself" (excerpts, 519-31).

TH 4/9 Dickinson's "I dwell in Possibility" (handout), "Wild Nights—Wild Nights!" (533-34), "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (534), "I like to see it lap the Miles" (535), "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died" (536), and "Because I could not stop for Death" (537-38).

**UNIT EIGHT: WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE . . .**

T 4/14 Strindberg's "The Stronger" and Martin's "Beauty" (handouts).

TH 4/16 Glaspell's Trifles (958-69).

**UNIT NINE: STRANGE EPIPHANIES**

T 4/21 Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" (158-65).

TH 4/23 Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemums" (204-13).

T 4/28 Mukherjee's "The Management of Grief" (354-67).

TH 4/30 REVIEW DAY FOR EXAM.

T 5/5 FINAL EXAM.

TBA CRITICAL THINKING ASSESSMENT.

# SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

# SPRING 2009

## UNIT ONE: "ALL WE NEED IS FOURTEEN LINES, WELL, THIRTEEN NOW"

Date Due: February 3rd

Assignment Type: Analysis

The line I've chosen as the heading for this first unit is the first line of Billy Collins's aptly named "Sonnet," a parodic example of the most familiar type of closed form poem written in English. After reading several other (more traditional) sonnets, we'll continue with select open form, or "free verse," poems before concluding the unit with some examples from each form, chosen specifically for their sounds.

*Paying careful attention to language and, in particular, to the connotations of words, allusions, figurative language, rhythm, sound, and so forth, explicate any one of the poems assigned for this unit. In doing so, please ignore anything you may happen to know about the poet or poem in question. Focus on the text and on the type of speaker the lines suggest.*

## UNIT TWO: THE COMPLEX OEDIPUS

Date Due: February 17th

Assignment Type: Analysis

In his groundbreaking 1900 work The Interpretation of Dreams, noted psychiatrist Sigmund Freud refers to Oedipus Rex as "a tragedy of destiny," adding that its tragic effect was traditionally thought to reside in "the contrast between the supreme will of the gods and the vain attempts of mankind to escape the evil that threatens them." But Freud disagrees. The king's destiny moves us, he says, "only because it might have been ours." It is the playwright's aim, in fact, to make us recognize on stage before us "our own inner minds, in which those same impulses, though suppressed, are still to be found."

*Presuming Freud is correct, it ought to be possible to treat the characters of this play, and Oedipus in particular, as real people, whose words (and motives) make sense to us. Starting with any one of the following lines, provide a meaningful context for what is said. Who says it to whom and why? Your answer to these simple questions ought to take the form of an explication. Use additional quotations to demonstrate whatever point(s) you are trying to make.*

*"I was not sleeping, you are not waking me" (Prologue, line 65)*

*"I am the kind of man / Who holds his tongue when he has no facts to go on" (Scene Two, lines 52-53)*

*"Ah, miserable! / That is the only word I have for you now" (Scene Three, lines 151-152)*

## UNIT THREE: INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Date Due: February 24th

Assignment Type: Analysis

If you were to ask ten people at random to tell you the opposite of "innocence," eight or nine of the ten would likely say "guilt"—our society is *that* litigious. Yet, as all good students of literature know, "experience" is what stands in clearest opposition to innocence. Who hasn't read a story in which the latter gives way to the former, in which a youthful protagonist "comes of age" or in which some new understanding dawns? The four stories I've brought together here are all stories of innocence and experience. Watch what happens when they collide.

*Select a brief passage (up to 200 words or so) from any one of the stories we've read so far and explicate its meaning. As with the assignments above, this means paying careful attention to language. Do not simply summarize the passage you've selected. Put it in context, first, to indicate when it appears, and explain why it seems to demand our close attention. If you'd like, connect it to something specific, such as character, setting, or point of view. Be sure to quote directly.*

#### UNIT FOUR: FORGET-ME-NOTS

Date Due: March 3rd

Assignment Type: Imitation

The most obvious similarity among the poems we'll read this week has to be the elegiac impulse that runs through each of them. Each poem memorializes a person or persons beloved by the poet—a lover, a father, and a grandmother, two iconic singers, and three close friends. Each is also, if less obviously, an extremely formulaic exercise: two villanelles, a pantoum, a sestina, and two "lunch-time" poems. Each is, in its way, defined by its style.

*This is not to be undertaken lightly. I would like you to write a poem, but not just any poem. Make it EITHER a villanelle, a pantoum, a sestina, or a "lunch-time" poem. Your poem may (but need not) memorialize someone or something. It's more important that the style be right. Study the form of your model carefully. Also, please follow up with a page or two of explanation. Don't let your entire grade for this assignment rest on a handful of stanzas.*

#### UNIT FIVE: UM . . . WHAT WAS THE QUESTION AGAIN?

Date Due: March 31st

Assignment Type: Imitation

Hamlet is, arguably, the best-known play by the best-known playwright, of all time. "Hamlet/The Hamlet" is something less than that, a relatively flimsy thing by comparison, one of innumerable modern works that would not (indeed *could* not) exist had the prior work never been written. It is, in fact, a parody, combining familiar elements of Shakespeare's story with elements we associate with another famous William—William Faulkner, whose "Barn Burning" you have also read.

*Using Parks's "Hamlet/The Hamlet" as your model, compose a scene that brings Hamlet together with another familiar story, not necessarily one on our syllabus. While anything we've studied up to this point is obviously fair game, use your knowledge of literature in general (or of television or the movies) to make a smart connection. As with assignment four, append to your parody a page or two of explanation.*

#### UNIT SIX: HOW TO BECOME A WRITER

Date Due: April 7th

Assignment Type: Imitation

I toyed with the idea of titling this unit "Five Incredibly Short Stories." Four of the five are barely half as long as even the shortest of the short stories we've looked at already. Instead, I've borrowed the title of the longest of the five, reasoning that its emphasis on *process* is precisely what's needed at this point. There are many ways to tell a story, even stories of a couple of pages.

*Tell me a story, modeling yours on one of the five stories we've just read and discussed. Don't worry too much about how long (or how short) it is. Length is less important than familiarity, and you should signal that familiarity in the title you choose. "Another Story of an Hour" would call Chopin's story to mind. "Girl" might become "Boy" or "Dog" or "Tree." You can channel Cisneros with "The 1990 Honda Civic in My Driveway." "How to Become a Nurse" would announce its debt to Moore. Pay close attention to tone. Finally, as with assignments four and five, include a brief explanation of what you've done.*

## UNIT SEVEN: EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

Date Due: April 14th

Assignment Type: Research

The two writers I've assigned for this unit—Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson—are a pair of American originals, poets so atypical in the nineteenth century that it was only in the twentieth, and posthumously, that they earned the reputations they presently enjoy. They make for quite a pair. For one thing, they illustrate perfectly the tension between experience and understanding, a tension vital to all good poetry, with Whitman seeming to choose experience over understanding and Dickinson vice versa. Modern critics have not tired of arguing about what their poems mean.

*First, have a look at the following critical resources, on E-RESERVE. Choose the one that seems most interesting to you.*

- \* Lewis M. Layman's "Echoes of Walt Whitman's 'Bare-Bosom'd Night' in Vincent Van Gogh's 'Starry Night'"
- \* Paul Faris's "Eroticism in Emily Dickinson's 'Wild Nights!'"
- \* Patrick F. O'Connell's "Emily Dickinson's Train: Iron Horse or 'Rough Beast'?"

*Then, give me the following: (1) a bibliographic entry in MLA or APA style; (2) a page or two that summarizes what you've read; and (3) a similarly brief, subjective assessment of the material, in which you respond to what the writer has to say.*

## UNIT EIGHT: WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE . . .

Date Due: April 21st

Assignment Type: Research

You know the rest . . . who needs enemies? Surely not Mrs. X., whose extraordinary monologue suggests she and Miss Y., if they never *were* bosom buddies, have an openly hostile future to look forward to. By comparison, Bethany and Carla seem genuinely fond of one another—at least until the jealousy kicks in. And poor Mrs. Wright! Now there's a woman who could have used a magic lamp. "Three wishes? Where do I even begin?"

*Follow the instructions for assignment seven, choosing from the following three articles:*

- \* Lynne Truss's "They're murder to write, but monologues . . . can stop an audience breathing"
- \* NPR's "Discovering Who Playwright Jane Martin Is" (transcript of radio broadcast)
- \* Phyllis Mael's "Trifles: The Path to Sisterhood"

## UNIT NINE: STRANGE EPIPHANIES

Date Due: April 28th

Assignment Type: Research

The editors of our textbook define *epiphany* in triplicate: first, as an "appearance or manifestation, especially of a divine being"; second, as "a sudden sense of radiance and revelation one may feel while perceiving a commonplace object"; and, third—the definition we would do best to pay attention to—as "a moment or event in which the essential nature of a person, a situation, or an object is suddenly perceived" (1438). It is, to be sure, a familiar enough concept in literature, and one nicely represented in each of these last three stories. As you read them, consider what price each protagonist pays for the knowledge she surely gains. Whose is the strangest epiphany?

*Follow the instructions for assignment seven, choosing from the following three articles:*

- \* David C. Estes's "Granny Weatherall's Dying Moment: Katherine Anne Porter's Allusions to Emily Dickinson"
- \* G. J. Palmerino's "Steinbeck's *The Chrysanthemums*"
- \* Bharati Mukherjee's "American Dreamer"