

**ENGL 782, Current Directions in Literary Study:  
Canon-Formation, Pedagogy, and the Reading Public**

Fall 2020 Thursdays 4:00-6:50 Colson 130

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**Overview**

We'll begin by examining three different approaches to the study of canon formation, focusing primarily on American literature: Reising's disciplinary account, Guillory's sociocultural account, and Csicsila's empirical account. Harris will help us clarify the object of study by differentiating among kinds of canon. Lauter, Kilcup, and Underwood offer case studies. Guillory's essay for the *ADE Bulletin* on the historical survey course will transition us to the second phase, where we'll examine how canon-formation plays out in the classroom. We'll examine several case studies from Dujardin's collection and a special issue of *American Literature* on pedagogy. We'll finish by turning from the academic to the public canon, including a Zoom session with the authors of two reception studies.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Gain a solid understanding of theories of canon formation, particularly focusing on American literature
- Differentiate among different kinds of literary canon (e.g., diachronic, disciplinary, classroom, public or popular)
- Develop a public-facing argument regarding a canonical text or author
- Formulate and research a question concerning canon formation or the function of a canon in a particular context and present your research in an analytical, thesis-driven academic essay.

**Required Texts**

Russell Reising. *The Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature*. Routledge, 2013. 9780415866422 (Look for used copies of the Methuen edition, 1986.)

John Guillory. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of the Literary Canon*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. 9780226310442

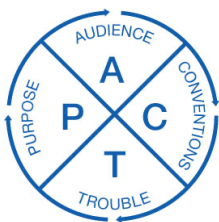
Gwynn Dujardin et al. *Teaching the Literature Survey Course: New Strategies for College Faculty*. West Virginia University Press, 2018. 9781946684097

Anne Boyd Rioux. *Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why it Still Matters*. Norton, 2019. 9780393357271

Journal articles available through WVU libraries.

Book chapters and other materials available on course eCampus site

Newspaper and magazine articles readily available on the web.



**Graded Work**

- Eight discussion board posts (~250 words) = 5 points each
- Two presentations: = 5 points each
- A short, public-facing essay = 10 points
- An article-length final essay, including prospectus, workshop draft, and final draft = 40 points

## Office Hours

I will hold office hours via Zoom, Tuesdays 3:00-4:00—these will be visible in eCampus: meeting ID 917 0983 0255, passcode English782. If that time is not convenient, please email me to schedule another time.

## COVID-19 Syllabus Statement

WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Should campus operations change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. If that occurs, students will be advised of technical and/or equipment requirements, including remote proctoring software.

In a face-to-face environment, our commitment to safety requires students, staff, and instructors to observe the social distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines set by the University at all times. While in class, students will sit in assigned seats when applicable and wear the required PPE. Should a student forget to bring the required PPE, PPE will be available in the building for students to acquire. Students who fail to comply will be dismissed from the classroom for the class period and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for further sanctions.

If a student becomes sick or is required to quarantine during the semester, they should notify the instructor. The student should work with the instructor to develop a plan to receive the necessary course content, activities, and assessments to complete the course learning outcomes.

→For ENGL 782, I have scheduled a Zoom meeting for each class period—these will be visible in eCampus: meeting ID 951 7721 5654, passcode English782 . If you can't attend in person, you will be able to attend virtually. The meetings will be recorded.

## Policies

**Late work.** Except for extraordinary circumstances, I will not accept late work. This includes the discussion board posts, which are due **one day in advance** of class meetings.

**Absence.** If you must miss class, please notify me ahead of time and provide documentation. For every unexcused absence, your final grade will be lowered by one letter. We will follow WVU policy for cancellation on account of weather.

**Inclusivity.** The WVU community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. For more information on WVU's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see the DEI website <https://diversity.wvu.edu> (304-293-5600).

**Accessibility.** If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Accessibility Services <https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu> (304-293-6700).

**Sexual Misconduct.** WVU does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence. (BOG Rule 1.6) It is important for you to know that there are resources available through the Title IX office if you or someone you know needs assistance: <https://diversity.wvu.edu/equity-assurance/title-ix> (304-293-5600). You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the

incident to the Title IX Coordinator. If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the Carruth Center, 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC), 304- 292-5100 or 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline).

## Calendar

Date	Reading / Topic	Work Due / date
8/27	Course intro	
9/3	Russell Reising, <i>Unusable Past</i>	DB post <b>9/2</b>
9/10	E. C. Stedman, <i>An American Anthology</i> (1900), archive.org <i>Covers, Titles, and Tables</i> project <a href="https://library.uta.edu/ctt/">https://library.uta.edu/ctt/</a> Sample anthology prefaces (PDF on eCampus site)	DB post <b>9/9</b>
9/17	John Guillory, <i>Cultural Capital</i>	DB post <b>9/16</b>
9/24	Wendell Harris, "Canonicity," <i>PMLA</i> 106.1 (Jan. 1991): 110-21. Joseph Csicsila, <i>Canons by Consensus</i> , excerpts (PDF)	DB post <b>9/23</b>
10/1	Henry Louis Gates, "The Master's Pieces: On Canon Formation and the African American Tradition" (PDF) Paul Lauter, "Melville Climbs the Canon," <i>American Literature</i> 66.1 (March 1994): 1-24 Karen Kilcup, <i>Who Killed American Poetry?</i> Intro & ch 5 (PDF) Ted Underwood, <i>Why Literary Periods Mattered</i> , Intro (PDF)	DB post <b>9/30</b>
10/8	Reading/writing day, class does not meet	
10/15	Andrew Newman, "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous: <i>The Great Gatsby</i> in the 1980s" (PDF) <i>Zoom meeting with the author, 4:00.</i> Thomas Koenigs, "Fictionality Risen: Early America, the Common Core Curriculum, and How We Argue about Fiction Today," <i>American Literature</i> 89.2 (June 2017): 225-53 <b>Presentation of prospectus for final project</b>	prospectus <b>10/15</b>

10/22	John Guillory, "Uses of the Historical Survey Course" (PDF) Gwynn Dujardin et al., eds., <i>Teaching the Literature Survey Course</i> , chapters: Intro. Lang 4. Rosenfeld, "Extended Engagement" 9. Lucas and Winters, "Thematic Organization" 10. Dujardin, "Fear and Learning" 11. Rosendale, "Survey as Pedagogical Training" 12. Staunton, "Re-Visioning the Am Lit Survey"	DB post <b>10/21</b>
10/29	Anne Rioux, <i>Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters</i> <i>Zoom meeting with the author, 4:00.</i>	DB post <b>10/28</b>
11/5	Greg Grandin, "Reading Melville in Post-9/11 America," <i>Nation</i> 1/27/2014 (also read the Toni Morrison sidebar) Ta-Nehisi Coates, "And Now for a Much Deserved Moment of Insanity." <i>Atlantic</i> 5/26/2011 Carl Safin, "Melville's Whale Was a Warning We Failed to Heed," <i>New York Times</i> 5/2/2020. Kathryn Schulz, "Moral Judgements of H. D. Thoreau," <i>New Yorker</i> 10/19/2015 Donovan Hohn, "Everybody Hates Henry," <i>New Republic</i> 10/21/2015 Ron Charles, " <i>Walden</i> may be the most famous act of social distancing," <i>Washington Post</i> 4/7/2020. Holland Cotter, "Lessons in Constructive Solitude from Thoreau," <i>New York Times</i> 4/9/2020.	DB post <b>11/4</b>
11/12	<b>Presentation of public-facing essay</b>	public-facing essay <b>11/12</b>
11/19	<b>Peer group workshop on draft of final paper</b>	Drafts due to group members by the evening of <b>11/17</b>
11/26	Thanksgiving Break	
12/3	<b>Individual videoconferences on final paper</b>	Summary of peer conference comments due to me by <b>12/2</b>

**Final paper due Friday 12/11**