

English 200: Foundations of Literary Study, (Un)Commonplaces

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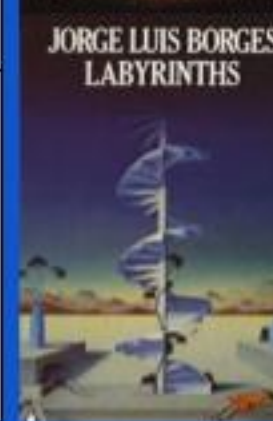
commonplace, *n.* and *adj.*

Etymology: A rendering of Latin *locus communis* ... explained as a general theme or argument applicable to many particular cases.

“There is no need to build a **labyrinth** when the entire universe is one.”
-Jorge Luis Borges

Learning Outcomes

- ❑ Learn and analyze conventions of traditional literary genres
- ❑ Draw and articulate connections between texts and genres
- ❑ Contribute to conversations about the social impact of English studies
- ❑ Practice rhetorically effective writing and communication, through both traditional, thesis-driven argumentation and creative, speculative, multimodal experimentation



English 200 is a foundation course, which means it concentrates on the fundamental components of literary study: reading, writing and research. A varied selection of course texts—poetry, fiction, drama—should spur some productive conversations about rhetorical practices and research processes, as well as **invite** students to discuss and discover the methodologies that English majors have *in common*. The course adopts the phrase *(un)commonplaces*, however, as its subtheme, because even as we acquaint ourselves with the common practices of English study, we will read authors who take the idea of the commonplace and de-familiarize it. The **commonplaces** of the course texts, that is, prove **inhabitable**—expansively so!—at the same time as they prove precarious, **haunted**, unpredictable.

Arguably, the **place** English majors inhabit in the current cultural moment is as hazardously hospitable as the intricate *topoi* of the course readings. We'll make **room** in this course to examine the scope and scale of the **commonplace** procedures, habits, timelines and professional boundaries of literary study, and we'll consider the collective (pre)**occupation** among humanities students, instructors and departments to articulate our common **place** in educational, political and cultural environments.

*Don't worry, you're not buying all the books pictured. Many are short story collections; selections will be provided on campus. You do need to buy *House of Leaves*.