

Foundations of Literary Study

English 200

Professor Johanna Winant
Tuesday/Thursday, 1-2:15pm

Why are people scared of works of literature? Why would powerful people think literature is even more powerful and go to the trouble of putting authors on trial and destroying copies of books?

In this course, we'll read poems, plays, and novels that were once outlawed, and we'll ask what gives them their power, and why that power frightened people. Will Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* upset you? Will Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* scare you? Will Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* make you uncomfortable? Will Alison Bechdel's graphic novel *Fun Home* make you mad? Maybe, and certainly these texts are written to provoke a response.

But we will do more than just respond emotionally; we will respond intellectually. In this course, you'll learn how to analyze literary texts. You'll learn how to take them apart and see how they achieve their effects. You'll learn to craft arguments that reveal how and why literature is particularly, peculiarly powerful. You'll learn—really learn—to write essays. And you'll get to read some books that might just change you forever...after all, someone, at some point, tried to keep them away from you thinking that they would.

