

# ENGL 337: Major Author

## Toni Morrison in the Morning

Dr. Katy Ryan  
Colson 205/Class Armstrong 121  
[kohearnr@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:kohearnr@mail.wvu.edu)  
Colson Office Hours Tues 9:45-10:45  
[Online Office Hours](#) Wed 9:00-10:00

### Course Description

Toni Morrison (1931–2019) understood narrative as more than entertainment. It is, she wrote, “one of the principal ways in which we absorb knowledge.”

As we study Morrison’s work as a writer, scholar, and editor, we will consider the knowledge she passed on to us. Her novels compel us to slow down, to reckon with U.S. history, to explore what it means to be responsible and to be free. Among her subjects are the trauma and legacy of slavery; Black liberation; the complexities of love, family, community; and possibilities for healing and growth.

We will read three of her eleven novels, essays from *What Moves at the Margin* and *The Source of Self-Regard*, her Nobel Acceptance Speech, and scholarship on her work. We will listen closely to Morrison and to one another. And we will do so early in the morning, Morrison’s favorite time of day.

### Required Texts

*Sula* (1973)  
*Song of Solomon* (1977)  
*Beloved* (1987)



The function of freedom is to free somebody else.

Make up a story. Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created.

At some point the world’s beauty becomes enough. You don’t have to photograph, paint, or even remember it. It is enough.

You your best thing, Sethe.

## Contents of Syllabus

1. Required Texts
2. Grade Distribution and Grading Scale
3. Class Engagement and Attendance Policy
4. Writing Requirements
5. Learning Outcomes, English Major Program Goals, and SpeakWrite
6. Online Tools and Policies
7. University Policy Statements
8. Schedule
9. Morrison Bibliography

### **1. REQUIRED TEXTS**

Please purchase or borrow the three novels listed above. Additional readings will be made available on ECampus, provided in class, or linked in the schedule. Do not hesitate to contact me if you cannot find something.

### **2. GRADE DISTRIBUTION and GRADING SCALE | 100 points**

Three reader responses	15
Midterm Essay (5-6 pp)	25
Final Research Project	30
<i>Annotated Bibliography</i>	10
<i>Research Project</i>	20
Class participation	30
<i>Discussion</i>	10
<i>Informal writing</i>	10
<i>Question or Quotation</i>	10

Note: Midsemester grades will include two reader responses, essay drafts, ½ of participation points.

### **Scale**

A+	100-98;	A 97-92;	A- 91-90
B+	89-88;	B 87-82;	B- 81-80
C+	79-78;	C 77-72;	C- 71-70
D+	69-68;	D 67-62;	D- 61-60
F	below 59		

### **3. CLASS ENGAGEMENT and ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Though we will not be able to sit in a circle, we will draw from the practice of restorative circles to engage with the material and one another. You can read about restorative practices in classrooms [here](#).

This course will strengthen your ability to question, analyze, reflect, discern, listen, and reason. We will create an environment that invites all of us to teach and be taught. I set a high bar for thoughtful and respectful exchange. If you have concerns about class discussion, please let me know as soon as possible.

Class engagement points will be the sum of three parts:

1. *Question or Quotation*      10 points

Each student will sign up for a Big Question or Quotation Day. On this day, bring a quotation from the reading for us to discuss or one question that engages with the reading. We will typically begin class with your question or quotation. Provide enough context to make the significance of your question or quotation clear to us.

[Sign up for your Quotation/Question Day.](#)

Write your Quotations and Questions [here](#).

2. *Informal writing*      10 points

Occasionally I will ask you to write in response to readings or discussions. These exercises are ungraded opportunities to process information and share your understanding. You receive full credit (2 points each) as long as your writing demonstrates that you have read and been paying attention in class discussion.

3. *Discussion*      10 points

There are many ways to participate—by speaking in the circle; being prepared for class; answering and asking questions; taking initiative in small groups; reading aloud; posting on the course blog and discussion groups. Ask me at any point if you have questions about your points. After each class, I take notes on who participated.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

I surveyed my students last semester and learned that all of them consider class discussion the most important element for learning—above writing and research, above reading. In-class learning is, of course, a challenge to make happen consistently right now.

You can miss five classes for whatever reason. Beyond five, your final grade will be reduced one letter grade for each additional unexcused absence. If you are sick or experience a crisis, you are excused. Routine lateness (three classes) will count as an absence. I will let you know when you have been late more than three times.

If you are seriously ill or have a personal emergency that necessitates extended absence, contact me as soon as it is feasible for you, and we will make arrangements to meet and

discuss if it is possible for you to make up the work. The University's statement on attendance is available [here](#).

**\*\*\*It is important that you remain in communication with me.**

#### **4. WRITING REQUIREMENTS**

Upload all written work to the appropriate ECampus folder on the due date before midnight. Review the rubric on ECampus for reader responses and the essay before turning in your work.

##### **Three Reader Responses** *15 points*

You will write **three reader responses** (approx. 500 words) to the readings. Due dates are on the syllabus. Please read the sample reader response on ECampus.

Strong responses investigate a specific question about the literature and are anchored in careful observation of language. Your analysis should advance an insight or argument and offer evidence for your claims.

Literary evidence consists of direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. Include at least **three direct quotations** from the text in your response. Provide the page number in parentheses after the quote. This practice will prepare you for the essay assignment.

You are welcome to make connections to other works we have read in class or that are relevant to your analysis.

You have the option to write one creative response (max. 1000 words). For this option, you do not need to quote directly from the literary works, but your understanding of the original needs to be clear; the same level of analysis needs to be demonstrated through the creative response as in the analytical response.

Below are ideas for the optional creative response.

- **Create a Comic:** Draw a comic strip or panel that engages with the original. Your comic might include your own writing, such as dialogue or thought bubbles.
- **Be the Author:** Write an additional scene a literary work. Your scene should illuminate an important question or insight about the original. You could create a scene that would occur within, before, or after the fiction or nonfiction work.
- **Create a dialogue:** Imagine a conversation between two characters or writers. The characters could be from the same or different literary works.
- **Conduct an Interview:** Imagine an interview with a character or the author of one of our works. Explain who is conducting the interview, where, when, etc. Your interview should help us to define key terms, understand concepts, or make sense of a confusing part of the work.

- **Write a Letter:** Compose a letter to an author or one of the characters. This letter should explore a question you have about the original and convey your interpretation.

### **Essay**

*20 points*

Around midterm, you will write a 5-6 page essay. I will collect drafts and provide feedback. You will have an opportunity to revise your work and read the work of other students. I will give you detailed instructions in writing.

### **Final Research Project** *30 points*

There will be several options for the final research project, which might take the form of a research essay, a poster, or a digital humanities project. Everyone will present their final project to the class in some format. I will give you written instructions in the second half of the semester.

### **Policy for Late Written Work**

I cannot respond to late essay drafts. I make room in my schedule to provide extensive feedback during the drafting period. If you cannot turn in a draft by the deadline, you can submit the final essay without my feedback (see evaluative criteria). If you turn in the final essay after the deadline, I will provide a grade and rubric score but not additional feedback.

The deadline to turn in late work is April 14. At least two reader responses must be turned in by the due date on the syllabus. Please visit me during office hours or make an appointment if you are having trouble making deadlines.

**Need Writing Help? The Eberly Studio** -- a free tutoring service for WVU students -- is located in G02 Colson Hall. Tutors are available to help with any writing project in any course. The Center specializes in helping students with brainstorming, drafting, and revising their work. Phone: (304) 293-5788 | Call for Evansdale and evening hours

[http://english.wvu.edu/centers\\_and\\_projects/wcenter/writing\\_center\\_home](http://english.wvu.edu/centers_and_projects/wcenter/writing_center_home)

## **5. Learning Outcomes, English Major Program Goals, and SpeakWrite**

Upon completing this course, a student should be able to:

- Analyze complex passages within literary and historical contexts
- Identify key themes and subjects in Morrison's fiction and nonfiction
- Enter a scholarly conversation about Morrison's work
- Communicate ideas effectively in speech and writing

One of my primary goals is to create with you a supportive intellectual community.

## English Major Program Goals

Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.



**Purpose:** What exactly do I want to happen?

**Audience:** Who is reading, listening, or viewing?

**Conventions:** What is expected in this context?

**Trouble:** What could get in the way of my goals?

## SpeakWrite

ENGL 337 has been designated as a SpeakWrite course by the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences. As part of Eberly's commitment to fostering effective communication skills, this course will:

- Emphasize informal and formal modes of communication
- Teach discipline-specific communication techniques
- Use a process-based approach to learning that provides opportunities for feedback and revision
- Base 90% of the final grade on successful written and spoken performance

Review and take advantage of these useful [PACT resources](#) on written and oral communication.

## 6. Online Tools and Email Policy

If we need to shift to Zoom, please let me know if anything will prevent you from synchronous learning.

- ◇ Connectivity Trouble: If you have trouble connecting, send me an email when you are able. Don't worry about joining late. Do your best. That's all we can do.
- ◇ Communicate with me often. This is essential. If you miss a class and are not sick, please contact me. If you are sick, concentrate on getting better. Once you recover, be in touch and I will catch you up.
- ◇ I try not to look at email over weekends. Send a reminder if you've sent me an email and have not heard back after three days.

## **7. UNIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, instructors will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of their courses. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University [Academic Standards Policy](#). Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see your instructor before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

### **Academic Standards Policy, including Academic Dishonesty**

The WVU Catalog contains the full [Undergraduate Academic Standards Policy](#) and [Graduate Academic and Professional Standards Policy](#).

- [Resources for Faculty and Students for Reporting and Appealing Violations of Academic Standards](#)

### **Adverse Weather Statement**

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use his or her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Safety should be the main concern. If you cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible. Similarly, if your instructor(s) are unable to reach the class location, they will notify you of any cancellation or change as soon as possible, using agreed upon methods to prevent students from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If you cannot get to class because of weather conditions, instructors will make allowances relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments. [adopted 9-8-2014]

### **Appropriate Use of Technology Statement**

Use of technology in the classroom should always be directly related to class activities and/or course learning outcomes. Inappropriate technology use can be an impediment to learning and a distraction to all members of the class. As such, inappropriate use of technology in the classroom may be considered a disruption of the class and constitute a violation of the [WVU Student Conduct Code](#) and could potentially result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct. Use of technology in the classroom when specifically prohibited by the instructor may also constitute a violation of WVU's [Academic Integrity](#) policy.



## **Campus Safety Statement**

The WVU Police are committed to creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Part of this mission includes educating the campus community on how to respond to potential campus threats, such as the threat of an active shooter on campus or other suspicious behaviors. Fortunately, WVU Police offer training - both online and in-person - on how to handle a variety of campus safety scenarios. All students are encouraged to visit the [WVU Police](#) webpage, in particular the content under the [Active Shooter](#) training program. Students are also encouraged to report any suspicious behaviors on campus using the [Report a Threat](#) portion of the webpage. Additional materials on campus safety prepared by WVU Police, including special safety tips and training, will also be provided on our eCampus page. [adopted 10-2-17]

## **Notice of Class Recording Policy**

Meetings of a course at West Virginia University (WVU), whether online or in-person, may be recorded. Recordings are not guaranteed, and are intended to supplement the planned class session. Recordings will be made available to class participants, which may include students, assistants, guest lecturers, and co-facilitators. Recordings may be shared by the instructor or institution in accordance with WVU Rules and policies. The Recordings are owned by and contain intellectual property of WVU. The Recordings may not be shared, copied, reproduced, redistributed, transferred, or disseminated in any form or by any means without the prior written consent of authorized officials of WVU.

## **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.



## **Inclusivity Statement**

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with [the Office of Accessibility Services](https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/).  
(<https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>)

More information is available at the [Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](https://diversity.wvu.edu/) (<https://diversity.wvu.edu/>) as well. [adopted 2-11-2013]

## **Incomplete Policy**

The WVU Catalog contains the full [Incomplete Policy](#).

## **Mental Health Statement - Main Campus**

Mental health concerns or stressful events can adversely affect your academic performance and social relationships. WVU offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns that you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at the Carruth Center for Psychological and Psychiatric Services (CCPPS) website: <https://carruth.wvu.edu/>

- If you are in need of crisis services, call the CCPPS main number 24/7: (304) 293-4431.

Crisis services are also available through text: Text WVU to 741741 for support 24/7 from a trained Crisis Counselor.

## **Student Advocacy Center**

Part of the Campus and Community Life, a Division of Student Life, the [Student Advocacy Center](#) is comprised of the Senior Associate Dean of Student Life who serves as the Student Advocate, Student Legal Services, the Off-Campus Housing Office, Commuter Student Programs, Non-traditional Student Assistance, and the Student HelpLine. The goal of the Center is to assist students with non-academic questions and concerns and to make the proper referrals when necessary.

Questions are answered daily about many concerns that students may have. The Advocacy Center is designed to simplify procedures and to help students cut through red tape by finding answers to questions and helping to familiarize our students with campus policies and procedures. We specialize in problem solving and helping our students be better

informed about making the decisions they need to make, whether these decisions involve classes or any other aspect of university life.

The Student HelpLine number is 304-293-5555

### **Sale of Course Material Statement**

All course materials, including lectures, class notes, quizzes, exams, handouts, presentations, and other course materials provided to students for their courses are protected intellectual property. As such, the unauthorized purchase or sale of these materials may result in disciplinary sanctions under the [Student Conduct Code](#). (<https://studentconduct.wvu.edu/campus-student-code>) [adopted 5-11-2015]

### **Sexual Misconduct Statement**

West Virginia University 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 if you or someone you know needs assistance. 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).

For more information, please consult WVU's Title IX Office  
<https://titleix.wvu.edu/resources-offices>

### **Student Evaluation of Instruction Statement**

Effective teaching is a primary mission of West Virginia University. Student evaluation of instruction provides the university and the instructor with feedback about your experiences in the course for review and course improvement. Your participation in the evaluation of course instruction is both strongly encouraged and highly valued. Results are strictly confidential, anonymous, and not available to the instructor until after final grades are released by Admissions and Records. Information about how you can complete this evaluation will be provided by your instructor.

### ***Optional Event***

The second annual Amplifying Appalachia Wikipedia Edit-a-thon will take place from **Monday, March 21 to Friday, March 25**. The edit-a-thon will be asynchronous with a possibly synchronous event. Participants work to amplify the stories and figures of

under-represented Appalachian artists, writers, and other creators, particularly women, people of color, and LGBTQ creators. The event is hosted under the [Art + Feminism umbrella](#). Let me know if you are interested in participating.

## 8. SCHEDULE

The schedule is subject to change in response to weather and other contingencies. Assignments are due by 5:00 PM on the given date unless otherwise indicated.

	READINGS	DUE DATES
1/11	Introductions. Syllabus. <a href="#">Sign up for your Quotation/Question Day</a> As we go, add Quotations and Questions <a href="#">here</a>	
1/13	1993 Nobel Prize Speech / ECampus / Readings Dr. Koritha Michell's <a href="#">Covenant</a>	
1/18	<i>Beloved</i> , Part One through "How did she know" *page numbers from Plume edition (1-63)	
1/20	<i>Beloved</i> , Part One through "The hem darkened in the water" (64-105)	
1/25	<i>Beloved</i> through Part One	First Reader Response due to <i>Beloved</i>
1/27	<i>Beloved</i> , Part Two through "unspeakable thoughts, unspoken" (169-199)	
2/1	<i>Beloved</i> through Part Two Your responses	
2/3	<i>Beloved</i> , Part Three Essay Assignment	
2/8	"On <i>Beloved</i> " / ECampus / Readings "The Site of Memory" / ECampus / Readings <a href="#">Summary of Margaret Garner</a>	
2/10	<i>Song of Solomon</i> 1-89 chaps 1-3	

2/15	<i>Song of Solomon</i> 90–151 chaps 4-6 In class: <a href="#">On Her Work</a> Scroll down to video “Remembering TM”	Second Reader Response due to <i>Song of Solomon</i>
2/17	<i>Song of Solomon</i> 152–216 chaps 7-9	
2/22	<i>Song of Solomon</i> 219-285 chaps 10–11 Your responses	
2/24	<i>Song of Solomon</i> 286 – end chaps 12–14	
3/1	In class: Interview on <a href="#">Song of Solomon and flying</a> “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation” ECampus / Readings	Essay Drafts due 3/1
3/3	Sonia Sanchez, “15 Haiku for Toni Morrison” in <i>Toni Morrison: 40 Years in the Clearing</i> , ebook available through WVU Library	Grades due Mar 4
3/8	<a href="#">Pieces of Me</a> available through WVU Library/Kanopy	
3/10	<i>Pieces of Me</i> Your essays Final Project Info	Final Essays due 3/11
Spring Break		
3/22	<i>Sula</i> Foreword; 3-48	
3/24	<i>Sula</i> 49-111	Third Reader Response due to <i>Sula</i>
3/29	<i>Sula</i> 112-end	
3/31	Interview, “Intimate Things in Place” / ECampus / Readings In class: <a href="#">On Race and Writing</a> Your responses	
4/5	“Unspeakable Things Unspoken”	

4/7	“Cinderella’s Stepsisters” / ECampus / Readings Discussion of Annotated Bibliographies and Proposals	Annotated Bibliography with brief proposal due
4/12	“The Dead of September 11” ECampus / Readings Sandra Guzman, “Remembering Toni Morrison, the Bird Whisperer” / ECampus / Readings	
4/14	“How Can Values Be Taught in the University?” / ECampus / Readings	
4/19	Workshop / Conferences	
4/21	Workshop / Conferences	
4/26	Final Presentations	
4/28	Final Presentations	Final Project due 5/3

## 9. Toni Morrison Bibliography

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1993/morrison/bibliography/>

### Novels

*The Bluest Eye.* – New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970

*Sula.* – New York: Knopf, 1973

*Song of Solomon.* – New York: Knopf, 1977

*Tar Baby.* – New York: Knopf, 1981

*Beloved.* – New York: Knopf, 1987

*Jazz.* – New York: Knopf, 1992

*Paradise.* – New York: Knopf, 1998

*Love.* – New York: Knopf, 2003

*A Mercy.* – New York : Knopf, 2008

*Home.* – New York : Knopf, 2012

*God Help the Child.* – New York: Knopf, 2015

### Miscellaneous

*Dreaming Emmet* (performed 1986, but unpublished)

*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* – Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press 1992

*Remember: The Journey to School Integration.* – Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004

*What Moves in the Margin : Selected Nonfiction* / edited and with an introduction by Carolyn C. Denard. – Jackson : Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2008

### For children, with son Slade Morrison

*The Big Box.* – New York: Hyperion/Jump at the Sun, 1999

*The Book of Mean People.* – New York: Hyperion, 2002

*The Lion or the Mouse?.* – New York: Scribner, 2003

*The Ant or the Grasshopper?.* – New York: Scribner, 2003

*The Poppy or the Snake?.* – New York: Scribner, 2004

*Peeny Butter Fudge.* – New York : Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2009

*The Tortoise or the Hare.* – New York : Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2010

*Little Cloud and Lady Wind.* – New York : Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2010

*Please, Louise.* – New York : Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2013