

ENGL 373W: Contemporary British and Irish Literature WRITING INTENSIVE

Spring 2014

Prof. Lisa Weihman

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CRN: 17798

Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:30-12:45

120 Armstrong, Downtown Campus

Office Hours: 1:00-2:00 T/TH and by appointment in 313 Colson Hall

Contemporary British and Irish Literature is a Writing Intensive course, which means that you will be reading, discussing what you read in class, giving presentations on what you read, and writing... a lot. 20-30+ polished pages of writing by the end of it all, including a major research paper (12-15 pp). In addition to fulfilling your "W" requirement, this course also builds the skills you will need to do well in your Senior Thesis/Capstone class. Along the way you will be introduced to a selection of authors in British and Irish literature since World War II, as well as a number of writers you may never have heard of before. This is not a survey class; we will not be comprehensive in our reading, but rather selective and thoughtful. Authors include Kazuo Ishiguro, Neil Gaiman, Elizabeth Bowen, Eavan Boland, Zadie Smith and others. There are no prerequisites for this class, but a familiarity with the literature of the first half of the twentieth century is helpful, as is prior experience in the survey courses.

This is a junior-level writing intensive class designed for English majors. Others are welcomed to the party but should be forewarned that I will expect students in this class to have mastered the basic conventions of writing English papers and to maintain a high level of discourse in both class discussions and in written work. In addition to learning quite a bit about Contemporary British and Irish literature, **this course should also teach you the information literacy skills you will need to be competitive in today's workforce:** finding critical sources using a variety of research tools; analyzing sources of information for accuracy and value; forming an argument about the information you have found; reading analytically and critically, not just for superficial knowledge of plot; writing an argumentative essay; presenting information orally to an audience and fielding questions from the audience about your work in progress, among other skills. While all of these skills will be applied specifically to literature in this class, the basic skills themselves are widely transferrable and will be need in most future careers. In addition to building your information literacy skills and learning a lot of factual information about our subject, I hope that you will also experience the pleasure of immersing yourself in literature. Not everything we read will be to everyone's tastes every time, but it is my hope that you will find a treasure somewhere on our syllabus.

This course fulfills the Writing Intensive course requirement of GEC Objective 1.

Learning Outcomes:

- ◆ You will understand significantly more about the critical, formal and intellectual heritage of contemporary British and Irish literature, and learn quite a bit of 20th and 21st century history
- ◆ You will practice the critical reading of both literary texts and academic writing about those texts
- ◆ You will analyze literature within its historical context and evaluate how literature reflects and effects social, political and economic forces
- ◆ You will learn more about the theoretical methodologies critics use when writing about literature
- ◆ You will employ oral communications skills through class discussion and formal presentations
- ◆ You will organize and compose research projects using a variety of source materials
 - Understand the structure of information within the field of literary research
 - Identify and use key literary research tools to locate relevant information
 - Plan effective search strategies
 - Recognize and make appropriate use of library services in the research process
 - Understand that some information sources are more authoritative than others and demonstrate critical thinking in the research process

Assignments: 400 points

1 st Paper	50
Group Presentation	25
2 nd Paper First Draft	10
2 nd Paper Final	50
Pop Quizzes (5x10 points)	50
Research Proposal	25
Source Analyses	25
Oral Presentation	50
Research Project Draft	15
Final Research Project	100

Assignment Descriptions**Group Presentation (25 pts); see class schedule for due dates**

- 1) Each group will be assigned a poem, and each group member will be responsible for researching the poem and presenting their findings to the class. This project will test both your research and your analytical abilities. Try to find the most recent work on the poem available online or in our library's collection. As a group, you will explicate the poem for the class; individually, you will report on how you used a particular research tool in order to find the information you needed about the poem. Your group should divide the work in the following way:
 - a. One person will find two secondary sources of information on the poem using academic databases such as MagillOnLiterature and the Literature Resource Center. This person should introduce the poet and give the overall explication of the poem, with reference to the two secondary sources of information they found.
 - b. One person will find a secondary source of information on the poem in a scholarly, peer-reviewed, academic journal article; this person will read the article (12-30 pp) and report on the author's arguments relating to the poem.
 - c. One person will find a scholarly, peer-reviewed book on the poet that references the poem; this person should read the relevant chapter of the book relating to the poem and report on the author's argument about it.
- 2) Each member of the group will be responsible for finding their particular source of information, and then will need to present a brief (2-3 minute) report on their findings. Be prepared to give the class the full bibliographic information about the sources that you are using in your report; you will be expected to know the database, author, title, and full publication information for any source that you reference in your presentation.
- 3) The group should meet (in person or virtually) prior to the presentation in order to compare notes on the explication of the poem and to practice presenting the information in a concise, coherent way.

The 1st Paper Close Reading Assignment (5+ pp; 50 points)

Also called an "explication de texte," a close reading is a careful, sustained analysis of a brief passage from a literary work. For this assignment, chose a short passage from the work we have been reading to explicate in at least 5 well-crafted pages. Consider the following:

- **Thesis:** What is your argument about this section of the text?
- What sort of **figurative language** does the author employ? Does the author use any **symbolism**? What is significant about the author's **style**? What is the **tone** of the passage?
- **Literal content** – the plot, or the Who What Why Where When and How of the passage – what happens in this passage, and how does the passage you've chosen relate to the text as a whole?

Avoid plot summary and biographical filler about the author. Keep your attention riveted to the text itself. A close reading pays close attention to the author's language. How to begin? Pick a short, relevant passage that caught your attention, then read it line by line, word by word, and make notes on what you notice. I will expect you to cite lines

from the text, but you are not expected to bring any outside sources into this paper. Keep your focus limited to the words the author has provided on the page. The literary critic Jacques Derrida wrote 80 pages (1984: "ULYSSES GRAMAPHONE: HEAR SAY YES IN JOYCE") on a single word from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Molly Bloom's final "YES"), so yes, you should be able to find 5 pp. in even a very small paragraph from any of these authors.

2nd Paper: Close Reading Assignment (8+ pp; first draft must be at least 5pp for full credit;)

Same assignment as described above, but with a different author/text and the introduction of peer workshopping, formal revision and research (*your final paper should reference at least two peer-reviewed, academic sources*). Close reading is the first step in any good literary analysis, and these two papers should give you material from which you can craft a research project.

Pop Quizzes: There will be five short quizzes worth 10 points each, dispersed randomly throughout the semester. If you miss a pop quiz you cannot make it up. The object of these quizzes is to reward those who keep up with the reading and attend class regularly.

The Final Research Project (12-15 pp plus drafts)

This is a multi-stage project that starts with the analysis of a single critical source and ends with an original research paper, 12-15 pp. long. You must include with the final paper all drafts with comments, the source analysis and the formal proposal, so keep copies of all your work. If your final paper is turned in without these materials, I will not grade it. Your final paper should reference at least four relevant peer-reviewed, academic sources of scholarship on your author or text. Here are the stages in the research project:

- 1) **Research Proposal:** A 150 word abstract summarizing your research question/working thesis. Due just after Spring Break, 3/20/14.
- 2) **Source Summaries:** You will need to find, read, analyze and summarize two relevant peer-reviewed sources for your paper by 4/1/14. Sources may be peer-reviewed, academic essays in journals, chapters in collections of essays, or chapters of relevant academic books. Your summary should highlight the argument made by the author and how you see the work fitting into your own arguments. You must include full bibliographic information for each source in order to get credit. These summaries are generally 2-3 paragraphs each, so you should expect to hand in 2-3 pages of text to get full credit.
- 3) **First Draft of Research Paper** to be workshopped in class on 4/3/14. To receive full credit, each draft should be at least 8 pages long. You will need to bring a copy to class to exchange with your workshop group and a copy to turn in to me for comments.
- 4) **Mandatory Individual Conference:** 4/8/14. You may schedule additional conferences with me if necessary, but everyone will meet with me one-on-one at least once to talk about the progress of your draft. I will be returning your first drafts to you at this conference.
- 5) **Oral Presentation of Research Project:** 10 minutes; 50 points. You will need to present to the class a coherent, well-organized presentation of your research project-in-progress. Each of these presentations should take between 10-15 minutes, including class discussion. These presentations will be peer-reviewed and peer-graded.
- 6) **Final Draft of Research Project** (packet must include drafts in progress, workshop notes and copies of relevant research materials) 12-15 pp., 100 points. Must be submitted in a folder or an envelope by noon on 4/29/14.

Submission Requirements:

- 1) All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins, in a standard font (Times, Courier, etc.).
- 2) MLA citation methodology is our default method in English, but you should use what is most common in your major. Consistency and accuracy are necessary.
- 3) Hard Copy Only – all work. Budget both time and money for printing.
- 4) Keep copies of all your work.
- 5) The paper length is a suggestion, not a mandate, but you should hit the minimum page requirements for each assignment. Research is required for your second and final paper. Your work should reflect careful

reading and thinking about your subject. Do not summarize the plot of a work, or rephrase your class notes in your paper.

- 6) Hand in work on time. **Late submissions will lose 5 pts per day.** If you run into trouble, talk to me before the assignment is due.

Grading Criteria: Note that while I indicate what it takes to reach a “plus” or “minus” grade, the letter grade alone is what factors into your GPA. The “plus” or “minus” is an indicator of your standing within the grade range. For example, you must achieve 80% of all possible points in order to earn the lowest possible B in the class (a B-). In order to earn a B, you must earn at least 83% of the points possible, or 332 points, and a B+ begins at 352 points. I give an A+ to the person who scores the most points in the class.

372 – 400: A

360 – 371: A-

352 – 359: B+

332 – 351: B

320 – 331: B-

312 – 319: C+

292 – 311: C

280 – 291: C-

272 – 279: D+

252 – 271: D

240 – 251: D-

0 – 239: F

A – Excellent Work. The assignments for this course have been completed in a professional and timely manner. The written assignments are clearly organized, choose compelling evidence to substantiate analysis, and engage with the subject at hand in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner. Final drafts of written work requires no substantive or stylistic revisions, whether it appears on an exam, quiz, or in an essay. Oral work is well-researched, and presented in an articulate, easy-to-follow manner, with clearly designed and relevant support materials.

B – Good Work. The assignments for the course have been completed in a professional and timely manner. The written assignments show substantial engagement with the subject at hand, but the analysis is either partially incomplete, invoking weak evidence, or manifests some difficulty with organization. Written work requires some substantive revisions, but few or no stylistic ones. Oral work is well-researched and presented in a reasonably organized, if not consistently articulate, fashion; the supporting materials are relevant, with minimal flaws in design.

C – Average Work. The assignments for this course have been completed, but not necessarily in a timely or professional manner. The written assignments show effort by the student, but the analysis is incomplete, evidence is inappropriate or there is a lack of evidence, or there is significant difficulty with organization. Written work, whether on a test, essay, or quiz, requires significant substantive or stylistic revisions. Oral work reflects some, but not thorough, research; the presentation is organized, but not presented in an articulate fashion; the supporting materials are relevant, but not complete.

D – Less than average work. The assignments for the course have not been completed in a professional or timely manner. The written assignments show a lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment. Written assignments lack analysis, evidence, and organization; extensive substantive and stylistic revisions are necessary. Oral work shows minimal effort at research, organization, and design, undermining the student’s ability to explain the subject of his/her presentation to the class.

F – Inadequate work. The assignments for the course have not been completed. Written assignments, when submitted, show a significant lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment and the subject matter of the course. Such work is marked by the absence of analysis, evidence, and organization;

engagement with the course materials is necessary before extensive revisions are even possible. Oral work demonstrates a lack of effort by the student to pursue or to organize the research necessary for oral presentation.

Grades of Incomplete will ONLY be given if you have completed at least 75% of our class work, and only at my discretion; you must discuss your situation with me before grades are due and complete a work contract with me in advance of the end of the semester.

Suggestions for Success and General Notes:

- 1) You must read ahead for our class discussions. I want conversation in this class, not just lecture, so I depend on you to keep up with the reading and to come prepared with good discussion questions.
- 2) Check your MIX account regularly for updates.
- 3) If you are absent it is your responsibility to get the day's notes from a fellow classmate. Make friends, exchange emails and phone numbers, and take responsibility for coming to class whenever physically possible. If you want to discuss what you missed in detail, make an appointment to meet with me.
- 4) If you are getting a D or an F in the class by mid-semester, you will receive a midterm report. Drop the class while there is still time.
- 5) I check my email regularly but not obsessively, and I do not generally respond to emails over the weekend. If you write to say you are ill, I will only respond if you ask me to respond to a specific query. If you write and do not receive a reply within a day or two, please let me know at the next class. There have been issues with email systems at WVU in recent years and sometimes emails go astray.
- 6) I have a mailbox in the English Department's main office in Colson Hall.

Attendance Policy

I expect you to attend class regularly and significant absences will negatively impact your final grade. People who do not attend do poorly on the quizzes and miss important information about the work in progress; people who attend regularly can expect to do well in this class. If you are contagious, stay home. Attendance will be taken for every class. There is no such thing as an "excused" absence other than university sanctioned events. You do not need to email or call if you are ill, but it is wise to do so if you are going to miss more than two classes in a row for any reason. **I reserve the right to give you an "F" for the semester if you miss a total of six classes over the course of the semester. Come to class on time, try to participate in every class, and expect to stay for the entire time.** Do not schedule advising, medical or other appointments during our class time – an absence is an absence, regardless of your reason for missing class. If you are going to miss a lot of class due to a family emergency, illness, or some other personal crisis, please contact the Office of Student Life (304-293-5611). The Office of Student Life will contact all of your professors regarding your emergency and will help you work through the impact of your crisis on your academic career.

West Virginia University 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, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. 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 Student Conduct Code http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code. 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 me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

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 this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC/ASSIGNMENTS DUE	TO BE DISCUSSED
1	1/9/14	INTRODUCTIONS	Class Policies; Syllabus
2	1/14/14	WWII and the End of Empire: Bowen	"Mysterious Kôr"
	1/16/14	WWII and the End of Empire: Orwell	"Killing an Elephant"
3	1/21/14	Samuel Beckett	<i>Endgame</i>
	1/23/14	Samuel Beckett	<i>Endgame</i>
4	1/28/14	Library Instruction Day	Meet in the Downtown Library
	1/30/14	W.H. Auden	Auden Poems Group Presentations
5	2/4/14	Philip Larkin	Larkin Poems Group Presentations
	2/6/14	Salmon Rushdie	"Chekov and Zulu", "The Counter"
6	2/11/14	PAPER #1 DUE ; Ishiguro	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>
	2/13/14	Ishiguro	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>
7	2/18/14	Ishiguro	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>
	2/20/14	Ishiguro	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>
8	2/25/14	Paper #2, First Draft Due	First Draft Workshop
	2/27/14	"Whose Language?" Eavan Boland	Boland Poems (Midsemester is 2/28/14)
9	3/4/14	PAPER #2 DUE	Reflective Writing/Research Project Discussion
	3/6/14	Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill	Poems/essay "Why I Choose To Write in Irish"
10	3/11/14	SPRING BREAK 2014	
	3/13/14		
11	3/18/14	Neil Gaiman	<i>The Ocean at the End of the Lane</i>
	3/20/14	Research Proposal Due ; Neil Gaiman	<i>The Ocean at the End of the Lane</i>
12	3/25/14	Neil Gaiman	<i>The Ocean at the End of the Lane</i>
	3/27/14	Library Research Day: Sign in at Eliza's	
13	4/1/14	Source Summaries Due; Zadie Smith	"Martha, Martha"
	4/3/14	1ST DRAFT DUE; WORKSHOP	8 + pp. draft of Final Research Project Workshop
14	4/8/14	Individual Conferences (mandatory; sign up for time)	
	4/10/14	Research Presentations	Peer Review
15	4/15/14	Research Presentations	Peer Review
	4/17/14	Research Presentations	Peer Review
16	4/22/14	Research Presentations	Peer Review
	4/24/14	LAST CLASS	Course Evaluations, final instructions
17	4/29/13	Final Project Due by Noon to Prof. Lisa Weihman's mailbox in Colson Hall	

This syllabus is subject to change with adequate notice. Be certain to pay attention in class for specific instructions regarding assignments.