

English 200  
**Foundations of Literary Study**  
**Banned Books**

West Virginia University  
Fall 2022

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30-9:45am  
Hodges Hall 133

- Instructor** Professor Johanna Winant
- Email: [johanna.winant@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:johanna.winant@mail.wvu.edu) (note—not mix.wvu.edu)
  - Office hours: Wednesdays, 10-11:30am, on zoom (sign-up and meeting links on eCampus)
- Description** In this course, we'll spend time with a few of the many texts that have, throughout history, been considered scandalous, dangerous, or even illegal or forbidden to read. Organizing our course around banned books is useful for a foundational literary studies course in two ways. The first is that we will read a broad range of texts: texts from the eighteenth century through to the twenty-first, from the United Kingdom and the United States, and also texts of poetry, fiction, drama, and a graphic novel. The second is that this course will provide us with an angle to think about literature's particular powers...after all, why were—and are—so many people so scared of it?
- Goals** Through your work in this course:
- You will become familiar with significant texts from different historical periods and the contexts to interpret and analyze them.
  - You will become familiar with different literary genres and the techniques to interpret and analyze them.
  - You will practice your skills of speaking and presenting in front of other people.
  - You will practice your skills in developing and writing original arguments.
- Texts** You must buy or borrow the following books in the listed edition:
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (Norton Critical Edition, edition 2)
  - *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller (Penguin)
  - *Howl and Other Poems* by Allen Ginsberg (City Lights)
  - *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
- Assignments** You will be responsible for writing a number of very short responses, three essays of 5-7 pages each, revisions of the first two essays, and one 5-7 minute presentation on the subject of your third essay.
- Evaluation** Your grade will be determined according to the following rubric:
- 40 percent for your support of a good classroom community
  - 20 percent for your essay on poetry (averaged with the revision)

- 20 percent for your essay on fiction (averaged with the revision)
- 20 percent for your essay on the graphic novel or drama (including 5 points for your presentation)
- Possible extra credit of up to 2 points: I will award up to one point of extra credit for each poem (with a limit of two poems) of 14 lines or longer that you memorize and recite to me in office hours. Please speak with me for more information if you are interested in this option.

Note that your support of and contribution to a good classroom community is more than just attendance, and even more than a traditional idea of class participation. Doing well for your “community” grade means appropriate, frequent, thoughtful, collaborative, inquisitive conversation with your instructor and your fellow students. Needless to say, you will have to be present, on time, with your texts in hand, and well-prepared, in order to support our community here and contribute to it. Being well-prepared means having read each poem at least three times: twice to yourself and once out loud. It also means having questions, observations, and ideas ready to share when you walk in the classroom. This course is a collaboration, and I am grading you on whether you do your part.

It’s easier to create a community if you know each other’s names. To that end: you must pass a test in which you correctly identify the names of at least 75% of your classmates in the first weeks of the semester. Your grade will not be affected by this test, but passing this test is a prerequisite for passing the class. You will have three tries.

### ***Policies***

You are expected to understand and follow the following basic ground rules:

- I am suspending my normal policy for absences—if you are sick or think you might have been exposed to covid, stay home. I will set up a rotation for note-taking, and you will not be penalized or fall behind as long as you keep up with the work.
- Plagiarism is a form of theft and has very serious consequences at WVU. If you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism, please see me before turning in an essay.
- You are not permitted to use any technology in class. If you need to use a laptop because of a disability, please discuss it with me first. And remember that I can see you check your smartphone, and I will ask you to leave class, which will count as one of your absences.
- If you need to contact me, email is best, but do not expect a reply immediately; it may take 24-48 hours for me to respond. And remember that emails are a piece of writing that you are sending to your professor; be professional, polite, and grammatically-correct. Email is suitable for questions requiring brief answers that are not found on the syllabus, for example, to arrange an appointment for office hours if you can’t make the regularly scheduled times. I do not give feedback on drafts of essays over email or respond to open-ended questions; I am happy to do both in office hours.
- If you would like someone to work with you on any stage of the writing process, I encourage you to visit the Writing Studio. Make an appointment by calling 304.293.5788 or on their website (<http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio>).

- WVU is committed to social justice, as am I. That means you can expect a learning environment that is based on mutual respect and non-discrimination.
- Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible, and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (304-293-6700 or Voice/TDD 304-293-7740).
- The calendar of readings may be revised as our discussion develops, if it becomes apparent that different assignments will be more productive than those I've chosen in advance.

***Good faith*** An unenforceable requirement of this course is that you undertake your reading, our discussions, and your writing in good faith. That means: Assume there is a purpose behind every text we study. When you seek to understand our texts, presume to see them in their strongest, most persuasive, most interesting, most valid, and most true form. Philosophy calls this “the principle of charity,” and it is not a posture of stupid cheerfulness. Rather, it is the rigorous core of all successful interpretation.

The material in this course can be challenging. The difficulty of the literature we will be reading makes it more, rather than less, important that you learn to work your own way through it. I urge you to eschew online study guides such as Sparknotes. Instead, trust yourselves – be patient when you feel alienated and frustrated, be calm when you feel afraid – and also trust one another.

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## ***Calendar***

Thursday, August 18: Introductions

Tuesday, August 23: William Wordsworth

- Read “A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal” (eCampus)
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed (pay attention to surprising word choices, unexpected turns of the argument, etc.).
- **First try for the name test**

Thursday, August 25: William Wordsworth

- Read “She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways,” “We Are Seven,” and “Lucy Gray” (eCampus)
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in one poem and a second sentence about why you noticed it. (Pay attention to surprising word choices, unexpected formal details, etc.).
- **Second try for the name test**

Tuesday, August 30: William Wordsworth

- Read “Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” eCampus

- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in one poem, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.
- **Last try for the name test**

Thursday, September 1: Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- Read “Kubla Khan” and parts I-III of “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (eCampus)
- **Complete the worksheet for your first essay**

Tuesday, September 6: Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- Read IV-VII of “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (eCampus)
- **Write an introduction for your essay using the worksheet**

Thursday, September 8: Workshop

Tuesday, September 13: Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Gordon, Lord Byron

- Read “Ozymandias” and “She Walks in Beauty” (eCampus)

Thursday, September 15: **First essay due by midnight on eCampus**

- Read “Introduction to Frankenstein” by Mary Shelley, and “The Composition of Frankenstein” by M.K. Joseph

Tuesday, September 20: Mary Shelley

- Read volume 1, letters I-IV of *Frankenstein*, and volume 1, chapters I-III
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in the text, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Thursday, September 22: Mary Shelley

- Read volume 1, chapters IV-VII
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in the text, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Tuesday, September 27: Mary Shelley

- Read volume 2, chapters I-VI

Thursday, September 29: **Revision of first essay due by midnight on eCampus & Mary Shelley**

- Read volume 2, chapters VI-IX

Tuesday, October 4: Mary Shelley

- Read volume 3, chapters I-V

- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in the text, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Thursday, October 6: Mary Shelley

- Read volume 3, chapters VI-end
- **Complete the worksheet for your second essay and write an introduction for your essay using the completed worksheet**

Tuesday, October 11: Workshop

Thursday, October 13: Mary Shelley

- Read one of the critical essays

Tuesday, October 18: **Second essay due by midnight on eCampus**

- With your group, present on the critical essay you read

Thursday, October 20: Walt Whitman

- Read selections from “Song of Myself” (eCampus)
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in the text, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Tuesday, October 25: Arthur Miller

- Read Act One of *Death of a Salesman*
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in the text, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Thursday, October 27: Arthur Miller

- Read Act Two and Requiem
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in the text, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Tuesday, November 1: **Revision of the second essay due by midnight** & Allen Ginsberg

- Read “Howl,” “America,” and “A Supermarket in California”

Thursday, November 3: Gwendolyn Brooks

- Read selections on eCampus
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in one poem, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Thursday, November 10: Alison Bechdel

- Read chapter 1 of *Fun Home*
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in the text, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Tuesday, November 15: Alison Bechdel

- Read chapters 2-5
- Write one sentence in which you point to something specific that you noticed in one poem, a second sentence about why you noticed it, and a third about what effect it has.

Thursday, November 17: Alison Bechdel

- Read chapters 6-7
- **Complete the worksheet for your third essay and write an introduction for your essay using the completed worksheet**

Tuesday, November 29: Workshop

Thursday, December 1: Presentations

Tuesday, December 6: Presentations

Thursday, December 8: Presentations

**Monday, December 12: Final essay due**