

LITERARY EXPLORATIONS III

Sections 4 & 8 • Fall 2019 • Dr. Eric Rettberg • Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

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Basic Information

INSTRUCTOR

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REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Your laptop and charger, which you must have with you and which will be used regularly in class
- Pen and paper
- Readings distributed as pdfs on the course site
- *Hag-Seed*, by Margaret Atwood
- *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare
- Other books distributed in class

TEACHING SCHEDULE

I'm often available during the school day outside the times when I teach. This semester, I teach during Mods 2, 4, 6, and 8 on A, C, and D days. You're welcome to stop by my office, or you can email or set up a Google Calendar appointment to be sure.

CLASS MEETINGS

Section 4: Mod 4 ACD, A119
Section 8: Mod 6 ACD, A116

Course Description

In this course, students consolidate their learning about writing and literature from LE I and LE II into a semester-long exploration of English literature. As they explore readings of aesthetic and cultural significance from the beginnings of English literature to the 19th century, students think through the development of the English language and the formation of the canon of English literature.

We will examine a variety of genres within foundational British literature, including poetry, drama, and fiction. Research-based student presentations will complement our readings and explore a range of historical topics related to the course. Because we are a community of learners, everyone's full participation in regular collaborative work is integral to the course.

In LE III, students formalize their writing and literary analysis skills. By the end of the course, students will have experienced, responded to, and analyzed many of the most influential works in English literature. The course asks students to closely read difficult texts and to present sophisticated arguments to prepare them for English electives, college, and beyond.

Essential Content

A full set of the IMSA English department's stated outcomes is listed below, and each of our courses builds iteratively on each of these targets. LE III approaches the major outcome areas in the following ways:

Rhetorical Knowledge: LE III continues to develop the rhetorical awareness fostered by LE I and LE II, though the rhetorical situation in this case often involves engagement with the disciplinary specificities of Literary Studies. Essays and projects will ask students to engage with a variety of audiences, contexts, and purposes, but each will also have to do with specifically literary content.

Reading: LE III challenges students with texts that may seem more challenging than texts they have encountered before, if only because the distance of time makes the language of these texts less immediately familiar to modern readers. Students will encounter a number of the most historically canonical works of English literature, and they will work through the challenges attendant to reading those texts.

Composition Process: Students will continue to refine and develop their processes of composition in LE III. They will be asked to synthesize not just challenging literary material, but also professional articles in literary studies. They'll do historical and literary research. Students will also be asked to adapt their process to the rhetorical situation of the timed essay, with several classroom assessments modeled on the AP English Language and Literature exam.

Knowledge of Conventions: Students will familiarize themselves with many of the conventions of English literary genre over time, including the conventions of several verse patterns as they emerge over time. Students will get a sense of the changing conventions of the English language over time, from the Old English of *Beowulf* to the Middle English of *The Canterbury Tales* to the Early Modern English of *The Tempest* to the Modern English of *Frankenstein*. In writing, they will continue to refine their mastery of English grammar and usage and to cite sources in adherence to the conventions of academic style guides.

Literary Knowledge: Engagement with literary history is at the heart of LE III. Students will encounter texts not as isolated "texts themselves," but as connected parts of a complex literary tradition, a rich fabric of influence, originality, and allusion. By the end of the course, students will have a broader view of the development of English literary traditions over time, and they will have read a number of milestone texts from those traditions.

IMSA English Outcomes

At the conclusion of their IMSA English experience, students will be able to:

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Compose texts in forms appropriate to their rhetorical situation, with attention to audience, purpose, context, and mode.
- Respond critically to a variety of rhetorical situations.
- Explain textual evidence to generate multiple meanings and support an argument.
- Compose arguments in a variety of modes and media that engage with, critique, or synthesize multiple points of view.

Reading

- Comprehend a range of informational and imaginative works.
- Evaluate the quality and legitimacy of sources of information.
- Read texts with attention to rhetorical situation and purpose, language choices and patterns, literary techniques, thematic patterns, context, genre, and structure.
- Ask questions to produce intellectual debate about and find meaning in texts.
- Connect the concerns of texts to their lives, to the lives of others, to larger cultures, and to other intellectual disciplines.

Composition Process

- Give critical feedback with empathy and awareness of audience.
- Consider and apply feedback to take ownership of their writing.
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing.
- Reflect on how composition processes influence their work.

Knowledge of Conventions

- Use conventions of grammar and language appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
- Cite sources using professional standards and demonstrate knowledge of the purposes of doing so.
- Demonstrate an understanding of distinctions between the conventions of different genres.
- Manipulate conventions intentionally for rhetorical, aesthetic, and expressive effect.

Literary Knowledge

- Describe the elements and features of a text using the methods and terminology of literary studies.
- Explain the relationship between a text and literary traditions, movements, styles, genres, and forms.
- Situate a text within historical, social, cultural, theoretical, and philosophical contexts.
- Apply knowledge gained from literature to understand contemporary issues and perspectives.

Instructional Design and Approach

Our LE III classroom will closely resemble classrooms students are familiar with from LE I and LE II, though as the literary content increases over the sequence, so too does the emphasis on sustained discussion of texts. LE III asks students to encounter more pages, and more challenging pages, than the sophomore year classes, with an attendant need to work through comprehension and questions as a class.

Beyond reading, classwork in LE III will ask students to engage deeply with works of literature, to create projects that model and adapt older works and forms, to do research, and to write literary essays that advance class discussion. Our class will continue to serve as an important sounding board for ideas, a community of collaborators working toward group projects, and a workshop community that offers feedback on projects and essays.

Assessment

GRADING

While grades may show up in the gradebook as either point values, percentages, or letter grades, the primary logic of the grade is based on letter grades. Grades do not represent a starting point of 100 from which various deductions are made, but a qualitative assessment of the whole. Generally, A is the highest grade awarded in the class. To translate letter grades into numbers, assume that A = 95, A- = 92, B+ = 88, B = 85, and so on. Using those translated numbers, the English department calculates final grades that roughly signify the following:

A (90-100): Exceeds course requirements

B (80-89): Meets course requirements

C (70-79): Credit awarded but needs improvement

D (69 or below): Does not meet course requirements; no Academy credit awarded.

Your semester grade will be calculated based on the accumulation of grades in the categories for the entire semester (that is, the quarter grade represents a snapshot in time, not a set percentage of your final grade).

COLLABORATION

I encourage you to seek and implement feedback on your drafts from a variety of readers—teachers, classmates, tutors, parents, and peers. You must be the one to actually write your sentences, responses, and essays, though, so those readers should not implement changes directly in your documents. It's great, that is, to have a parent or peer comment on errors in a Google Doc—but it's not OK to have them simply correct errors in a Google Doc. It's great to have a parent or tutor offer suggestions for how to improve your topic sentences—but it's not OK to have them write your topic sentences for you. Seek feedback and guidance from readers, but take ownership of your own writing.

ON (NOT) ROUNDING

Instructors in the English department do not round quarter or semester grades.

ASSIGNMENT TYPES AND GRADING WEIGHTS

Timed Essays 10%

This semester, you'll write three timed essays from prompts modeled on those used in the AP English Language and Literature exam. I've historically been averse to timed writing — the best writing, as I hope LE I and II and your history classes suggest, comes from a sustained, thoughtful process. You're at a time in your lives, though, when you still have a number of timed writing scenarios ahead of you, and these timed essays give you key practice for those scenarios. Timed essays will not be revisable, because they are not revisable in those scenarios.

Major Essays 50%

You'll complete three major essays this semester that emphasize comparison, close reading, adaptation, and research in literary studies. These essays will have revision opportunities for improved grades.

Presentations and Projects 20%

"In today's day and age," as a hackneyed writer might say, communication occurs across a variety of modes and media. Paper was once king, but now students must learn to communicate persuasively in person, with images, and on screen, among other modes—even, at times, in the dread format of the PowerPoint slide. This semester, you'll complete multimodal projects and presentations individually and in groups.

Homework and Quizzes 10%

Homework assignments may include informal writing, process documents such as rough drafts, or other small assignments. Quizzes may be used to promote careful engagement with texts and to check for comprehension.

Participation 10%

I'm not going to do all the talking for you, so without students' active participation, we'd have no class. Participation will be assessed holistically at the quarter and semester mark. A basic expectation is that each student in the classroom speaks every day—that'll probably earn you a B—but I encourage you to distinguish your participation by coming prepared with excellent questions, by making thoughtful contributions to discussion, by actively assisting your peers in workshops, and by seeking advice for improve your writing in office hours.

REVISIONS

Excellent writing almost never emerges whole from the writer's mind on the first try. The strongest writers use an iterative process of planning, drafting, and revision. We'll spend time in class even before your essays are due producing multiple drafts. You will also have an opportunity to revise some major essays for an improved grade.

"Revision" is not the same as "editing." Merely correcting a few superficial convention or style errors will not improve your grade. Rather, you should expect to rethink, restructure, and rewrite during the revision process.

To receive credit for revisions, you must follow the procedures outlined in class, which typically include an additional document, such as a "Dear Reader" letter or a revision memo. Detailed requirements of such documents will be posted to the course sites. All revised essays and revision memos will usually be due two weeks after the feedback draft has been returned (one week, toward the end of the semester), on a due date specified in class. Late penalties accrued on feedback drafts will also apply to revisions.

LATE ESSAYS AND PROJECTS

It is important to get your work in on time. Not doing so means significant disruption to the sequence of the class and to your progress in the course, and it means your teacher is spending large amounts of time wrangling your work instead of commenting on your essays and those of your peers, which means slower turnaround times for everyone.

Assignments in the homework/minor process documents category may not be turned in late for credit.

Until the last two weeks of the semester, penalties for late essays and projects are assessed as follows:

0 – 8 hours: no penalty

8 – 48 hours: 1 letter grade deduction (85 becomes 75, for example)

48 – 168 hours: 2 letter grade deduction (85 becomes 65, for example)

168+ hours: essay/project receives half of earned grade (85 becomes 42.5, for example)

All work due in the last two weeks of class, when my own grading deadlines loom, must be turned in within 72 hours of the due time to receive any credit (and will be subject to the penalties above, up to the 72-hour mark).

Unless there are severe extenuating circumstances, you should plan on presenting presentations on the day on which you are scheduled. If you miss a group presentation, even for an excused absence, you will likely have to start from the beginning and complete a separate individual replacement project.

For essay and project (but not presentation) deadlines, extensions of up to 24 hours may be granted to students who request an extension at least 12 hours before the deadline **once** during the semester. If the student fails to meet the extended deadline, late penalties are calculated from the original deadline.

Student Expectations

ATTENDANCE

Whether or not you are present in class, you are responsible for class activities, presentations, and assignments. Please refer to the student handbook for the full attendance/tardy policy.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Writing classrooms depend on trust between students, peers, and teachers. It is always better to contact me about the difficulties you're having with an assignment than to plagiarize. I trust my students, but that trust is matched by the seriousness with which I take academic honesty. Instances of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to Student Life for disciplinary action.

ANNOTATING TEXTS

Whether you are reading a print text or an electronic text, you should plan to have a system to annotate it in preparation for class. For print texts, you can use pen and post-its. You may print electronic texts or read them on screen—as long as you have a way to take notes on them.

LAPTOPS

We will use laptops regularly in this class, and you will need to use your laptop to access and annotate electronic texts. In general, I permit laptop use in class—but if I notice a pattern of distraction, I will ask you to forego your laptop in favor of printed copies of texts. If I ask you to bring printed copies of texts, you must have a printed copy of each text each day.

ON (NOT MAKING) TECHNOLOGY EXCUSES

You live on a campus inundated with computers, and your IMSA Google Drive account lets you back up your work automatically. If you aren't working in Google Docs or another program that automatically saves your work, use Google Backup & Sync or Google File Stream to make sure you always have a current backup of your work. Unless a technology problem is a system-wide failure, IMSA's fault, or my fault, please don't share it with me as an excuse. If you plan ahead and have good backup plans, you won't lose access to up-to-date copies of your work.

I can only grade what you turn in. If you submit an incomplete, corrupted, or outdated file, that is the file I will grade—so be careful with your submissions.

Sequence of Topics

Early Modern Literature: The Tempest and Hag-Seed

At the beginning of the semester, we'll use the summer reading as a springboard for our initial discussions. We start the chronological sequence of the course in the middle, with Early Modern English. We'll consider Shakespeare's language and stage, and ask what adapting Shakespeare as Atwood does in Hag-Seed accomplishes. We'll also consider the Renaissance lyric. The two major texts will become a focus for a major essay, a timed essay, and a group project.

Medieval Literature: Beowulf and The Canterbury Tales

In our second unit, we step back in time to the origins of English literature and encounter two versions of English that are not immediately comprehensible to modern readers, the Old English of Beowulf and the Middle English of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. We'll observe radical differences in language, character, and plot styles, especially in comparison with contemporary texts. Students will model the alliterative verse of Beowulf and the portrait style of Chaucer in short projects and complete a longer essay focused on the implications of reading these texts in translation.

Oroonoko as Representation of Slavery

In our consideration of Aphra Behn's short, novel-like text Oroonoko, we'll explore the text's complex interplay of anti-racist and racist representations. The text finds English prose developing toward the novel and raises key questions about the capacity of authors in positions of relative power to represent the lives of the oppressed — but also raises questions about Behn's status as a woman author. Oroonoko also offers a key example of England's growing influence as a colonial superpower and raises questions about the relationship of literature and empire.

Frankenstein and Romanticism

Mary Shelley's novel famously invites a consideration of scientific ethics, which is perhaps why it has been such a mainstay of the IMSA English curriculum. As a novel, though, it's also rich as an example of Romanticism and as a consideration of the possibilities and limits of the human. We'll supplement our readings of Shelley with readings of Romantic poets and with brief sections from Milton's Paradise Lost, a key inspiration for Shelley — and for the novel's famous creature.

TBD Victorian or Modernist Text

Students will contribute to the selection of a later nineteenth century or early twentieth century novella-length text.

Student-Taught 20C Texts

In the last weeks of the semester, student groups will lead class activities related to a series of short early twentieth-century texts that point to the modernism of the 20th century and beyond.

What You Can Expect from Me

RESPECT: I assume that my students have ideas to contribute to our discussions and to the world. Even when students have difficulties in class, I believe in their capacity to improve their thinking, writing, and communication. I will strive to take your ideas seriously and to fully acknowledge you as a person with a complex life.

UNDERSTANDING: Believe it or not, I am aware that life is complicated, and I will understand and empathize with you when you are having a rough time. “Understanding” does not necessarily mean that I will make special allowances for you in every circumstance, but I will at the very least not judge you because you are having trouble in life or in the class.

HELP AND GUIDANCE: I want you to succeed in my class, and I have chosen this profession because I want to work with you inside and outside of class to make that happen. If you are confused by an assignment or are struggling with something we are doing in class, stop by my office so we can talk about it. If you are having trouble understanding something, contact me early and often. Plan ahead so if you need help, you have time to get it.

AVAILABILITY: I will respond to clear, self-contained questions directed to my IMSA email within 24 hours during the working week. I will make myself available during office hours.

ENTHUSIASM FOR YOUR IDEAS: As a teacher, I am interested in helping you understand my ideas and the ideas of authors. I’m even more interested, however, in helping you hone and communicate your own ideas. If you’re having trouble connecting the content of the course with the things that interest and concern you most, please come see me during office hours so I can help you find the connections.

USEFUL FEEDBACK: I will spend a lot of time crafting comments and feedback on your assignments. It is important to me that you do your best to understand that feedback and produce work that responds to it. If you have trouble understanding my comments on your work, please see me during office hours.

HIGH STANDARDS: I believe that writing and literature are serious, important stuff that will be crucial to your life, education, and career whether you end up being a biologist, a mathematician, a doctor, an engineer, a teacher, or a novelist. Grades in my class are not “given,” and points in my class are not “lost” from some arbitrary beginning point. Instead, grades in my class are earned through hard work and the difficult process of completing excellent assignments and projects.

What I Expect from You

RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH CLASSMATES' IDEAS: Discussions of texts and current events can involve challenging, contentious topics. Even when you disagree with your classmates, it is absolutely crucial to the success of our conversations that you treat them with respect. I will treat you like adults, and I expect you to treat your classmates like adults engaged in a respectful conversation.

COMMITMENT TO PROCESS: You will probably enjoy many of the texts we read in this class, but there are some you may not enjoy. Even if you realize a certain text is not your cup of tea, work through it and try to find what's interesting about it, even if it's hard. Similarly, commit to improving your writing, whether you believe you are a strong writer or a weak one. All of us, including me, still have lots to learn when it comes to writing.

WILLINGNESS TO SEEK HELP: I love nothing more than helping students improve their work. I can only do so, however, if students seek out my help. Taking advantage of my help—and, as importantly—the help of tutors at the writing center—will help you become a stronger writer, thinker, and communicator.

COMMUNICATION: When you are having a rough time, it's important to let your teachers know—you can offer important context that will help us teach better. It's also really important to respond to direct emails within 24 hours and to make it to meetings you have set up with me.

RESPONSIBILITY: I expect you to take responsibility for your own learning in the course and to feel responsible for helping your classmates learn in our classroom community.

CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE AND SIGNIFICANT PARTICIPATION: At the scheduled start time of class, you should be in your seat and ready for a conversation. Come prepared with questions and observations about the text, and be willing to share those questions and observations in small groups and in the large-group conversation.

HONESTY: I assume that you will tell me the truth and that your work represents your own effort. Please match my respect with your honesty.