

Principles of Literary Study: Prose

<http://pls19.blogs.rutgers.edu>

MW 4 (Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:10 p.m.–2:30 p.m.) in Scott 205

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Office hours: Thursdays, 11:30–1:30 in Murray 019 or by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do we read fiction? How does fiction work? What can the study of fiction tell us about non-fiction, or about writing in general? This course introduces the ways the modern discipline of English studies addresses these questions. Students develop a strong foundation in the formal analysis of narrative prose, learning to identify and analyze the components of narrative, including genre, plot, character, point of view, and narrative voice. But formal analysis matters only in connection with arguments about what texts mean; in discussion and in written assignments, we practice the techniques of presenting literary interpretations systematically and convincingly. Students also consider some of the central issues in contemporary literary study, including the relation between fiction and history, the cognitive foundations of fiction, and the status of genre.

It is a luxury of the introductory course that readings can be chosen from across the history of prose literature in English. Selections include writings by Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Frederick Douglass, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Toni Morrison, and Phaswane Mpe, together with scholarship on these figures and some material on the theory of narrative. The major assignments are two short papers and in-class midterm and final exams.

LEARNING GOALS

1. Master key concepts necessary to the analysis of prose literature in terms of form, genre, and style.
2. Develop proficiency in using detailed analysis of texts to support the interpretation of prose literature, especially narrative fiction.
3. Become adept at effective, thoughtful participation in academic discussion.
4. Master the conventions of written scholarly argument in literary studies.
5. Make convincing written interpretive arguments about prose literary texts.

This course satisfies the following Core Curriculum goals:

1. Arts and Humanities (AHP): Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

2. Writing and Communication (WCd): Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

REQUIREMENTS

PARTICIPATION (10%)

Attendance and active, thoughtful participation in discussion are required. Discussion requires every student to take the intellectual risk of offering observations, ideas, and arguments in class in response to one another and to the instructors. You aren't supposed to know all the answers in advance, but you are required to come to class prepared to join in a communal effort to figure things out. Lateness, lack of preparation, and disruptive behavior will affect the participation mark. To receive full credit for participation, you should speak thoughtfully in every class.

Laptops, smartphones, tablets, and smartwatches are not permitted in class, except for students who require accommodation for a disability. The potential uses of these devices do not outweigh their power to distract from discussion.

If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible; you can make up for an excused absence. If you miss three classes without excuse, the *maximum* participation mark you can receive is 3.0; if you miss four, 2.0. Missing more than four meetings without an excuse will normally result in a failing grade for the course.

SHORT EXERCISES (5%)

Occasional written exercises will be assigned, for practice in key ideas and skills from class.

PAPER 1 (20%)

1500–1800 words on a single text.

PAPER 2 (25%)

1800–2100 words on one or two primary texts, making appropriate use of secondary sources.

MIDTERM EXAM (15%)

Short-answer questions. Given in class.

FINAL EXAM (25%)

Short-answer questions on key concepts from the course, plus one essay question. Three hours, given in exam period.

GRADING STANDARDS

Grades will be given on the four-point scale as specified in the Undergraduate Catalog. In converting the final numerical score to a letter, the equivalents in the Catalog are taken as the *maxima* of intervals open on the left and closed on the right. Thus A corresponds to scores strictly greater than 3.5 and less than or equal to 4.0, B+ to scores greater than 3.0 and less than or equal to 3.5, B to scores greater than 2.5 and less than or equal to 3.0, and so on. There are no “minus” grades. The general standards for grades are as follows:

A range (3.5, 4.0]: Outstanding work, demonstrating thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B range (2.5, 3.5]: Good work, demonstrating serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C range (1.5, 2.5]: Satisfactory work, meeting requirements but indicating significant problems mastering the course materials and skills.

D (0.5, 1.5]: Poor or minimally passing work, meeting the basic course requirements, but frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

F [0, 0.5]: Failure due to unmet course requirements or consistently unsatisfactory work.

The final grade will be based on a numerical score but is subject to my discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade. It is not possible to pass the course without turning in both papers and completing both the midterm and the final.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students and instructors have a duty to each other and to our community to abide by norms of academic honesty and responsibility. To present something as your own original writing when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the University Policy on Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Conduct. For the University’s academic integrity policies, please see academicintegrity.rutgers.edu.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. Students who may require accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services (ods.rutgers.edu; 848-445-6800) and speak with at the start of the semester.

SCHEDULE

Readings are to be completed by the day they are listed under. The schedule may change as term goes on; the most up-to-date syllabus will always be available at pls19.blogs.rutgers.edu/syllabus. You are expected to have the reading, in print form, with you in class. The bibliography (see below) tells you exactly what edition of each book I expect you to have; in general, other versions, including electronic versions of books assigned in print, will not work for this class. A few shorter readings are in digital form; the bibliography also gives links to these. You are expected either to print these readings out for class or to bring your written notes on them.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4. INTRODUCTION.

Readings for discussion distributed in class:
 Aesop, "The Ant and the Cricket" and "The Fox and the Grapes."
 Franz Kafka, "A Little Fable" and "Before the Law."

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9. NARRATIVE DISCOURSE.

Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, vol. 1, chaps. 1–11.

(TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10.)

Last day to drop courses without a "W."

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11.

Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, through vol. 2, chap. 4.
 Bal, *Narratology*, 11–23.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16.

Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, complete.
 Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 41–48.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18. CHARACTER.

Austen, *Northanger Abbey*.
Exercise due. "Ironic."

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23. FRAMES.

Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 3–68.
 Bal, *Narratology*, 51–60.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25.

Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 3–118.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30. TEXTUALITY.

Shelley, *Frankenstein*, complete, and appendices A and B.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2.

Shelley, *Frankenstein*, continued.

Mellor, “Choosing a Text of *Frankenstein* to Teach.”

Poovey, “My Hideous Progeny.”

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7. GENRE AND TRUTH.

Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, including the prefaces by Garrison and Phillips.

Exercise due. The principled essay introduction.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9.

Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, continued.

Frow, *Genre*, 6–19.

(SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12.)

Paper 1 due.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14. POINT OF VIEW.

James, *In the Cage*, chaps. 1–11. We are not reading *The Turn of the Screw* (but it's good).

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16.

James, *In the Cage*, through chap. 19.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 21.

James, *In the Cage*, complete.

Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction*, 6–12, 16–36.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23.

James, *In the Cage*, continued.

Exercise due. Mind-reading.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28.

Midterm exam in class.
Last day to drop the course with a “W.”

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30. STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, pt. 1, chaps. 1–8.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4.

Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, pts. 1–2.
Auerbach, “The Brown Stocking” excerpt.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6. CONTRADICTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, complete.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11. ARMISTICE.

Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, continued.
Flint, “Virginia Woolf and the General Strike.”
Exercise due. Responding to scholarship.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13. PLOT.

Morrison, *Beloved*, 3–59.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18.

Morrison, *Beloved*, 3–124.
Bal, *Narratology*, 5, 66–74.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20. STORY, HISTORY, MEMORY.

Morrison, *Beloved*, 3–195.
Watkins, “The Slave Mother.”
May, *Fugitive Slave Law*, 37–45.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25.

Morrison, *Beloved*, complete.

(WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27. NO CLASS.)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2.

Morrison, *Beloved*, continued.
 Alexandre, "From the Same Tree."
 Berger, "Ghosts of Liberalism."
Exercise due. Paper 2 draft page.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4. SETTING.

Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, 1–27.

(SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7.)

Paper 2 due.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9.

Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, complete.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11. LITERATURE OF THE WORLD.

Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, continued.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 8 A.M.—11 A.M.

Final exam.

REQUIRED BOOKS

ISBNs are included to help students ordering books online. The course texts are available at Barnes & Noble. They are also on reserve at Alexander Library. For my general advice about buying course books, see andrewgoldstone.com/book-buying.

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. In *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, and Sanditon*, edited by Claudia Johnson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780199535545. Please acquire this edition, which has good notes.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. 1845. Mineola, New York: Dover, 1995. ISBN: 9780486284996. I will use this cheap reprint in class, but for Douglass aficionados I recommend the Library of America edition of his *Autobiographies*.

James, Henry. *In the Cage*. In *The Turn of the Screw and In the Cage*. Modern Library, 2001. ISBN: 9780375757402. I will use this inexpensive edition in class, but for James aficionados I recommend the Library of America volume of the *Complete Stories, 1892–1898*.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Vintage, 2004. ISBN: 9781400033416.

Mpe, Phaswane. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001. ISBN: 9780821419625.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*. Edited by Marilyn Butler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. ISBN: 9780199537150. This novel exists in multiple versions from Shelley's lifetime. Please acquire this edition of the 1818 version.

Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Edited by Mark Hussey. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005. ISBN: 9780156030472. Please acquire this edition, which has good annotations.

OTHER READINGS

- Alexandre, Sandy. "From the Same Tree: Gender and Iconography in Representations of Violence in *Beloved*." *Signs* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 915–40. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/10.1086/658505>. Online via the libraries.
- Auerbach, Erich. "The Brown Stocking." In *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953. Online on Sakai.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 4th ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. Excerpts on Sakai.
- Berger, James. "Ghosts of Liberalism: Morrison's *Beloved* and the Moynihan Report." *PMLA* 111, no. 3 (May 1996): 409–20. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/463165>. Online via the libraries.
- Flint, Kate. "Virginia Woolf and the General Strike." *Essays in Criticism* 36, no. 4 (October 1986): 319–34. Online on Sakai.
- Frow, John. *Genre*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2015. Excerpt on Sakai.
- Johnson, Claudia L. *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. Excerpt available on Sakai.
- May, Samuel. *The Fugitive Slave Law, and Its Victims*. New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1856. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/fugitiveslavelaw1856mays>.
- Mellor, Anne K. "Choosing a Text of *Frankenstein* to Teach." In *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein*, edited by Stephen C. Behrendt, 31–37. New York: Modern Language Association, 1990. Online on Sakai.
- Poovey, Mary. "My Hideous Progeny: Mary Shelley and the Feminization of Romanticism." *PMLA* 95, no. 3 (May 1980): 332–47. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/461877>. Online via the libraries.
- Watkins, Francis Ellen [Francis Ellen Watkins Harper]. "The Slave Mother: A Tale of the Ohio." In *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, 40–42. Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, 1857. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/poemsonmiscellanoooharp>.
- Zunshine, Lisa. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006. Excerpt on Sakai.

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