Ways of Reading: The Pleasures of the Text
Engl 201Q
Fall 2014
MW 2:40-4pm, Wyllys 113

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COURSE OVERVIEW
"Ways of Reading" introduces students to the characteristics thought of as literary and the methods for studying them. This is a gateway course into the English major, and only one of the ENGL201 series may be taken for credit.

"Ways of Reading" courses develop strategies for careful and close reading, and techniques for the analysis of literary forms such as poetry, drama, and prose narratives such as novels and short stories. They familiarize students with some of the protocols of the literary-critical essay, examine the idea of literature as a social institution, and explore ways of connecting textual details and the world beyond the text. The ways of reading learned in the course are powerful tools for critically assessing discourses that expand far beyond the realm of literature. So while students will become adept literary critics, they also will learn quickly that to be a literary critic is to read critically and carefully all the time: in poems, novels, and plays; but also in political speech, in popular culture, and in the discourses that shape everyday life.

This Ways of Reading course introduces the bundle of characteristics we think of as "literary" and the methods for studying them, with an eye toward pleasure: What spurs us to read, and what spurs us to return to certain texts. We will develop strategies for careful and close reading, and techniques for the analysis of poetic and narrative forms; we will examine the idea of literature as a social institution and explore ways of making connections between textual details and the world beyond the text.

REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES
Reading. Read and reread. Then read again. Makes notes in the margins, underline and circle words and phrases: be an active reader. Do this with each text in advance of our session, and arrive with several points or questions for discussion. We will read (and reread!) the material together with an eye toward specific issues, but it is crucial that you carefully study the texts before we meet.

Writing. Eight short essays (3-5pp. each). In these essays, you will be developing both your writing and your reading skills, most often based on a prompt from me regarding a text we have studied together in class. Through these frequent and directed writing exercises, you will cultivate a command of critical concepts, a familiarity with the dynamics of specific literary forms and techniques, and an attentiveness to the nuance and complexity of particular texts. Rich descriptions and robust analyses are the goals here. One way to think of these assignments is as a means of becoming a writerly reader of literature—that is, a reader with a sharp sense of what matters and why, and one with the critical gusto not only to engage with difficult texts but also to “rewrite” them in a language both supple and sophisticated.

Participation, attendance, deadlines. Arrive to class on time and prepared to actively participate in our discussions. “Class participation” is not a formal part of the grade for this course because this is a discussion course: the basic assumption is that we will all participate. Participation includes
active and careful listening as well as speaking; properly nurtured silences enable us to think and to formulate our responses to others.

More than three absences will be grounds for failing the course. All due dates are firm.

**Disabilities Resources.** Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

**Honor Code.** All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code, which prohibits the following: the attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise without due acknowledgment; plagiarism; the submission of the same work for academic credit more than once without permission; willful falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise; deception concerning adherence to the conditions set by instructor for the formal academic exercise; failure to take constructive action in the event of committing or observing a violation or apparent violation; providing false information and/or deceptive use of documents during an Honor Board hearing. If you need help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, let me know or contact the Writing Workshop: [www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/](http://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/)

When in doubt about whether or not you are complying with the Honor Code, please ask me!

**TEXTS (available at Broad Street Books):**
- William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (Pelican)
- Terry Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem* (Blackwell)

**All other texts will be posted to our course Moodle site. Please read them, print them, and bring them to class.**

**SCHEDULE**

**PART ONE: POETRY**

**Week 1**
MONDAY, 9/1 – What is literature? What is literary pleasure?


Langston Hughes, “Johannesburg Mines”
WEDNESDAY, 9/3 – Line, meter, rhythm 1
   Eagleton, Chapter 2: “What Is Poetry?”
   Emily Dickinson, “The Way I read a Letter’s – this –”
   William Blake, “London”

**Week 2**
MONDAY, 9/8 – Line, meter, rhythm 2 (FIRST ESSAY DUE)
   John Milton, *Lycidas*

WEDNESDAY, 9/10 – Poetic argument and sonnet form 1
   Eagleton, Chapter 5: “How to Read a Poem”
   Sir Philip Sidney: *Astrophil and Stella* 1, 29, 106
   William Shakespeare: Sonnets 47, 53, 57, 60
   Abrams, entry on “sonnet”

**Week 3**
MONDAY, 9/15 – Poetic argument and sonnet form 2
   John Donne, “I am a little world made cunningly”
   John Milton: Sonnet 16 (“When I consider how my light is spent”), “To the Lord General Cromwell”
   John Keats, “On the Sonnet”

WEDNESDAY, 9/17 – Versions of the ode, Horatian and Pindaric (SECOND ESSAY DUE)
   Eagleton, Chapter 4: “In Pursuit of Form”
   Andrew Marvell, “An Horatian Ode, upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland”
   Percy Shelley, “Ode to the West Wind”
   John Keats, “To Autumn”
   Abrams, entry on “ode”

**PART TWO: DRAMA**

**Week 4 – The Merchant of Venice 1**
MONDAY, 9/22
   Read Act 1 for this session.
   “The Theatrical World” (pp.ix-xxiii)
   “The Texts of Shakespeare” (pp. xxv-xxviii)
   “Note on the Text” (li-lii)

WEDNESDAY, 9/24
   Read Acts 2 and 3 for this session.

**Week 5 – The Merchant of Venice 2**
MONDAY, 9/29 (THIRD ESSSAY DUE)
   Read Acts 4 and 5 for this session.
   “Introduction” (pp. xxix-l)
   Katharine Eisaman Maus, “The Merchant of Venice”
WEDNESDAY, 10/1

Critical examples: Kenneth Gross, from *Shylock Is Shakespeare*; Walter Cohen, from “The Merchant of Venice and the Possibilities of Historical Criticism”

PART THREE: POETRY REPRISE

Week 6
MONDAY, 10/6 – Figurative language, metaphor
   Eagleton, Chapter 3: “Formalists”
   John Donne, “The Canonization”
   Sylvia Plath, “Daddy”
   Lucille Clifton, “[what spells raccoon to me]”
   Abrams, entry on “figurative language”

WEDNESDAY, 10/8 – Visit to Special Collections, Olin Library (FOURTH ESSAY DUE)

Week 7
MONDAY, 10/13 – Augustan poetics
   Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*

WEDNESDAY, 10/15 – Line, meter, rhythm 3
   Langston Hughes, “America”
   Muriel Rukeyser, “Three Sides of a Coin”
   Frank O’Hara, “Ave Maria”

Week 8
MONDAY, 10/20 – FALL BREAK. NO CLASS.

WEDNESDAY, 10/22 – Poetic form and narrative 1
   Elizabeth Bishop, “In the Waiting Room”
   Jeff Hoffman, “The Skin Bodies”

PART FOUR: PROSE

Week 9 – *Dracula* 1
MONDAY, 10/27 – Read pp. 1-98 (Chapters I-VIII) for this session. (FIFTH ESSAY DUE)

WEDNESDAY, 10/29 – Read pp. 98-160 (Chapters IX-XIII) for this session.

Week 10 – *Dracula* 2
MONDAY, 11/3 – Read pp. 160-262 (Chapters XIV-XXII) for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 11/5 – Read pp. 263-327 (Chapters XXIII-XXVII) for this session.
Week 11
MONDAY, 11/10 – Dracula and ways of reading (SIXTH ESSAY DUE)
   Critical examples: Franco Moretti, from "Dialectic of Fear" (Dracula, pp. 431-444); Nancy
   Armstrong, from How Novels Think

WEDNESDAY, 11/12 – Poetic form and narrative 2
   John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book 1

Week 12
MONDAY, 11/17 – Prose style and argument
   Theodor Adorno, “Morality and Style” and “Punctuation Marks”

WEDNESDAY, 11/19 – Short prose narrative 1 (SEVENTH ESSAY DUE)
   Edgar Allan Poe, “The Purloined Letter” and “Never Bet the Devil Your Head”

Week 13
MONDAY, 11/24 – Short prose narrative 2
   Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle”

WEDNESDAY, 11/26 – THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS.

Week 14
MONDAY, 12/1 – James, “The Beast in the Jungle” (continued)
   James Phelan, “Character in Fictional Narrative: The Case of John Marcher”

WEDNESDAY, 12/3 – (EIGHTH ESSAY DUE)
   Eagleton, Chapter 1: “The Functions of Criticism;” “Form and History” from Chapter 5
   Barthes, from The Pleasure of the Text