COURSE OVERVIEW
This course introduces the bundle of characteristics we think of as “literary” and the methods for studying them. 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.

Students with disabilities. It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, and for making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the second week of the semester) so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html.

Honor Code. Please sign the honor code at the top of the first page of all assignments that you submit (“Pledge, no aid, no violations”). 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/)

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

A course reader, available from Pip Printing, 344 Main St.

**Order the reader online at [www.pipmid.com](http://www.pipmid.com).** Click on the course-book icon and complete the order form. You can save your username and password for future orders. Course readers will be ready for pickup one workday after you place your order.**

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**

**WEDNESDAY, 9/9 – What is literature?**


Langston Hughes, “Johannesburg Mines”

**PART ONE: POETRY**

**Week 2**

**MONDAY, 9/14 – Line, meter, rhythm 1**

Eagleton, Chapter 2: “What Is Poetry?”

Emily Dickinson, “The Way I read a Letter’s – this –”

William Blake, “London”

**WEDNESDAY, 9/16 – Line, meter, rhythm 2 (FIRST ESSAY DUE)**

John Milton, *Lycidas*

**Week 3**

**MONDAY, 9/21 – 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”

**WEDNESDAY, 9/23** – 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”

**Week 4**
**MONDAY, 9/28** – 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”

**WEDNESDAY, 9/30** – 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”

**PART TWO: DRAMA**

**Week 5** – *The Merchant of Venice* 1
**MONDAY, 10/5**
Read Act 1 for this session.
“Sources, Analogues, and Date” in the “General Introduction” (pp.13-29)
“Textual Introduction” and “Editorial Procedures” (pp. 84-95)
Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller, “The Texts of Shakespeare”

**WEDNESDAY, 10/7**
Read Acts 2 and 3 for this session.
“Shakespeare and Semitism” in the “General Introduction” (pp. 1-13)
Katharine Eisaman Maus, *The Merchant of Venice*

**Week 6** – *The Merchant of Venice* 2
**MONDAY, 10/12 (THIRD ESSAY DUE)**
Read Acts 4 and 5 for this session.

**WEDNESDAY, 10/14**
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 7
MONDAY, 10/19 – Augustan poetics
   Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism

WEDNESDAY, 10/21 – Visit to Special Collections, Olin Library (FOURTH ESSAY DUE)

Week 8
MONDAY, 10/26 – FALL BREAK; NO CLASS

WEDNESDAY, 10/28 – Line, meter, rhythm 3
   Langston Hughes, “America”
   Muriel Rukeyser, “Three Sides of a Coin”
   Frank O’Hara, “Ave Maria”

Week 9
MONDAY, 11/2 -- Poetic form and narrative 1
   Elizabeth Bishop, “In the Waiting Room”
   Jeff Hoffman, “The Skin Bodies”

WEDNESDAY, 11/4 – Poetic form and narrative 2
   John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book 1

PART FOUR: PROSE

Week 10 – Frankenstein 1
MONDAY, 11/9 – Read pp. 1-58 (through vol. 1) for this session. (FIFTH ESSAY DUE)

WEDNESDAY, 11/11 – Read pp. 59-101 (vol. 2) for this session.

Week 11 – Frankenstein 2
MONDAY, 11/16 – Read pp. 103-156 (vol. 3) for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 11/18 (SIXTH ESSAY DUE)
   M.K. Joseph, “The Composition of Frankenstein” (pp.157-160)
   Anne K. Mellor, “Choosing a Text of Frankenstein to Teach” (pp. 160-166)
   Critical example: Franco Moretti, from “Dialectic of Fear”

Week 12
MONDAY, 11/23 – Sermonic form and textual interpretation: an example
   Jonathan Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light”

WEDNESDAY, 11/25 – THANKSGIVING BREAK; NO CLASS
Week 13
MONDAY, 11/30 – Prose style and argument  
   Theodor Adorno, “Morality and Style” and “Punctuation Marks”

WEDNESDAY, 12/2 – Short prose narrative 1 (SEVENTH ESSAY DUE)  
   Edgar Allan Poe, “The Purloined Letter” and “Never Bet the Devil Your Head”

Week 14
MONDAY, 12/7 – Short prose narrative 2  
   Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle”

WEDNESDAY, 12/9  
   James, “The Beast in the Jungle” (continued)  
   James Phelan, “Character in Fictional Narrative: The Case of John Marcher”

Week 15
MONDAY, 12/14 (EIGHTH ESSAY DUE)  
   Eagleton, Chapter 1: “The Functions of Criticism;” “Form and History” from Chapter 5