

Department of English and Writing Studies
Seminar in Literary Studies: Narrative, Performative and Dialectical Selfhood in
Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Charlotte Bronte, Ralph Ellison and Audre Lorde
English 4871G
Winter 2021

Instructor: Nigel Joseph

Delivery Type: Blended (both online and synchronous)

Office hours: (online) by appointment

Prerequisites: 1.0 from English 3000-3999 or permission of the Department.

Course Description: The idea of a “narrative selfhood” has been explored by Alasdair Macintyre, who suggests that, deprived of stories, children become “unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words.” Other, often competing, versions of selfhood include the dramaturgical or performative self and the self dialectically constituted from the interplay between self-regard and the evaluation of oneself by others. All three versions of selfhood are prominently on display in our contemporary social-media-influenced world; and all three types have been explored by theorists who are interested in the way awareness of class, race and gender have inflected the negotiation of selfhood by modern subjects. This course explores the theoretical underpinnings of these three versions of selfhood, especially as they are illustrated and dramatized in the fictions of Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*), William Wordsworth (*The Prelude*) Charlotte Brontë (*Jane Eyre*), Ralph Ellison (*Invisible Man*) and Audre Lorde (selected essays). Among the theorists we will look at are Hegel, Alasdair Macintyre, Frantz Fanon, G.H. Mead, Erving Goffman, Judith Butler, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Kimberlé Crenshawe.

Objectives: By the end of the course

- 1) Students will become conversant with theories about selfhood and their philosophical and narrative sources
- 2) Students will be able to make the connections between theories of selfhood and such social categories as race, gender, and class
- 3) Students will learn to interpret narrative forms in terms of their effects upon selfhood

Course Materials: Required texts (available at Book Store):

Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Selected Works by Audre Lorde

We will be studying short extracts from the following texts (except the sections already extracted from Wordsworth, Augustine, and Montaigne, which we will read in full).

Extracts will be made available during lectures (and posted online) but if you have complete copies of the texts by all means use them (and read as much of the text as possible). The following have been listed not alphabetically but in (rough) order of importance. The texts in bold will be read quite closely: **Wordsworth**: *Prelude* (Book 1); **Augustine**: *Confessions* (Books 1-3); **Montaigne**: (3 essays); **Ralph Ellison**: *Invisible Man*-Prologue and Epilogue; **Virginia Woolf**: *A Room of One's Own*; **Kimberlé Crenshaw**: "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color"; **Alasdair Macintyre**: *After Virtue*; **Irving Goffman**: *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*; **Irving Goffman**: *Stigma*; **G.W.F. Hegel**: *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Lordship and Bondage); **Gayatri Spivak**: "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism"; Milton: *Paradise Lost* (Book IV); Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic*; Julia Kristeva: *Strangers to Ourselves*; Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*; G.H. Mead: *Mind, Self, and Society*; Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness* ("The Look"); Sartre: *Nausea*; Helene Cixous: "Laugh of the Medusa."

Methods of instruction.

- **Zoom classes** will be held every Friday, from 11.30 to 2.30. **Attendance** will be taken (10% of your grade is for attendance and participation). Since this is a seminar course, **you must participate verbally** to get a good grade.
- **Lectures will also be posted on Voicethread.**
- You will be expected to post **forum responses** (at least **four topics**, 20% of your grade; you can post on more than four, and the **best four** will count towards the final grade). A general topic-heading will be put up every week, and your forum comments will appear under that heading. A comment can be of any type, and must run to at least twenty words. You must post **at least two comments per topic** to be eligible for a grade; responding to another student's comments is definitely encouraged, and counts as a comment.
- You will also be expected to write **two response papers** (600 words each); you can of course respond to more than two topics, and the **best two** will be counted towards the final grade. The topics for response papers will be the same as the forum topics. The response papers will be retrospective, and will be e-mailed to me: students will write short, informal papers that will comment on some aspect of the texts and discussions from the previous week's class. Marks for these will be posted weekly on OWL, and you are welcome to talk about your work during office hours.
- The **assignment** (2000 words) will be a research paper, with at least three secondary sources.
- **Presentations** will be made towards the end of the course, and must be done on Voicethread or Zoom (each of these must last at least 20 minutes and must have a visual element—the speaker must be visible to his or her classmates). Topics may be discussed with me beforehand, but don't have to be.
- **E-mail queries**: I will be checking for your messages in the forums or at my e-mail every day, so you can expect fairly quick responses to your queries. I really don't mind how

often you might wish to check on something with me, so feel free to ask questions and seek clarifications.

Methods of evaluation

Attendance and participation:	10%
Forum comments:	20%
Response papers:	20%
Assignment:	20%
Presentation:	30%

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are temporarily unable to meet academic requirements (e.g. attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) may submit a self-reported absence form online (available on your Student Center) provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Students can self-report only two absences per academic year. See policy here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf.

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to Academic Counselling. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The *University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com* <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Timetable

1 st week	3 types of selfhood: narrative, dramaturgical, dialectical; Macintyre, Sartre, Goffman, Butler, Hegel, Mead, Fanon
2 nd week	Augustine; Montaigne; Wordsworth; Ellison: male narrative selfhood
3 rd week	Augustine; Montaigne; Wordsworth; Ellison
4 th week	<i>Frankenstein</i> and selfhood; the monstrous and the failure of recognition
5 th week	<i>Frankenstein</i> , gender (Gilbert and Gubar), race (Fanon, Ellison, Lorde)
6 th week	Performative vs. dramaturgical selfhood: Goffman and Butler; Sartre
7 th week	<i>Jane Eyre</i> ; narrative selfhood and the denial of recognition: Gilbert and Gubar; Woolf; Kristeva; Spivak; Lorde;
8 th week	Jane Eyre
9 th week	Dialectical selfhood and recognition; Hegel; Kojeve; Fanon; Mead; Taylor; <i>Frankenstein</i> and <i>Jane Eyre</i> revisited;
10 th week	Dialectical selfhood and misrecognition in race; Lorde; Fanon; Ellison; Coates; Crenshaw
11 th week	Presentations
12 th week	Presentations