

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 1020E (001)
Understanding Literature Today
Fall/Winter 2026-27

Instructor Information

Course coordinator:

Dr James Purkis | jpurkis@uwo.ca | University College 4412

Office Hours will be posted on Brightspace and held in person. Zoom meetings held by prior arrangement. Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting instructors. Dr Purkis usually responds within 24 hours Monday to Friday but is unlikely to respond over the weekend.

Teaching Assistants:

Kiana Fazilatmoaddeli | kfazilat@uwo.ca

Tatiana Jahromi | tjahromi@uwo.ca

Sarah Regier | sregier6@uwo.ca

Check with your tutorial instructor for their own contact policies and office hours.

Antirequisites: [English 1022E](#), [English 1035E](#).

Prerequisites: Grade 12U English or permission of the Department. For part time students who have been admitted without the OSSD, this permission will be granted as a matter of course.

Course Objectives, Schedule, Delivery Mode

This course introduces students to poetry, short stories, plays, and longer fiction from Ancient Greece to the present. Classes will give a sense of key historical developments in these forms and explore how literary texts, and our readings of them, respond to historical and cultural events.

By the end of the course, successful students will have learned to:

- Identify and analyze foundational elements of literary texts, such as theme, symbols, setting, plot, characters, metre, key poetic and dramatic forms
- Write an effective essay about a work of literature, supporting a thesis through effective analysis of the primary text
- Research critical commentary on literary works and evaluate the reliability and limitations of available criticism
- Present work in accordance with MLA format

Class Schedule

SEPTEMBER 2026

9 Introductions

Poetry

14-16 E.E. Cummings “l(a)”, “In Just-”; Herbert, “Easter Wings”; Henry Constable, “My lady’s presence makes the roses red”.

21-23 William Shakespeare, “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun”, “A woman’s face with nature’s own hand painted”*; “The expense of spirit in a waste of shame”*; Edna St. Vincent Millay “What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why”, I being born a woman and distressed”.

28 Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”; Elizabeth Bishop, “Sestina”.

We 30 **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (non-instructional day)**

OCTOBER 2026

5-7 Helen Chasin, “The word Plum”; Rita Dove, “Pedestrian Crossing, Charlottesville”; Jessie Pope, “The Call”; Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”.

10-18 FALL READING WEEK | NO CLASSES

19-21 W.H. Auden, “Musee des Beaux Arts”*; Blake, “The Sick Rose”; Dorothy Parker, “One single Rose”; Adrienne Rich, “Diving into the Wreck”

26-28 Lorna Dee Cervantes “Freeway 280”; Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach”; Matthew Li-Young Lee, “Persimmons”; Rita Dove “Daystar”

NOVEMBER 2026

2-4 Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess”; William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Act 1, Scene 1, Act 3, Scene 1; a sonnet from *Romeo and Juliet**

Prose

9-11 Alice Munro, “Boys and Girls”; Ralph Ellison, “King of the Bingo Game”

16-18 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat”; Tommy Orange, “The State”; George Saunders, “Puppy”

23-25 Junot Diaz, “Wildwood”; Tim O’Brien, “The Things They Carried”

30 James Joyce, “Araby”; Zadie Smith, “Meet the President”

DECEMBER 2026

2 James Joyce, “Araby”; Zadie Smith, “Meet the President”

7-9 Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Birth Mark”; Haruki Murakami, “Barn Burning”

JANUARY 2027

4-6 Bharati Mukherjee, “The Management of Grief”; William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily”

11-13 Amy Tan, “A Pair of Tickets”; Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants”

18-20 Sophocles, *Antigone* (1)

Drama

25-27 *Antigone* (2)

FEBRUARY 2027

1-3 William Shakespeare, *Othello* (1)

8-10 *Othello* (2)

13-21 WINTER READING WEEK | NO CLASSES

22-24 Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1)

MARCH 2027

1-3 *A Raisin in the Sun* (2)

Adaptation/Intertexts

8-10 Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire* (1)

15-17 *Home Fire* (2)

22-24 Djanet Sears, *Harlem Duet* (1)

29-31 *Harlem Duet* (2)

APRIL 2027

5-7 Remainders, reminders, revision.

Course Materials

Required.

Kelly J. Mays (ed.) *The Norton Introduction to Literature* (W. W. Norton, 2024) 9781896239279
(<https://wnorton.com/books/9781324085898/about-the-book/product-details>) Paperback - \$110.70

Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire* (Riverhead Books, 2017) 9780735217690
(<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/555763/home-fire-by-kamila-shamsie/9780735217690>) – Paperback \$24.95

Djanet Sears, *Harlem Duet* (J. Gordon Shillingford, 1997) 9781896239279
(<https://www.canadianplayoutlet.com/products/harlem-duet>) – Paperback \$15.95

Additional course material will be posted to OWL: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>
Texts in class schedule marked with * will be posted on OWL

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Technical Requirements This course requires you to submit work online through Brightspace in MS Word format.

Electronic Devices No aids are permitted for in-class tests or the final exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted for these assignments.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and so on) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these

materials until after final grades have been entered. In the event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

2 x Short Paper (400-500 words) (due Oct 19, Jan 22) – 5 % each
4 x In-Class Writing Assignment (best 3 count: Oct 5, Nov 4, Feb 3, March 8) – 5% each
1200-word Essay (due December 9) – 15%
2000-word Essay (due March 31) – 20%
Participation – 10%
3-hour Exam (in April exam period) – 30%

Short Paper (400-500 words)

Please ensure that you support your reading with analysis of the primary text. Include a Works Cited and proper and correct referencing. You may, but need not, cite appropriate criticism. Questions will be given one week in advance of the due date.

In-class Writing Assignments

25 minutes, hand-written (unless accommodation is required) and with no reference to notes, texts, or electronic devices allowed. Students will be given either a passage analysis or a discussion question that calls for engagement with course material. I shall talk about the format and what will make for a strong response in class before the assignment.

Please note that the first in-class writing assignment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with an opportunity to make up this work by writing a similar assignment later in the semester.

Essay 1 (1200 words)

Your essay must be presented in accordance with MLA Guidelines and must include at least ONE piece of peer-reviewed secondary reading and a Works Cited list. Your essay will be graded on presentation, articulacy of expression, quality of interpretive analysis, relevance of your choice of secondary reading, and your ability to build that criticism into your own argument.

Questions will be posted on OWL three weeks before the essay is due.

Essay 2 (2000 words)

Your essay must be presented in accordance with MLA Guidelines and must include at least TWO piece of peer-reviewed secondary reading and a Works Cited list. Your essay will be graded on presentation, articulacy of expression, quality of interpretive analysis, relevance of your choice of secondary reading, and your ability to build that criticism into your own argument.

Questions will be posted on OWL three weeks before the essay is due.

Participation

The grade will be founded on regular and punctual attendance in lectures and tutorials; demonstration of completion of assigned reading; meaningful and regular contributions to class discussion and completion of tutorial exercises. Please note that interactions with the professor outside of class time will not count towards the participation grade.

Exam

A three-hour in-person exam. The format of the exam will be explained in class and a description of the format and the exam's rubrics will be posted to OWL in advance of the examination. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar

Please submit electronic copies (in MS Word and NOT pdf) of all out-of-class writing assignments through the course's OWL Brightspace site.

General information about missed coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

- Final examination (April exam period) This is defined by senate policy, as stated above.
- The first in-class writing assignment (see above).

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are not eligible for additional consideration.

To make things easier for all of us, I am using a system of grace days, which – in effect – brings a flexible deadline to all assignments with the exception of the final exam and the first in-class writing assignment. This is how the grace-days system works:

You are each given FIVE grace days, which you can use at once, or share between your assignments. You will not be penalized for a late submission as long as you can cover the delay through using your grace days. When your grace days are gone, they are gone, and you are faced with a late assignment. If you submit an assignment after the due date and the expiration of your grace days, the grade will be reduced by a penalty of 2% for each calendar day that it is late. A reminder: Senate regulations stipulate that all assignments must be completed by the last day of classes (December 9). Grace days cannot extend the final deadline before the last day of classes.

In the case of prolonged extenuating circumstances that exceed the five grace days, a request for academic consideration must be made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

When a student misses the **Final Exam** and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar ([Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

Students with academic consideration who miss an in-class assignment will be given the opportunity to complete a make-up assignment.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 18 unexcused hours), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy).

Additional Statements

Academic Integrity Module

Incoming undergraduate students are required to complete Western's Academic Integrity Module. Information about the module, including access instructions, and completion deadlines, is available at: https://vpacademic.uwo.ca/Academic_Integrity_Module.html.

This training is part of the required training suite for all incoming students. Students who do not complete the Academic Integrity Module by the deadline will have an academic seal placed on their records and will not be able to add/drop courses, obtain a transcript, or Intent to Register the following year.

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, here:

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

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#) . Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”
<http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Support Services

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either

recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.