English 1020E, Section 01, “Understanding Literature Today”
Fall/Winter 2014-15
Western University, Department of English/http://www.uwo.ca/English
Mondays & Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Chemistry 9

Dr. Alison Conway
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Office hours: Wed. 1-4 p.m., or by appointment, Ivey 3G16

Teaching Assistants

Philip Spurrell (043, 045): UC 274, Th. 1:30-2:30 p.m.; 045: UC 274, Th. 9:30-10:30 a.m.
Office hours: Th. 11:30 a.m. –1:30 p.m., Ivey 0N20Q
pspurrel@uwo.ca

Meghan Adams (040, 042): 040: UC 274, Wed. 10:30-11:30 a.m. 042: Thurs. 3:30-4:30 p.m.
Office hours: Mon. 12:30-2:30 p.m., Ivey tba
madams42@uwo.ca

Course Description

This course invites students to consider what it means to read literature today. How does literature help us to understand the realities governing our lives in the early twenty-first century? We will consider literature’s engagement in history and politics and our role, as readers of literature, in conversations that shape the worlds in which we live. Through readings of prose, poetry, and drama, we will interrogate how the trauma of war, the advent of civil rights movements, and the legacy of colonial and postcolonial governance have shaped British, American, and Canadian literatures. We will also consider, more specifically, aesthetic questions, such as: What is literature? How do literary texts speak to one another? How do the formal properties of a text engage its thematic preoccupations? Finally, students will engage intensively in the development of their own writing and oral communication skills through a series of assignments.

This class meets twice a week for a one-hour lecture and once a week for a tutorial. We will read prose, poetry, and drama primarily, but not exclusively, from the twentieth- and early twenty-first century.

Required Texts:
The Norton Introduction to Literature, Portable Eleventh Edition—bundled with Nicole Krauss, Great House
Matt Duggan, Cherry Electra
Tim O’Brien, The Things They Carried (Mariner)
Tomson Highway, The Rez Sisters (Fifth House)
Rules for Writers (Bedford)
The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

- Essay 1 (1200 words) 10%
- Essay 2 (1200 words) 10%
- Essay 3 (2100 words) 15%
- Annotated Bibliography (Essay 3) 5%
- Sentence/paragraph assignments 5%
- In-class passage analysis 5%
- Vodcast/Memorization/participation 15%
- Final exam 35%

“Students must pass both term work and the final examination in order to pass the course. Students who fail the final examination (regardless of their term mark) automatically fail the course” (from the Department of English, “Information for Instructors”).

**Attendance:** Students who miss more than 15% of classes (11 for the year, including tutorials) may, according to university regulations, be barred from the final exam.

**Academic Accommodation**

The English department’s “Information for Instructors” provides the following guidelines:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

**E-mail:** This is not a distance studies class. We want to meet with you to discuss ideas during office hours. If our hours conflict with other classes, please make an appointment to see us at another time. E-mail should be used only to set up appointments and to notify us of anticipated absences. All e-mail correspondence should respect the rules of style and grammar valued by English instructors.

**Laptops:** I do not permit the use of laptops in the classrooms (lecture and tutorial) unless a student has been granted accommodation by the Student Learning Centre. (Phone use in class is also prohibited. Please turn off your phones before class begins.)

**Plagiarism**

The Senate of the University of Western Ontario writes:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of a text 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 offense.** See the Scholastic Offence Policy in Western Academic Calendar: [http://uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)
Student will be asked to provide electronic versions of their papers for submission to turnitin.com. See also: http://www.uwo.ca/english/site/undrgrd/info.html

Any paper suspected to have been plagiarized will be sent directly to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Students should be aware that submitting the same paper in two courses is considered plagiarism.

Mental Health: 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.

Course Objectives

By the end of the academic year, successful students will be able to:

--develop a critical reading of a text and write essays that have an effective thesis and a logical argument supported by evidence from the text(s);
--engage in research and properly document their essays using the MLA guidelines;
--converse in the language of the discipline, using literary terms and concepts, both in written and oral forms.

Schedule of Classes

M. Sept. 8:  Introduction to English 1020E
Tutorial:  Diagnostic writing assignment.

M. Sept. 15:  Why write essays? Why write essays about literature? What is close reading?  
W. Sept. 17:  How to write a sentence.  
Tutorial:  Writing 1:  What is a thesis?

Sentences due:  A-K by Sun. at 4p.m.; L-Z by Tues. at 4 p.m.
M. Sept. 22:  Duggan, Cherry Electra, Chapters 1-2  
W. Sept. 24:  Duggan, Cherry Electra, Chapters 3-8  
Tutorial:  Writing 2:  paragraphs

Sentences due:  A-K by Sun. at 4 p.m.; L-Z by Tues. at 4 p.m.
M. Oct. 1:  Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (theme)  
W. Oct. 8:  Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants” (narration/point of view)  
Tutorial:  Writing 3:  developing an outline

Paragraphs due:  A-K by Tues. at 4 p.m.
M. Oct. 6:  Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (plot)  
W. Oct. 8:  Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants” (narration/point of view)  
Tutorial:  Writing 4:  evidence/citation

Paragraphs due:  L-Z by Tues. at 4 p.m.
M. Oct. 13:  Thanksgiving  
W. Oct. 15:  Marquez, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” (symbol)  
Tutorial:  Writing 5:  first drafts/revision  

M. Oct. 20:  O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” (setting)  
W. Oct. 22:  Morrison, “Recitatif” (character)  
Tutorial:  Writing 6:  introductions and conclusions  
(Over the weekend, choose your Poet Companion and the poem you will be writing on as well as the lines you will be memorizing.)

M. Oct. 27:  Intro. to poetry  
W. Oct. 29:  Milton, “When I Consider How my Light is Spent”; Shakespeare, “Like as the Waves”:  ESSAY ONE, DUE IN CLASS  
Tutorial:  poetry  

M. Nov. 3:  Donne, “The Flea”; Herbert, “Easter Wings”  
W. Nov. 5:  Dickinson, “My Life Had Stood a Loaded Gun”; “Because I Could Not Stop for Death”  
Tutorial:  poetry  

M. Nov. 10:  Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress”; Olds, “Sex Without Love”  
Tutorial:  poetry  

M. Nov. 17:  Browning, “My Last Duchess”  
Tutorial:  poetry  

W. Nov. 26:  Auden, “Musée des Beaux Arts”  
Tutorial:  peer-editing:  bring a draft of essay two to tutorial

W. Dec. 3:  ESSAY TWO, DUE IN CLASS; review  
Tutorial:  review

M. Jan. 5:  research methods; library class A-K  
W. Jan. 7  research methods; library class, L-Z  
Tutorial:  Writing 7:  research essays/plagiarism

M. Jan. 12:  Krauss, Great House  
W. Jan. 14:  Krauss, Great House  
Tutorial:  office visits with T.A.s and Prof. C

M. Jan. 19:  Krauss, Great House  
W. Jan. 21:  Krauss, Great House
Tu 
Tourial: 
video instruction

M. Jan. 26: Krauss, *Great House*
W. Jan. 28: intro. to *The Things They Carried*

Tutorial: 
video instruction

M. Feb. 2: O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*
W. Feb. 4: O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Tutorial: critical methodologies

M. Feb. 9: O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*
W. Feb. 11: in-class passage analysis: O’Brien

Vodcasts due by 4 p.m., Friday, Feb. 13

Feb. 16-22: reading week

M Feb. 23: How to engage in a critical conversation.
W. Feb. 25: Sophocles, *Antigone*

Tutorial: Writing 8: How to prepare a list of works cited/annotated bibliography

M. Mar. 2: Sophocles, *Antigone*
W. Mar. 4: Sophocles, *Antigone* Preliminary bibliographies due (and provisional thesis)

Tutorial: discussion

M. Mar. 9: Sophocles, *Antigone*
W. Mar. 11: Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Tutorial: discussion; return bibliographies

M. Mar. 16: Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
W. Mar. 18: lecture cancelled (I am away at a conference)

Tutorial: discussion

M. Mar. 23: Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
W. Mar. 25: Highway, *Rez Sisters*

Tutorial: peer-editing, essay 3

M. Mar. 30: Highway, *Rez Sisters*
W. Apr. 1: Highway, *Rez Sisters* ESSAY THREE due IN CLASS (with annotated bibliographies)

Tutorial: discussion

M. Apr. 6: review
W. Apr. 8: review
ASSIGNMENTS

*SENTENCES*

Write one sentence of response to the class SQs (posted on OWL) for our classes on Sun. Sept. 21, Tues. Sept. 23, Sun. Sept. 28, Tues. Sept. 30 by 4 p.m. Depending on your last name, you’ll be submitting either Sunday or Tuesday. Email these to Prof. Conway: amconway@uwo.ca

“These sentences are designed to practice two skills: close reading and clear writing. They will help you to prepare for your paragraphs and essay. Make sure that your sentence examines a specific portion or aspect of the reading.”

“Make sure your sentence is clear, accurate, and grammatically correct. In class, we will practice how to read closely. We will also discuss how to craft clear prose. You should apply these principles when you compose your sentences.”

Example: Both Teddy and E. make art and take drugs, and these two activities do not appear unrelated.

*PARAGRAPHS*

Answer, in paragraph form, one of the SQs for the Wednesday classes on Oct. 8th and 15th. Email your paragraph to your TA (psurrence@uwo.ca; madams42@uwo.ca) by 4 p.m. on Tues. Oct. 7 and 14th. The paragraph should be 100-200 words long, have a topic sentence, and it should draw on the text for evidence to support its claims.

ESSAYS

All essay assignments must be submitted to Turnitin.com. For instructions, go to our class Web page. Please include a Word Count at the bottom of the last page of your essay.

Extensions may be granted with permission of the instructor, but no essays will be accepted more than one week after the due date without documentation from the Academic Counselling office of your home faculty. Papers coming in late without an extension will be docked 1%/day, including weekends. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of class.

**Essay 1: due Wed., Oct. 29 IN CLASS.** Write a 1200-word (4+ pages) essay on one of the following topics. Use the MLA format guidelines and provide a Works Cited.

1. How does Leroy’s obsession with building a log house contribute to the breakdown of his marriage in Bobbie Ann Mason’s “Shiloh”?
2. There are no roses in Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily.” What symbolic resonance does the rose of the title carry into the story?
3. Analyze the final paragraph of “The Cask of Amontillado.” How does it shape, or re-shape, our understanding of the story as a whole?
4. What extra-linguistic factors shape the acts of communication represented in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Interpreter of Maladies”? Why are Mrs. Das and Mr. Kapasi unable, finally, to make a meaningful connection?
Essay 2, due Wed., Dec. 3rd IN CLASS. Write a 1200-word (4+ pages) essay on one of the poems of your Poet Companion. Use the MLA format guidelines and provide a Works Cited. You may not write on a poem we have discussed in class. DO NOT USE SECONDARY SOURCES FOR THIS ESSAY—no browsing the Internet!

Please note: If you are using a poem not included in our anthology, please attach a photocopy to your hard copy of the essay. **Note that you must use a standard, scholarly edition of poems; do not download poems from the Internet.**

Your job, in this essay, is to provide a close reading of the poem, advancing a thesis regarding one (or more) of its central concerns, either formal or thematic. So, for instance, you might write on a poet who is revising the Renaissance sonnet form to speak to twentieth-century concerns. Or, you might discuss an important theme in the poem you have chosen, attending to how poetic form helps illuminate that theme. It is very important that you have chosen a second poem to write on in January before you begin this essay; if you don’t, you may find yourself having to re-think your essay entirely rather than having a foundation upon which to build when you come to re-write this paper in its longer form.

1020E Bibliography Assignment (Essay 3)

This research project consists of two parts:

**Part A (due in-class, Mar. 4):**

i. An introduction in which you define your topic (loosely). What critical conversations are you entering into? Who are the most important critics on your subject/author? Why have you chosen this topic? What contribution do you hope to make to discussions of your topic?

ii. A preliminary bibliography: Make up a list of at least ten sources. This bibliography should list both newer studies of your subject and older, frequently-cited sources. Use MLA format for your bibliographic entries.

**Part B (due, with final essay, April 1):** Your annotated bibliographies. A complete list of the sources you are using for your essay in a Works Consulted, attached to your essay, as well as three 100-word summaries of three of your sources. Each summary needs to address the author’s argument and its theoretical outlook and/or research orientation. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s argument? How has it shaped the thesis governing your essay?

**Essay 3: Due Wed. April 1 IN CLASS:** Write a 2100-word (7+ pages) essay on one of the following topics, using MLA format and documentation.

1. Discuss the significance of dust in Antigone. What cultural taboos regarding purity and pollution does Antigone break when she picks it up? What is the significance of the dust storm witnessed by the sentry?

2. The appearance of Nanabush puts magic realism at the centre of The Rez Sisters. Analyze the role of the supernatural in the text and how it shapes the play’s reading of indigenous culture and life on the reservation.
3. Discuss, in detail, the character of Beneatha Younger in A Raisin in the Sun. What hopes and aspirations does she represent? How does her gender shape her relationships and ambitions? Where do you think Beneatha will land, finally? In a marriage, Africa, a hospital—or some combination of these?

4. How does the landscape of Vietnam become an agent in the lives of the characters we meet in The Things They Carried? That is, how does it become a presence, a character of its own, interacting with the humans living in and moving through it?

5. Analyze the significance of George Weisz’s Jerusalem home in relation to the larger politics of displacement that Krauss represents in Great House. In what way does it stand in for all the other homes represented in the novel?

**PARTICIPATION GRADE**

**Poetry memorization:** to be performed in tutorial sometime between Oct. 27 and Dec. 3

Choose a poem, or a selection from a poem, of between fourteen and twenty lines from one of the works of your Poet Companion and memorize the lines. You will be asked to recite the lines in your tutorial during one of the weeks we are working on poetry. You will also be asked about your reading of the poem and how your understanding of the poem’s meaning informs how you recite it. If reciting lines in front of the class makes you feel self-conscious, you may make an appointment to see your instructor for a private performance.

Your Poet Companion is a poet of your choice whose last name has the same first letter as your last name. An alphabetized list of the poets who appear in our anthology is available on our class Web page. In the event that your letter is missing (I, U, V, X, Z) or the pickings are slim, feel free to choose a poet one letter up or down.

*Group Work, Term 2:* A podcast, to be posted to the class website by 4 p.m., Feb. 13.

Each group is responsible for presenting an 8-10 minute podcast on Great House. These podcasts are designed to develop your skills at oral presentation and your ability to present relevant, interesting material about literature and its engagement with art and the material world.

1. The characters in Great House often make reference to artists and works of art. Choose one of the following references and discuss the relationship between the reference and the chapter in which it appears, as well as its significance for the novel as a whole:

   Wim Wenders, Wings of Desire (“Lies Told by Children”)

2. In what ways are the cities featured in Great House—Budapest, London, Jerusalem, and New York (and, to a lesser extent, Budapest and Santiago)—characters in their own right? Discuss the significance of the city as a particular kind of space in relation to the novel’s central preoccupations.

   You will receive podcast instruction and have a chance to work on your podcasts in tutorial in January. You should also plan to work on this podcast outside of class, of course.
“Podcast work will require four stages: a) research and preparation; b) writing a script; c) practicing; and d) production.

a) During research and preparation, consider what kinds of information you want to include to develop your analysis.

b) During the writing of the script, compose your information into a graceful presentation. Make sure you have a catchy opening and a good conclusion. Make sure that you cite all the sources that you use. You may want to use google docs to write collaboratively.

c) As you practice, make sure that you can pronounce all the words and read the script fluently. Experiment with pace and style to make your podcast as engaging as possible. Time yourself to make sure that you fall within the length limits. All members of the group must speak during the podcast.

d) During production, record your podcast. Revise, fine-tune, and modify if necessary. Adjust the volume of your voices and other music and sounds (if you use them).”

Finally, please submit, on the podcast due date, a short report of your group work: note who was responsible for which tasks and how evenly the workload was divided.

Poetry memorization and group work assignments are each worth 1/3 of tutorial/participation grade (5% each; 10% of total grade). The other 5% of your participation grade will be based on an evaluation of your contributions to tutorial and class discussions.

*These assignments adapt those of Professor Siobhan Phillips, Dickinson College, with her permission. Quotation marks indicate material taken from Professor Phillips’s syllabus for English 101-03, “Contemporary American Fiction.”

APPENDIX I: ESSAY GRADING CRITERIA

A + (90 and up)
• Forceful development of a distinctive and fresh thesis, with proper paragraphs
• Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses)
• Exceptional style, rhetorically impressive and few if any errors
• Close engagement with primary and, where appropriate, secondary texts; carefully distinguishes the author’s argument from those of sources. Quotations seamlessly integrated into text, with proper documentation
• Careful attention to conceptual and / or linguistics subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

A (80 and up)
• Clear development of a specific and challenging thesis, with proper paragraphs
• Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses)
• Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors
• Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response
• Quotations well integrated into text, with proper documentation
• Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

B (70 to 79)
• Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs
• Sentence structure correct, with reasonable range of sentence types and full range of punctuation
• Style not too wordy, with errors relatively few and minor
• Adequately detailed reference to texts
• Quotations well integrated into text, with proper documentation
• Ability to expound reasonably sophisticated ideas with clarity

C (60 to 69)
• Reasonably clear development of a thesis, with proper paragraphs
• Sentence structure correct, but perhaps overly simple, with tendency to avoid punctuation besides period and comma
• Errors relatively few, but occasionally serious, with evident misunderstanding of some point of elementary grammar (comma splices, fragments, semicolon errors, subject-verb disagreements, poorly integrated quotations)
• Effort to support points with references to the text, with reasonable effort at documentation
• Basic ability to expound ideas

D (50 to 59)
Inadequacy at one of the following levels:
• Difficulty with paragraphing or consecutive thought
• Errors of grammar or diction frequent enough to interfere with understanding
• Ideas inchoate, but clouded by weak expression
• Overgeneralization with inadequate support, or with examples that run to lengthy irrelevant paraphrase

F (49 and down)
• Inadequacy on several levels at once
• Ideas too simple for level of course
• Content largely “borrowed” from sources with no individual distillation, but no apparent attempt to deceive

0 (Report to Department)
• Plagiarism with intent to deceive

APPENDIX II: WRITING INSTRUCTION

From High School to University Writing

Williams and McEnerey, “From High School to College,” http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/high_school_v_college.htm#_Toc431538571


Griffith, “What is Interpretation?” 8-13
Writing 1: What is a thesis?

Williams and McEnerey, “But What’s a Good Point?” http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/high_school_v_college.htm#_Toc431538571


Hacker and Sommers, “Drafting a Working Thesis,” 18-19

Writing 2: Paragraphs

Hacker and Sommers, “Build Effective Paragraphs,” 50-68.

Headrick, “Analytical Paragraphs,” 7-16.

Writing 3: Generating Ideas/Developing an Outline


Writing 4: Evidence/Citation


Headrick, “Integrating Quotations from Literary Texts,” 20-3.

Griffith, “Citation of Sources,” 276-85.

Writing 5: First Drafts and Revision


Hacker and Sommers, “Revising and editing sentences,” 37-9

**passive voice:** *Rules for Writers* (RW), 112-13.
**over reliance on verb “to be,”** *RW*, 114.
**comma splices and run-on sentences:** *RW*, 188-95.
**gender-biased language:** *RW*, 167-70.
**dangling modifiers:** *RW*, 131-34
**faulty parallelism:** *RW*, 116-19.
**vague pronoun references:** *RW*, 212-16.
**noun/pronoun agreement:** *RW*, 207-11.

Grammar guides: [http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/grammar.htm#quickguides](http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/grammar.htm#quickguides)

**Writer’s panic setting in? Check out, “Symptoms and Cures for Writer’s Block”--** [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/567/1/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/567/1/)

**Writing 6: Introductions and Conclusions**

Williams and McEnerney, “Effective Introductions” [http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/revising_the_introduction.htm#_Toc431538589](http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/revising_the_introduction.htm#_Toc431538589)

“Effective Conclusions” [http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/revising_the_introduction.htm#_Toc431538590](http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/revising_the_introduction.htm#_Toc431538590)


**Writing 7: Writing a Research Essay/Plagiarism**


Booth and Mays, “The Research Essay,”

Hacker and Sommers, “Citing Sources; avoiding plagiarism, 464-68.

Booth and Mays, “Using Sources Responsibly.”

Writing 8: Preparing a Works Cited


Booth and Mays, “The List of Works Cited”

Works Cited


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**English 1020E: Assignments at a Glance**

Week of Sept. 22: Sentences (A-K, Sun. 4 pm; L-Z, Tues. 4 pm)
Week of Sept 29: Sentences (A-K, Sun. 4 pm; L-Z, Tues. 4 pm)

Tues. Oct. 7, 4 p.m.: Paragraphs (A-K)
Tues. Oct. 14, 4 p.m.: Paragraphs (L-Z)

Wed. Oct. 29: Essay 1, in class (and to TurnItIn, before class)

Oct. 27-Dec. 3: Poetry memorization

Wed. Dec. 3: Essay 2, in class (and to TurnItIn, before class)

Wed. Feb. 11: In-class passage analysis (O’Brien)

Fri. Feb. 13: Vodcasts posted to class website by 4 pm

Wed. Mar. 4: Preliminary bibliographies and provisional theses

Wed. April 1: Final essays due, in class (and to TurnItIn, before class)