**Engl 200-2**

**Introduction to the Study of Literature**

**(GEP: HU; GDR: HU2)**

(This syllabus is subject to change.)

Class Time: TR 1400-1515

Class Location: CCC 320

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Office Hours: M 1400-1450, T 1530-1620 & by appointment

# Course Description

What is literature? What does it do? What can it do? Why have we humans always had some kind of literature, be it oral or written, be it poetry, plays or fiction? With those questions in mind, this course will introduce you to a selection of fiction, poetry and drama in English or in English translation by writers from various cultures, nations, and time periods. You will be asked toexamine each piece of literature carefully, engage in class and small group discussions, so that you can find out what literature is about and, hopefully, will be able to enjoy literature more in the future, in the myriad forms it takes. The written assignments mainly consist of short writing online (and possibly in class) and three exams.

# Intended Objectives

At the end of the semester, you should be able to analyze a literary piece based on careful interpretation of its details. In other words, you will be able to identify important details in a reading, interpret the details in a meaningful way, and put together an analysis based on what you make of the details. That’s the bottom line of the course. You also will become familiar with various literary techniques that professional writers employ. In addition, you will be encouraged to think about what messages or ideas writers have in their minds when they create literary pieces, and to consider stories, poems, and plays in their socio-cultural context. Furthermore, you can delve deeper into the academic discipline of literary studies by comparing and contrasting two or more literary works in their various aspects as well as by learning the language in which “professionals” discuss literature.

# GEP Learning Outcome (Humanities)

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to

1. Read closely, think critically, and write effectively about texts or cultural artifacts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition (such as the search for truth and meaning, the confrontation with suffering and mortality, or the struggle for justice, equality, and human dignity).

2. Investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own.

# Textbooks

Diana Hacker. *The Bedford Handbook*. Sixth Edition. Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2002. (Text Rental)

Joseph Kelly, ed. *The Seagull Reader: Literature*. 3 vols. Third Edition. Norton, 2015. (Text Rental)

Paula Vogel. *How I Learned to Drive.* Dramatists Play Service, Revised Edition, 1997. (Purchase)

# In addition, there will be some shorter readings that you will be asked to bring to class, either as printouts or on an electronic device.

# Major Assignments

1. First Exam

2. Second Exam

3. D2L Writing (and possibly some In-Class Writing)

4. Final Exam

Final Grade Break-Down

First Exam 30%

Second Exam 30%

D2L (and possibly In-Class) Writing 10%\*

Final Exam 30%

\*The percentage may be increased to 15% or 20% if there is more online (and in-class) writing assigned than envisioned at the outset of the semester. If that should happen, the percentages assigned to some or all of the exams will be reduced accordingly.

Please read the statements below to find out how absences can affect your final grade.

**Your Responsibilities and Assessment Info**

## Attendance

Attendance is key to success in this course! Class activities are organized to help you understand how literature works, so it is a lot easier to attend class regularly than to try to figure it out on your own, especially if you are not familiar with what we call serious literature. Do not miss class if you can at all help it. But for those times that you have conflicting obligations, I will excuse your first two absences (no questions asked though I always appreciate being told why), after which each absence will lower your final grade by one-half of a letter grade unless explanation is given and accepted as legitimate by me. For example, if you miss a total of four classes with no legitimate excuse, your final grade will be a B at best; if you miss six classes altogether, your final grade will be a C at best. Coming late to class or leaving early will be considered partial absence and can affect your final grade.

## Reading Assignments

You need to read the assigned literary work (and any other related material if assigned) in advance for each class period. Some topics and questions may be distributed in advance to help focus your reading of the pieces. If you read the piece carefully, class time will be more interesting and productive for you; if you do not do the reading, you will be dazed and confused. As you read each piece, it will be a good idea to write down what you notice in the reading and/or highlight interesting details and key words in the piece.

Class Participation

Active participation in class not only will make class time more interesting to you (and to others including the instructor), but also can improve your final grade. I will add up to 0.333 to the final grade on the scale of 4.00 for excellent class participation. This can make the difference between two final grades, for example, B+ and A-. You can prepare to contribute to class (and possibly small group) discussions in a meaningful way by carefully reading the assigned piece and giving serious thought to its various aspects and characteristics. This will also help you with the online (and possibly in-class) writing (see below), so why not read the assigned piece the best way you can?

Exams

There will be three exams for this course. The first exam will focus on fiction (short stories) that we have read and discussed in class. The second one will be about plays discussed in class, and the final exam will be based on the poetry discussed towards the end of the semester. At this point the exams are planned to consist of essay questions, but they also may include some short answer questions such as identifications. The first two exam dates may be slightly delayed if more class time is needed to complete discussion of the readings.

D2L Writing

Over the course of the semester, class on several Thursdays (typically the first and third Thursdays of the month but probably not every one of them) will be shortened to end around 14:55. To make up for the missed class time, you will be required to submit online writing that is related to assigned readings and/or class discussions. The writing will be graded Pass/Fail, though when appropriate partial credit may be awarded. The instructor will announce such changes to the class schedule and the online assignment ahead of time, and set up instructions and drop boxes on D2L.

In-Class Writing (if assigned)

In-class writing will be generally unannounced. This short writing exercise will be about the reading(s) assigned for the day’s class (in most or all cases you will not be allowed to refer to the textbook) and you are expected to write a short paragraph to show you have done the reading carefully and thoughtfully (in other words, the writing will not be limited to identification questions). On principle, in-class writing may not be made up if you happen to be absent when it is given. In-class writing will be graded Pass/Fail, but partial credit may be awarded when appropriate.

Group Work

I plan to form small groups (three to five people each) at various points in the semester. You will be asked to discuss some of the readings with your group in class, prior to class discussion of the same readings. I may assign group leaders who will be responsible for running group discussion and then reporting the group’s ideas to class. Representing your group for class discussion will be part of the class participation bonus, as detailed above.

# Use of Electronic Devices

# Cell phones and other electronic devices are not to be used during class unless they are directly related to the academic work being done. For example, you may use a tablet to review readings assigned for class discussion and/or homework, but I may ask you to get explicit permission from me in advance for such use. If you are expecting a phone call or message related to an emergency while in class, you may let me know in advance and leave your cell phone on, but please take the call outside the room if/when it comes in. If a cell phone or another type of electronic device is used for non-academic purposes in the classroom and it proves to be disruptive or otherwise problematic, the person using it may be asked to leave the room. In general, it is expected that phones and other electronic devices be turned off in the classroom unless they are used for explicitly academic purposes related to the ongoing class activities.

Recording of Classroom Activities (English Department Policy)

Students may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of lectures or other class activities without written permission from the instructor. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to turn off the device being used. Refusal to comply with the policy will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom, and possibly being reported to the Dean of Students.

Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

For information on more general, campus-wide regulations, please go to the UWSP Community Bill of Rights and Responsibilities document at http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx. Information especially relevant to this course is presented in Chapter 14, which begins on page 11 of the document.

**Tentative Schedule**

\*For many of the readings, the page numbers below refer to the rental text, *The Seagull Reader*. Read the blurb on the author whenever available.

9/6 T Introduction/Syllabus and Handouts

9/8 R Elements of Fiction/ Kate Chopin (*The Seagull Reader: Stories* 98-101)

9/13 T Joyce Carol Oates “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”

(*The Seagull Reader: Stories* 316-33)

9/15 R Tillie Olsen “I Stand Here Ironing” (381-89)

9/20 T James Baldwin “Sonny’s Blues” (29-61)

9/22 R Raymond Carver “Cathedral” (61-76)

9/27 T Sherman Alexie “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” (8-28)

9/29 R Edith Wharton “Roman Fever” (488-501)

10/4 T Katherine Anne Porter “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” (397-406) & Jamaica Kincaid “Girl” (228-30)

10/6 R First Exam

10/11 T Introduction to Plays/ Susan Glaspell  *Trifles* (*The Seagull Reader: Plays*  253-68)

10/13 R *Trifles* Continued/ Anton Chekhov *The Seagull* (most likely PDF)

10/18 T *The Seagull* Continued

10/20 R *The Seagull* Continued

10/25 T Lorraine Hansberry *A Raisin in the Sun* (*The Seagull Reader: Plays* 268-356)

10/27 R *A Raisin in the Sun* Continued

11/1 T *A Raisin in the Sun* Continued

11/3 R Paula Vogel *How I Learned to Drive* (Purchase)

11/8 T *How I Learned to Drive* Continued

11/10 R *How I Learned to Drive* Continued

**Most of the readings for discussion of poetry will be assigned from the rental. There may be some handouts and/or PDFs.**

11/15 T Second Exam

11/17 R Introduction to Poetry/ Pleasures of Poetry/Metaphors and Similes

11/22 T Metaphors and Similes

<< Thanksgiving Break >>

11/29 T Symbol and Irony

12/1 R Poems about Love and Sexuality

12/6 T Poems about Nature

12/8 R Poems about Family

12/13 T TBA

12/15 R Poems about Teaching and Learning

12/19 M Final Exam  **(8:00-10:00)**