

**Department of English**  
**Undergraduate Course Descriptions**  
**Spring 2021**

**English 1100: The Plague in Western Literature**

Mode: In Person

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00—11:40

Dr. Grace Tiffany

This class will focus on a timely question. How have writers through the centuries dealt with the phenomenon of plague? We will explore a selection of poems, plays, and fiction, all of which address mass disease outbreak as a literal threat, use plague as a metaphor for other social problems, or do both things at once. Practicing close reading, we will discuss how the authors' different historical periods and chosen genres (including dystopian fantasy) affected their ways of representing and interpreting plagues. Students will also have the opportunity to write their own "plague" poems or short stories at some point during the term.

**Texts:**

*Poems:* Lucretius, Thomas Nashe, Christina Rossetti  
*Drama:* Sophocles' *The Oedipus Cycle*, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*  
*Fiction:* Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*  
Edgar Allen Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death"  
Albert Camus, *The Plague*  
Geraldine Brooks, *Year of Wonders*  
Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven*

**Assignments:** Four three-page papers, including one creative assignment (10% of grade each), presentation (15%), class participation (20%), final exam (25%)

**ENGL 1120 - Literary Classics**

English 1120: Literary Classics

Mode: In Person

Tuesdays, 2:00—4:30

Dr. Philip Egan

**Catalog Description:** Readings in selected literary masterpieces from Homer to the present. The works studied are chosen to introduce students to the rich and diverse literary traditions which represent an invaluable aspect of their heritage. Recommended for the general student as well as for potential English majors or minors; does not, however, count for English major or minor credit. This course satisfies WMU Essential Studies Level 1: Foundations – Inquiry and Engagement: Critical Thinking in the Arts and Humanities Category.

### **English 2080: Literature in Our Lives**

Mode: In Person

Wednesdays, 2:00—4:30

Dr. Philip Egan

**Catalog Description:** This course examines the ways that literary works represent and reflect upon human experience and the human condition. It emphasizes the response of the individual reader to both the intellectual content and the aesthetic properties of texts and seeks to develop critical standards as a basis for a life-long engagement with literature; does not count as credit toward English major or minor. This course satisfies WMU Essential Studies Level 1: Foundations – Inquiry and Engagement: Critical Thinking in the Arts and Humanities Category.

### **English 2100: Film Interpretation**

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Mondays, 6:30—9:00

Dr. Meghann Meusen

ENGL 2100 *Film Interpretation* is a course that "studies in the motion picture as art form." In this section of the course, this means an emphasis on two key elements of analysis: technique and ideology. By learning to identify the ways that filmmakers produce the dazzling spectacle on our movie screens, we can see the purposeful ways that they present messages and themes that can affect the way we see the world. Moreover, by considering what films reflect about contemporary and historical belief systems and values, we can see film as an ideological apparatus and a tool in building society.

This semester, most films we study will also center around a theme: children and childhood. While only some of the movies we'll watch will be intended for young audiences, we'll continually return to questions of how film uses concepts of childhood to influence our understanding of the world, considering the profound ideological impact that movies can have on the very young-- and the young at heart. *Note: In Spring 2020, ENGL 2100's lecture, course materials, and assignments will all be delivered in an online asynchronous environment. Film screenings will also be online, but viewing will be restricted to specific time periods.*

### **English 2110: Folklore and Mythology**

Mode: Asynchronous

Dr. Mustafa Mirzeler

In this course students will explore the folklore and mythology of people who live in disparate parts of the world, in Africa, Central Asia, Mesopotamia, the ancient shores of Mediterranean Sea and Western Europe. Drawing from the contemporary folklore and mythology, this course historicizes and conceptualizes cultural and social contexts that produce folklore and myths around the world.

### **English 2230: African American Literature**

Mode: Partially Synchronous

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00—1:40

Ms. Nicole Mason

This course will examine how canonized Black American authors like W.E.B. Dubois, Ralph Ellison, and Harriet Jacobs have influenced more contemporary writers such as Colson Whitehead, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Octavia Butler. We will focus on works that explore the long history of slavery and racism in our country through texts like Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*, Coates' *Black Panther*, and Butler's Xenogenesis series. Students will expand their notions of "Literature" and their understanding of the connections between culture and art. As we all work together in these strange times to strike the perfect balance in online learning, students will have a significant voice in how the course adapts to their needs during the semester.

### **English 2660: Writing Fiction and Poetry**

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Schedule: Various

Instructors: Various

This is an introductory creative writing course that covers both fiction and poetry. It is a reading as well as a writing course; students will learn the basic elements of fiction and poetry, read selections of work in each genre, complete critical and creative writing exercises and assignments, and participate in workshop sessions that focus on discussion of their own work and the work of their peers.

### **English 2810: Youth Literature and Culture**

Mode: Asynchronous

Ms. Ellen Foley



Anders, W. (1968). *Earthrise*.

ENGL 2810: Youth Literature and Culture:  
Climate Change in YA Literature  
Fulfills Western Essential Studies Level 2  
Artistic Theory and Practice requirement and  
elective credit for Literature and Language  
majors and minors

Climate change is one of the most dangerous, complex, and pressing crises that humanity currently faces. This course will explore how climate change is presented in literature to young people who will invariably experience its impact most significantly. Participants will read a variety

of young adult climate fiction (cli-fi) and nonfiction. Students will also study documentaries and youth activism movements such as Fridays for the Future and The Sunrise Movement. Tentative text list includes: *The Marrow Thieves* (Dimaline, 2017), *Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation* (Duffy, 2020), *War Girls* (Onyebuchi, 2019), *Orleans* (Smith, 2013), *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Young Readers Edition* (Kamkwamba and Mealer, 2016), *Hoot* (Hiaasen, 2002), *Dry* (Shusterman and Shusterman, 2018), and *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (Thunberg, 2018).

As a fully asynchronous offering, this course will meet via WMU's Elearning site and requires no in-person or synchronous virtual meetings, though optional sessions will be offered. Students are required to participate in discussion boards, record asynchronous video responses via Flipgrid, maintain reading journals and reflections, and complete terminology application and textual exploration projects.

### **English 3050: Professional Writing**

Mode: Asynchronous

Dr. Brian Gogan

English 3050 is a course designed to develop your confidence and competency in written communication. Whatever your future career plans or your current, favorite media for communicating (print, digital, twitter, Facebook or other social media), you are likely to need strong writing skills. Numerous studies, for example, show that in many professions, communication skills are ranked at the top (first or second place) of the most valued qualities for success. Many of you might be surprised at how central writing is in the day-to-day life of most professionals. To help prepare you for the challenges ahead, this class will expand your writing repertoires beyond the academic essay or research paper. Through various class projects, you will

- Become familiar with the formats and rhetorical challenges of various practical genres and document formats (memos, reports, manuals, web text, visual displays and designs, etc.)
- Develop skill for anticipating (and addressing) the needs and reactions of audiences to communications in different contexts
- Learn the fundamentals of reader-centered communication, including the fundamentals of document design and readability used to create well-crafted documents
- Learn about some documents and communication habits typical for professionals in your discipline

The course offers plenty of opportunity for personalized help with course projects.

### **English 3060: Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture**

Mode: Asynchronous

Dr. Maria Gigante

Rhetoric is often misunderstood or dismissed as manipulation through deceitful language, but in actuality, rhetoric is the study of the various signs and symbols that make human communication possible. The rhetorical tradition dates back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, and their treatises on the communicative arts are still relevant today. This course will focus on how rhetoric functions in contemporary cultural life, giving significance, meaning, and value to day-to-day practices. A major goal of the course is to help you gain knowledge about human communication; that way, you will have greater insight into your own communication practices and can better evaluate the effects and consequences of the communications around you. The readings for this course will define and explain rhetorical concepts and theories. You will rhetorically analyze written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts, and, for major course projects, you will conduct research and produce texts through various media.

### **English 3080: Quest for Self**

Mode: In Person

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00—3:15

Dr. Christopher Nagle

TBA.

### **English 3110: Our Place in Nature**

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30—1:45

Dr. Jil Larson

This course will begin with some classics of nature writing by authors such as Henry David Thoreau and Annie Dillard. We will then read poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction by a variety of writers, written from diverse perspectives. One of our texts is likely to be *Black Nature*, edited by Camille Dungy, an anthology of nature writing by African American poets. We will also read *Zoologies* by Alice Hawthorne Deming, a collection of essays that will foster discussion of our place in the animal world. Finally, we will consider the scientific and social challenges of climate change as explored in literature, including science fiction (by James Bradley and/or James Vandermeer) and recent work by Annie Proulx, Lindsay Teague, Barbara Kingsolver, Amitav Ghosh, and others. The course will explore nature in all its beauty, life in a climate changed world, the ecological uncanny, debates about the Anthropocene, and ways of thinking and writing about the entwined human and natural worlds.

**English 3120: Western World Literature**

Mode: Asynchronous

Dr. Margaret Dupuis

**Catalog Description:** Study of works selected from the Western literary tradition, excluding those from Great Britain and the U.S.A. Selections may range from biblical literature and great works of Greece and Rome through classics of the Middle Ages and Renaissance to major works of the present. Works will be studied in English.

**English 3160: Storytellers**

Mode: Asynchronous

Dr. Mustafa Mirzeler

Relying on oral tradition and the written word, the storytellers work imaginatively within the realms of fantasy and reality. The fantasy element of their oral tradition and written literature is the link to a fabulous and grandly mythicized past created in oral epic tales, stories, and novels. In the world of the storytellers, what assuage the pain and suffering of people are the stories, the myths, and the imaginary worlds of the ancient past. In every age, human societies have produced their master storytellers who have moved tradition into new dispensations through the magic of words. In reading the accounts of these storytellers, the students will enter into their magical worlds and experience the magical truth of storytelling as well as the magic of the words.

**English 3170: Stories of the Other**

Mode: Asynchronous

Dr. Mustafa Mirzeler

This course brings the stories of gender, religious and sexual “minorities” in non-Western world from a comparative perspective. These are the people who are called others of the “others” in their respective societies with their attendant terms and categories. This course brings the voices of these others’ “other”, to the classrooms, and share their stories with students. These stories constitute a valuable comparative resource for students, as they put a spot light on universally vital issues in their own societies, recent examples may include the issues of migrants, and LGBTQ individuals, in non-Western world, such as in Turkey.

**English 3210: American Literature II**

Mode: In Person

Thursdays, 2:00—4:30

Dr. Philip Egan

This course will examine a substantial number of important American writers after 1880 in class and still more writers in oral presentations by students. The purpose is to understand important works by these writers, to understand the diversity of the circumstances and traditions from

which they arose, to see connections between different authors' works, and in general to get a better feel for what American literature is. This section, then, seeks to achieve a broad exposure to American literature and to reinforce the students' sense of how literature reflects both the diversity of the U.S. populations and the trends of U.S. intellectual history. Because this is an English course, it also seeks to make students into better readers and writers generally.

### **English 3300: British Literature I**

Mode: In Person

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30—1:45

Dr. Grace Tiffany

This class is a broad survey of the first eight hundred years of English literature, starting with Anglo-Saxon poetry (in translation, c. 900), continuing through the Middle English poetry of Chaucer (late 14<sup>th</sup> century), progressing through the ages of Shakespeare and Milton during the English Renaissance (1580-1660), and ending with an eighteenth-century work of Jonathan Swift. The class will promote understanding of major historical trends as they pertained to the creation of the greatest and most influential works of literature in the English language.

Prerequisite: English 1100 (Literary Interpretation).

*Text: The Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol. I, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., A, B, and C.*

*Assignments:* two take-home writing assignments, quizzes, and a final exam.

### **English 3660: Advanced Fiction Writing**

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00—3:15

Ms. Samantha Atkins

Want to get a lot better at writing short stories and flash fiction? This is the course for you! In this section of ENGL3660, we will read incredible contemporary works by published authors and be amazed by one another's stories as well. In this course, we write creatively together, explore themes of fiction craft, and engage in whole class and small group workshops. Each student will receive oral and written feedback on their fiction writing from the professor and from one another. You'll be challenged in this advanced fiction workshop, but your writerly self will grow tremendously through the process.

### **English 3660: Advanced Fiction Writing**

Mode: Partially Synchronous

Tuesdays, 2:00—4:30

Professor Thisbe Nissen

Immersion in the genre of fiction—specifically flash or very-short fiction. Students are challenged to explore multiple avenues of entry into writing flash fiction, and to read widely and

closely within the genre. This course involves substantial amounts of reading and writing, both critical and creative.

**English 3680: Playwriting**

Mode: Hybrid

Tuesdays, 2:00—3:15

Dr. Steve Feffer

**Catalog Description:** An introductory course in the writing of drama, with class discussion and criticism of each student's writing, and including study of selected examples of drama in print and in production.

**English 3710: Structures of Modern English**

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30—4:45

Dr. Adrienne Redding

This course examines the English language through an analysis of its core linguistic components (e.g. phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse, etc.), with special attention on the ways in which these components function as the building blocks we all use, most often unconsciously, to communicate, connect, and comprehend every day.

**English 3820: Literature for the Young Child**

Mode: Asynchronous

Ms. Jaime Bienhoff

ENGL 3820, Literature for the Young Child, invites students into the provocative, amusing, and surprising world of children's literature. Students will not only garner a deeper understanding of childhood as a literary genre but also play an active role in deciphering, analyzing, and interpreting the broader implications of being a reader, writer, teacher, and scholar of Children's literature. We will develop creative and critical thinking skills, visual and textual literacy, and critical sensitivity by engaging with historical and cultural contexts. As such, this course will survey various genres (folktales, fantasy, fiction, and poetry) and formats (easy readers, picture books, and verse novels). Student assessments include a picture book project, creativity and engagement essay, formal essay, midterm, and final exam.



## **English 3820: Literature for the Young Child**

Mode: Asynchronous

Ms. Shelley Esman

Introduces students to the study and teaching of children's texts suitable for kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms, with emphasis on critical sensitivity and techniques necessary for interpreting and evaluating works for these readers. Development of children's literature as a genre will be examined as well as literacy development in young children as they learn to read and explore texts in a variety of ways. Students will analyze a variety of texts (such as novels, realism vs. fantasy, historical fiction, poetry, fairy tales, and picture books) within their historical and cultural contexts, developing methods of incorporating children's literature into classroom spaces.

## **English 3830: Literature for the Intermediate Reader**

Mode: Partially Synchronous

Tuesdays, 10:00—11:40

Dr. Gwen Tarbox

English 3830, Literature for the Intermediate Reader, is a survey course that will focus on these questions: 1) What are the distinguishing features of contemporary texts written for children, aged 9-12? 2) How has the representation of childhood altered over the last two hundred years in texts written for children and what do these changes in representation tell us about adults' anxieties regarding children and their behavior? 3) What forms of critical analysis have been brought to bear upon children's literature and how can they enrich our understanding of the genre?

**ENGL 3830 is Partially Synchronous, with the majority of instruction and interaction taking place in an online asynchronous ELearning environment.** To supplement this online instruction, **we will meet from 10:00-11:40 on the following Tuesdays: 1/12; 1/26; 2/9; 2/23; 3/9; 3/16; 4/6; 4/13.**

Here is a copy of the text list. Students are expected to rent or to buy all of their texts and to have them available for homework and class discussion.

1. Bond, *A Bear Called Paddington* (chapter book)
2. *Paddington 1* (movie available on a number of streaming services)
3. Hale, *Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales: Treaties, Trenches, Mud, and Blood* (history graphic novel)
4. Mendoza, *Indigenous People's History of the United States for Young People* (non-fiction book)
5. Perez, *The First Rule of Punk* (illustrated realistic novel)
6. Telgemeier, *Smile* (realistic graphic novel)
7. Pancholy, *The Best at It* (realistic novel)
8. Riordan, *Percy Jackson, Book 1: The Lightning Thief* (fantasy novel)
9. Wicks, *Human Body Theater* (non-fiction graphic novel)

**English 4400: Studies in Verse**

Mode: Asynchronous

Dr. Beth Bradburn

In this course we will study the relationship between form and meaning in poetry by reading (mainly) books of poetry in verse forms from traditional to post-modern. Some are book-length poems while others are collections. The texts include

*Omeros*, by Derek Walcott

*Autobiography of Red*, by Anne Carson

*Geography III*, by Elizabeth Bishop

*Paterson*, by William Carlos Williams

*My Life*, by Lyn Hejinian

*Citizen: An American Lyric*, by Claudia Rankine

and selected poems by Emily Dickinson.

Course assignments include two short analytical papers, one longer researched critical essay, and regular contributions to an online discussion board.

**English 4790: Writing in the Secondary School**

Mode: Partially Synchronous

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00—1:40

Dr. Jonathan Bush

Built around concepts of 'best practice,' this course includes intensive study and practice of all aspects of teaching writing at middle and secondary schools and will focus on concepts of audience, purpose, and genre as they apply to the processes of writing. We will practice all the skills that make an effective writing teacher – planning, development, response, grading, and classroom activities that support students' writing processes. We will also touch on grammar, technology, and the effect of Common Core Standards on classroom practices. The course typically concludes with a practical demonstration of teaching, either at WMU or in local high school or middle school classrooms. Students will leave the course with a firm background in teaching writing.

**English 4800: Teaching Literature in the Secondary Schools**

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:00—1:40

Ms. Elisabeth Spinner

This section of English 4800 will include a study of techniques and theories of teaching literature to young adults. Students will learn methods of teaching important issues through the use of literature in the secondary classroom. There will be opportunities to meet with current English

teachers so students can observe teaching techniques. The class will also include student-led projects which will offer opportunities to practice various methods. The major class assignments tentatively include: creating lesson and unit plans, interviewing and observing teachers, and constructing reflection projects. Finally, students will become familiar with and get involved in professional organizations within the field. Does not count as credit toward the major.

### **English 5220: From Slavery to Harlem Renaissance: African Americans and Literature**

Thursdays, 6:30—9:00

Mode: In Person

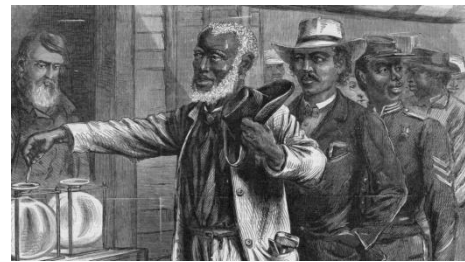
Dr. Scott Slawinski

In this class we will look at literature written by African Americans as they navigated times of enslavement, Reconstruction and raised hopes, disappointment in Jim Crow segregation and disfranchisement, and artistic



triumph and the birth of the New Negro during the Harlem Renaissance. We'll look at how American blacks met the challenges of their times, beginning with some of the earliest poetic and prose expressions in the eighteenth century and expanding through select antebellum slave narratives, post-bellum narratives of racial uplift, and rediscovery of African roots in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Focusing a lens on these

writings from the past, we'll consider early manifestations of race and racism and their evolution over time while keeping an eye turned toward contemporary thinking and events.



Likely authors will include Phillis Wheatley, Briton Hammon, Frederick Douglass, Francis Harper, Harriet Jacobs, Pauline Hopkins, Charles Chesnutt, Paul



Laurence Dunbar, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and various Harlem Renaissance writers of prose and poetry.

Course requirements include a fifteen-minute oral presentation, a short first paper, a seminar-length second paper, and, for graduate students, a fifteen-minute “teaching moment.”

### **English 5380: Modern Literature**

Mondays, 4:00—6:20

Mode: Partially Synchronous

Dr. Todd Kuchta

Literature written in the first half of the twentieth century is usually called “modern” or “modernist.” These adjectives have come to mean brashly experimental, highly self-reflexive, notoriously complex, and pessimistic if not apocalyptic in tone. Modernist literature was once

thought to privilege art's transcendence over everyday life and its separation from the social sphere. But this way of viewing modern writers overlooks their engagement with the past, with popular culture, and with their own social and political status.

More than anything, modernism is a movement of innovative and experimental literary styles. We will examine a range of those stylistic innovations, but we will do so by considering how they both reflect and respond to the dramatic cultural and historical changes of the early twentieth century. This was a period when urban society—with its new media, modes of communication, and forms of transportation—created an increasingly unified and interconnected globe. These technologies made time speed up and distances shrink, profoundly altering how people perceived and experienced the world around them—a world that seemed to expand and contract simultaneously. This condition is also typically described as “modern,” and it inspired the era's writers to create forms and styles that could come to grips with these exciting and sometimes overwhelming changes.

Modern literature is also international in scope, a product of exiles, émigrés, and travelers. While we will focus on writers from the British canon, they represent a broad range of national contexts. As critic Terry Eagleton once put it, “the seven most significant writers of twentieth-century English literature have been a Pole, three Americans, two Irishmen and an Englishman.” We will focus on most of these authors: Polish-born Joseph Conrad, American expatriate T. S. Eliot, Irishmen James Joyce and W. B. Yeats, and Englishman George Orwell, as well as two of the crucial female authors Eagleton overlooks—Rebecca West and Virginia Woolf. Alongside the literature, we'll also read some important works of theory and criticism.

Course requirements will likely include consistent participation, a 5-page essay, a 10-15-page research paper, and regular postings to E-Learning. For questions please contact [todd.kuchta@wmich.edu](mailto:todd.kuchta@wmich.edu).

### **English 5660: Creative Writing Workshop—Fiction**

Wednesdays, 6:30—9:50

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Professor Richard Katrovas

This is a creative-writing workshop that acknowledges the range of storytelling regarding veracity. We shall proceed on the assumption that the best prose fiction lies its way to truths about the human heart, and that the best personal essays and memoirs seek to “tell all the truth but tell it slant,” as Emily Dickinson said we must do. All narrative may be regarded on a spectrum of veracity from fact to fancy: There are short stories and novels that track authors' lives as closely as any autobiographies, and there are genuine memoirs rife with whimsy (*Angela's Ashes*: McCourt “sees” his parents conceiving him!). Each student will compose two minimum ten-page narratives, either short form (short story or personal essay) or long form (memoir or



novel fragment/chapter). The class will proceed on the assumption that making art is a form of “play for mortal stakes,” as Robert Frost famously asserted, which is to say that fun is good and we’ll try to have some. We’ll discuss the “hybrid” nature of the course at our first meeting, whether it’s face-to-face or not.

**English 5670: Creative Writing Workshop—Poetry**

Mondays, 6:30—9:00

Mode: Fully Synchronous

Professor Richard Katrovas

Recalling that Aristotle posited three types of poetry—dramatic, epic, and lyric—and noting that what we think of as “poetry” is usually lyric verse, this course will dovetail the composition of lyric with an exploration of the defining issues of American poetry, especially regarding the transformation of lyric in the crucible of modernity. We will consider “lyric” broadly, and regard such matters as the relation of popular song lyrics to lyric poetry. Each student will compose five poems over the course of the semester, as well as one minimum five-page explication (close reading: I’ll show you how!) of a “great” poem. The class will proceed on the assumption that making art is a form of “play for mortal stakes,” as Robert Frost famously asserted, which is to say that fun is good, and we’ll try to have some. We’ll discuss the “hybrid” nature of the course at our first meeting, whether it’s face-to-face or not.