

## **ENG 301 FOUNDATIONS OF THE ENGLISH MAJOR (CONTEXT)**

**Fall 2016 | 123 Pacific | TR 10:00-11:20 + discussion section**

Professors: Warren Ginsberg, Heidi Kaufman, & Priscilla Ovalle

GEs: Katie Jo Lariviere (katiejol@uoregon.edu) & Annie Narver (aknowles@uoregon.edu)

Additional email, office hours, & other contact information can be found on Canvas and at

<http://english.uoregon.edu/profiles/faculty>

The Foundations of the English Major is a three-course sequence (ENG 301, ENG 302, ENG 303) that introduces students to the discipline of English as it is practiced at the University of Oregon. The entire sequence provides English majors with a common intellectual experience and a foundation for future coursework in literatures, media, and folklore. The course provides a solid foundation in the histories, theories, debates, and critical reading practices used to study different kinds of texts. This year, ENG 301 focuses on the Medieval and Victorian periods, as well as newer media from the 19th and 20th centuries. The department strongly encourages students to take these courses sequentially. If necessary, however, students may begin the sequence with ENG 301 or ENG 302, but not with ENG 303.

**301 Course Description:** ENG 301 is divided into three parts to address the following questions: What is a cultural context? How are cultural contexts tied to the historical imagination? To answer these questions, each part of the course studies its literary and media forms within their cultural and historical contexts. We use comparative *methodologies* to appreciate how cultural, historical, biographical, and archival concerns frame the way we understand and approach each text. These are skills you will continue to practice as an English major.

In the **Medieval** portion of the term, we examine such contextual factors as how the difference between orality and writing in the Old and Middle English periods and the status of English in a bi- and tri-lingual society influenced the production and reception of literary texts. In the **Victorian** portion we focus first on print culture and the Victorian experience of reading. From there we'll read Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (serialized from 1837-8) within the context of Victorian Poor Laws (1834). In the **Newer Media** portion, we ask similar questions of context and reception to explore the historical, cultural, and technical/technological traditions that led to a newer media classic: *Citizen Kane* (1939).

### **By the end of this course, students will be able to:**

1. Define key terms ("text" and context") and explain how they relate to specific historical moments and media.
2. Identify the *methodologies* that informed readers use to interpret literary, auditory, and visual texts according to their historical context.
3. Identify how these cultural texts in turn shape their contexts.
4. Define "reception" and analyze examples of reception culture from the Medieval, Victorian, and early twentieth century periods.
5. Practice contextualized textual analysis by working with secondary sources to do the following:

acquire relevant historical and cultural information; properly acknowledge and cite sources; and write convincing interpretive analyses showing how literary, auditory, and visual texts engage their own times and places.

6. Evaluate comparative historical methodologies for understanding and analyzing literary, auditory, and visual texts.

**Department Learning Outcomes:**

1. Read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their generic conventions.
2. Draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts.
3. Perform critical, formal analyses of literary and other cultural texts.
4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, professional and grammatical prose.
5. Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments.
6. Employ primary and secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

**Required Course Materials and Texts: Available at the Duck Store. Please use the specific editions listed below**

M. H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, eds, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th edition, Volume A (WW Norton, 2012).

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Broadview Encore Edition (2005; ISBN 1-55111-758-4)

Candles for Victorian reading exercise

Additional materials will be available on Canvas and as hyperlinks on the syllabus

Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) [“MLA Works Cited Page”](#)

(<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>)

**Attendance Expectations, Assignments, Grade Breakdown, and Grading Policy**

Consistent and full attendance at both lecture and discussion sections is required. Grades will be assigned in accord with competencies and performance levels outlined in the English Department's Undergraduate Grading Policies:

<http://english.uoregon.edu/resources/attachment/english-dept-u-g-grading-policies-6>

**Absences & Grade Reduction:** Lecture and discussion section attendance are mandatory. One Discussion Section absence is allowed; your final grade will drop by one-third of a letter grade for each subsequent absence unless you have contacted your GE and worked out an agreement on alternative arrangements. (Example: an A would drop to an A-; a B+ would drop to a B.) You are responsible for work due or assigned on days you are absent. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact a fellow student to find out what you've missed.

## **Grade Breakdown**

**10% Lecture Participation**

**10% Discussion Section**

**30% Average of 3 Contextual Exercises (2 pages each)**

**50% Average of 3 Interpretive Essays (4-5 pages each)**

Lecture Participation & Discussion Sections. You must come to class having read/screened the assigned material and prepared to discuss it with your tutor and your peers. The lecture participation and discussion section grades reward students who take an active and engaged role in discussions, who are willing to contribute thoughtfully and constructively to the collaborative process of in-class dialogue, and who conduct themselves in a collegial and respectful way. You will be expected to participate during lectures using a clicker; clicker grading policies and how they factor into this portion of the grade will be addressed in the first week of class. **20%**

**TOTAL**

3 Contextual Exercises + 3 Interpretive Essays. This course has three portions during the term. Each portion of the term will have two assignments for a total of 6 assignments: a **contextual exercise** involving preliminary research on a relevant historical or cultural context; and an **interpretive essay** in which you analyze a text in light of its contexts. For the contextual exercise, students will need to demonstrate their understanding of the context's importance/role in their evaluation of a text. For the essay, students will be evaluated based on how specifically and insightfully they produce a convincing interpretive analysis of the relationship between text and context. 2-page Contextual Exercises (the average of all three will count for 30% of the final course grade); 4-5 page Interpretive Essays (the average of all three will count for 50% of the final course grade) **85% TOTAL**

## **Grading Scale**

A+ 100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59
A 94-99	B 84-86	C 74-76	D 64-66	
A- 90-93	B- 80-83	C- 70-73	D- 60-63	

## **Class Policies**

Lecture and discussion etiquette: Please turn off all electronic devices before class begins. In rooms as acoustically-live as large lecture halls, it is difficult to lecture over “cross-talking,” so please avoid this. Talking during lecture may impede other students’ learning, so plan to hold your individual conversations outside class time. Any activity that disrupts or distracts others from course material is not only rude but may also violate the university’s code of academic conduct. Please be considerate of those around you.

Inclusive Learning Environments: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify one of the professors teaching this course if there are aspects of the instruction or course design that result in disability-related barriers to your participation.

You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).

Lecture Notes and Missed Classes: Lectures may not be copied, taped, or videotaped in any manner unless you have documented a communication-related disability with the University and have received permission from the course instructor. Should you miss a lecture or discussion, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from your colleagues, so be sure to get to know others in the course who would be willing to help you and whom you would be willing to help. Missing lecture should, however, be a rare event. In no case should you take notes regularly for another student, unless you obtain the professor's approval. However, comparing notes with a study partner or a small group could assist you with the course and clearly that kind of activity is something we'd all applaud.

Tutorial Help: Meaningful and successful learning often requires more than students and teachers can accomplish individually. Programs, workshops, courses, tutors, and mentors are among the many resources the Teaching and Learning Center provides to help students with educational pursuits at the University of Oregon. For example, the TLC offers courses, tutorials, and drop-in assistance for students' academic writing. The TLC is located in 68 PLC and their website is <http://tlc.uoregon.edu/>. Please note that any other assistance (beyond the UO TLS office) that you receive on papers, from organizing your paper to identifying your main points, from typing or proofreading papers to editing or revising papers, must be cleared with your GTF or the professor.

Academic Integrity: The University of Oregon values academic honesty. Students are informed of the University's expectations about conduct and academic honesty when they matriculate. You are here because you clearly have the ability to engage your own mind in rigorous intellectual work. Consult the [UO's Student Conduct Code \(http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code\)](http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code) for definitions of plagiarism and information on documentation should you need it. See your GTF and/or your 301 professors should you have any concerns about documentation and/or academic honesty.

In accord with English Department policy, cases of clearly established plagiarism or cheating, a final course grade of "F" will be the minimum penalty; all incidents will also be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, as required by the University.

The University Student Conduct Code (available at <http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code>) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the

question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at [researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism](http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism).

Deadlines and Late Assignments: Course assignments should be turned in by the deadline. Work submitted after a deadline will be counted as late. Assignments will be docked 5 points for each day beyond the deadline. Emailing written work to the professor or GE is not permitted unless arrangements have been made in advance due to extenuating circumstances.

## **COURSE & READINGS SCHEDULE**

**(Subject to change, updates will be posted on Canvas)**

### **Week 1 — Introductions and Beginnings**

9/27 Tuesday: Introduction to the Course

What is a text? What is a context? Medieval, Victorian, Newer Media Texts and Contexts

9/29 Thursday: Introduction: The Middle Ages to ca. 1485

Readings to Discuss: Norton: pp. 1-21 and Caedmon's *Hymn in Bede's Ecclesiastical History* (Norton: 24-27); *Dream of the Rood* (Norton: 27-29); *Judith* (Norton: 100-08)

### **Week 2 — Christianity and the Heroic Tradition**

10/4 Tuesday: Discussion of readings continued

10/6 Thursday: *Beowulf*

Readings to Discuss: (Norton: 29-80)

**DEADLINE: 10/9 Sunday 11:59pm PST — Medieval Context Exercise Due**

### **Week 3 — The Hero and the Knight in Late Medieval England**

10/11 Tuesday: *Beowulf* continued

Readings to Discuss: Norton: 80-100

10/13 Thursday: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Readings to Discuss: Introduction, Parts 1 & 2 (Norton: 162-85)

#### **Week 4 — Medieval ↔ Victorian**

10/18 Tuesday: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* continued

Readings to Discuss: Parts 3 & 4 (Norton: 185-213)

10/20 Thursday: Dickens and Victorian Print Culture

Readings to Discuss: [Kate Flint, “Victorian Readers”](#) (active link)

[Matthew Taunton, “Print Culture”](#) (active link)

*Oliver Twist* (chapters 1-7) (Please read from the Broadview Edition)

**DEADLINE: 10/23 Sunday 11:59pm PST — Medieval Essay Due**

#### **Week 5 — Victorians vs. Dickens on Crime and Poverty**

10/25 Tuesday: Victorians on Crime and Poverty

Readings/Film to Discuss: [Oliver Twist: Depicting Crime and Poverty](#) (active link, BL short film)

*Oliver Twist* (chapters 8-19)

10/27 Thursday: Dickens on Criminal Outcasts: Nancy & Fagin

Readings to Discuss: *Oliver Twist* (chapters 20-30)

**DEADLINE: 10/30 Sunday 11:59pm PST — Victorian Context Exercise Due**

#### **Week 6 — Victorians and Murder**

11/1 Tuesday: Making a Victorian Criminal

Readings to Discuss: *Oliver Twist* (chapters 31-40); discussion will focus on this selection of chapters as well as earlier chapters depicting Oliver’s morality (does he have it?) and Fagin’s efforts to poison Oliver’s soul (can he succeed?).

11/3 Thursday: Victorian Murder and Morality

Readings to discuss: *Oliver Twist* (chapters 41-53)

#### **Week 7 — Victorian ↔ Newer Media**

11/8 Tuesday: Dickens and the New Poor Law of 1834

Readings to Discuss: [Ruth Richardson, “Oliver Twist and the Workhouse”](#) (active link)

[Liza Picard “The Working Classes and the Poor”](#) (active link)

[Dickens’s “A Visit to Newgate”](#) (active link)

11/10 Thursday: Stages and Screens: An Introduction to Moving Light and Images

Screenings (In-Class): Early Trick Cinema

**DEADLINE 11/13 Sunday 11:59pm PST — Victorian Essay Due**

**Week 8 — Phantasmic Images/Fantastic Sounds**

11/15 Tuesday: The Fantasies of Pre-Cinema and Cinema

Reading to Discuss: Theodore Barber, “Phantasmagorical Wonders: The Magic Lantern Ghost Show in Nineteenth-century America,” *Film History* 3.2 (1989): 73–86 [PDF on Canvas]

11/17 Thursday: Listening to Space and Time

Listening (In-Class): *War of the Worlds* (radio drama, 1938)\*

Reading to Discuss: [Wikipedia Entry on War of the Worlds \(novel, 1897\)](#) (active link)

**DEADLINE 11/20 Sunday 11:59pm PST — Media Context Exercise Due**

**Week 9 — Aesthetics of Sound and Vision**

11/22 Tuesday: Early Radio Aesthetics

Readings to Discuss: Neil Verma, “Dramas of Space and Time,” from *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* 17-32. [PDF on Canvas]

11/24 Thursday: No Class: Thanksgiving

Screening (During Break): *Citizen Kane* (1941) — DVD on reserve in Knight Library

**Week 10 — Putting It All Together**

11/29 Tuesday: *Citizen Kane* & the Multimedia Celebrity of Orson Welles

Screening (In-Class): *Citizen Kane* movie trailer

Listening to Discuss: [“Podcast #23: War of the Worlds Revisited.” \*Sounding Out: A Sound Studies Blog\*. Nov 28, 2013.](#) (active link)

Screening to Discuss: *Citizen Kane* (1941)

12/1 Thursday: Closing thoughts/Conclusions

**DEADLINE 12/4 Sunday 11:59pm PST — Media Essay Due**

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## English Major Reading/Screening Guide

- 1) Step away from your computer, tablet, and cell phone. Turn off (not silence, but actually shut off the power) of your cell phone, tablet, or computer. Tell your friends you are studying and won't be available. Create an environment where you can focus without interruption. If you're screening a film, find the biggest screen possible with the best sound quality possible (unless an assignment specifically requires mobile media, bigger screens and better speakers/headphones allow you to see/hear more detail).
- 2) Find a quiet place with a notebook and pen where you can read/screen/study. Be ready to use the notebook and pen as ideas occur to you. Reading/Screening a text is an active process and requires participation and engagement. It's not something that can be done passively.
- 3) Engage in SLOW READING/SCREENING: Anticipate how much time it will take to complete your assignment and plan accordingly. If you try to rush through passages or multi-task while screening a film you'll miss important details. Leave enough time each week for completing your homework assignments with care and full attention.
- 4) Create a character list as you move through the text. When you encounter significant details about a character (the guy who murdered his wife, the woman who wears a pink dress and laughs oddly, etc.) record them on your list. If you keep that list handy when you're reading you will not only be able to continue adding to it, but it'll be useful in times when you want to recall or reflect on significant details. If you're reading a print text be sure to write down page numbers on which you find significant character details or features of the writing that interest you. If you're screening a film, note the point in the running time that the event happened.
- 5) Mark passages or identify moments in the text that interest you. Articulate your interests and questions aloud during class discussion so that others can learn from and build on your observations.



## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

### Medieval Contexts Exercise (2 pages)

The hall, the monastery, and the court were the three sites in which Old and Middle English poems were most likely to be performed. Imagine you are in the audience at one of these places. What can you say about yourself? (What is your status? Can you read? What, if anything, is happening during the recitation? What, if anything, are you doing?) How are your expectations and responses conditioned by the setting? (Do your expectations change if you are a man or a woman? If the poem is religious, what is the nature of the community it creates if you hear it in a hall or at court? If the poem is not religious, what is the nature of the community it creates if you hear it in a monastery? If you can read the poem, how does your experience of it change?)

In this exercise, choose one of the poems we've read (you can choose *Sir Gawain* if you know it) and respond to each of these questions. The first set (what can you say about yourself) may require only a sentence or two. When relevant, indicate the source(s) you've consulted for information. The questions about expectations and responses may require a brief paragraph. The most important thing is that you note your ideas (for example, what you think you would expect of a poem, depending on where you hear it, if you're a man and if you're a woman); you should also cite a source you might want to look at to learn more about the matter.

### Medieval Essay (4-5 pages)

In all the poems we've read, one figure stands forth as a hero. In "Caedmon's Hymn," it is God, in the "Dream of the Rood," it is the cross; in "Judith," *Beowulf*, and *Sir Gawain*, it is the character after whom editors have named the poem (None of the works is titled in the manuscript that contains it). Discuss the idea of heroism in at least one of these works. How does the context in which it was composed and performed affect the manner in which its hero is presented and judged both inside and outside the poem itself?

You will be evaluated on the clarity of your thesis statement, your ability to write clear sentences and to organize them into coherent paragraphs, and your success in supporting your ideas with evidence (both from the text and, when relevant, from secondary sources).

### Victorian Contexts Exercise: Victorian Readers (2 pages)

For this assignment you'll complete half of one night's reading assignment of *Oliver Twist* by candlelight--a technology used by Victorian working and middle class audiences. Just as Victorians would have read at night, at the end of their work day, you should complete your candlelight reading after the sun has set. Light as many candles as you need to see without eye strain. If you get a headache or experience vision problems stop reading immediately. Hopefully

you'll be able to read long enough, however, to get a sense of the experience of reading a nineteenth-century novel at night by candlelight. Please be VERY, VERY careful to keep an eye on your candles. Do not leave the room while they are lit, and be sure to keep them in a safe place where they're unlikely to fall or set something on fire. Be particularly mindful of curtains and other hanging cloth items. Fire accidents are not part of this assignment.

Once you complete the reading assignment, write a reflection essay about the experience of reading a Victorian novel by candlelight. Your essay should consider one (or a few) of the following questions:

How did the context of reading by candlelight affect your thoughts about the novel's content, form, or style?

Did features of the narrative become clearer (or less clear) because of the context in which you were reading?

What does reading by candlelight illuminate about our contemporary reading contexts (electric light, prescription eyeglasses, furniture, book size, etc.)?

How did your relationship to the story or the physical book shift when you read the narrative by candlelight? Did you notice descriptions of night or candles?

Other thoughts and revelations about the significance of Victorian experiences of reading by candlelight?

Reflection essays should be 2 pages (min) and should *not* be written by candlelight. Upload to Canvas by the deadline. This is an essay that requires you to consider the experience of reading as an important context in our analysis of a text. Therefore, your essay should not include research or use secondary sources.

### **Victorian Essay** (4-5 pages)

Two of *Oliver Twist's* most controversial characters are Nancy, a prostitute trapped in a criminal underworld, and Oliver, a workhouse orphan with a hidden past. Do these characters enforce the popular Victorian notion that poverty and crime are inseparable, and hence the poor are destined to be criminal and immoral? Or do you believe Nancy and Oliver challenge Victorian assumptions about poverty and the morality of the poor?

Your essay should focus on Nancy **or** Oliver (not both). You should develop a clear argument about whether or not one of these characters reinforces or challenges Victorian views of poverty and morality. Essays should point to specific examples from the text to support your thesis. At the same time, you should consider the character's entire life story in your analysis. In short, don't base your analysis on a single passage, but on what we understand about the character's development throughout the novel.

Essays on *Oliver Twist* will be evaluated on the strength of the thesis statement, your ability to write clear sentences and to organize them into coherent paragraphs, and your success in developing a persuasive argument with supporting evidence (both from the text and, when

relevant, from secondary sources). **Use only sources listed on the syllabus for this assignment.**

**Newer Media Contexts Exercise**

TBA

**New Media Essay**

TBA