ENG 205-22223: ROMANCE AS GENRE AND NARRATIVE MODE

Professor Kirby Brown
Office: 523 PLC
Office Hours: T: 4-5pm, W: 12-2pm, and by email appt.

Class Meetings: TR 10-11:20am
Location: 195 ANS

Graduate Assistant: Megan Butler, mbutler7@uoregon.edu

This course fulfills a UO General Education lower-division elective and the genre requirement for the English major.

This course is a combination of lecture and active discussion/participation.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Though signifying idealized notions of love in popular parlance, romance is about more than the transcendent power and emotional magic of romantic love. As a genre—an expressive form with recognizable and elastic conventions—and as a narrative mode—a specific way of structuring and telling stories with the primary goal of exploring and resolving social contradictions into a coherent moral order—romance explores tensions ranging from class conflict and anxieties over religious, racial, and national identity to the collapse of social institutions, normative authority, and society itself. Understood in these terms, romance permeates everything from “serious” literature and “high” culture to Harlequin romances and pulp western fictions, and finds expression in a variety of forms ranging from epic poems, Renaissance dramas, and gothic novels to speculative fiction, superhero comics, and postapocalyptic TV series and blockbuster films.

CLASS GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
This class will explore the romance through close attention to a handful of representative texts from across history in a variety of forms. While not attempting anything approximating comprehensive historical coverage, the course will situate primary texts in relation to the historical contexts and debates out of which they emerge and to which they’re responding and adapting. We’ll pay particular attention to the development of formal conventions and narrative strategies that mark a romance as such. Along the way, we’ll also develop a shared critical vocabulary and a set of analytic tools to understand and interpret various expressions, complications, and refusals of the genre.

Some conventions and narrative strategies we’ll explore include:
• Generic distinctions/continuities between epic, comedy, tragedy, realism, & romance
• Relationships between allegory, character, idea/ideal
• Narrative mode, structure, and the “political unconscious” of the romance
• Plot Structure(s): isolation of “hero/es” from society via quest/journey/adventure; trial through various tests/challenges in exotic, foreign lands/locales; return/reintegration into society via successful quest, victory, marriage, etc.; resolution of social contradictions, affirmation of emergent social relationships
• Voice: moral development of character, psychological internality, narrative self-consciousness
• Temporality and Setting: episodic/linear, legendary/historical, familiar/exotic
• Motifs: love/marriage, adventure/quest, dreams/fantasy/mystery/imagination
• Themes/Tensions: individual vs. society; words vs. deeds; intent vs. action; passion/desire vs. reason/responsibility; material/empirical vs. metaphysical/affective; intellectual vs. imaginative; familiar vs. foreign/exotic; self vs. other; known vs. unknown

REQUIRED TEXTS
Becker, Nano B. *The 6th World*. Future States, 2012. Short Film [*T6W*]

Other required texts available on Canvas

All required texts are available in the DuckStore as well as numerous online vendors. They are also on reserve in the Knight Library in hard and electronic copies.

NOTE: While I don’t ban the use of digital texts in class, I highly recommend that you get printed versions if possible. Research shows that comprehension and retention increase substantially when students “read actively” (see appendix below) from printed materials.

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE
You are expected to attend class regularly, *bring assigned texts to class*, and make substantive contributions to class discussions. This requires that you keep up with the reading assignments, make observations and take careful notes for each text, and bring thoughtful questions or concerns to class.

Though I don’t enforce an attendance policy—and therefore don’t need for you to inform me of an impending absence, illness, etc.—be aware that missing class regularly will severely impact your grade due to missed in-class group assignments, free writing assignments, daily/weekly quizzes, and class discussions/lectures, all of which you’ll be responsible for on midterm and final exams. If you miss class, it is your responsibility entirely to approach your fellow classmates to get notes for that day and catch up on any material you missed. Do not email me before you’ve made these initial inquiries and have developed specific questions/concerns about the material.
Students who observe religious holidays, who are involved in university sanctioned activities, or who have other commitments or circumstances that conflict with academic requirements should inform me and make compensatory arrangements in person well in advance of the absence.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INVENTORY
The University of Oregon suggests roughly 30 hours of labor throughout the term for each credit hour taken. You should thus plan to spend roughly 120 hours of labor throughout the term for this 4-credit class. Refer to the following as a guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Format or Activity</th>
<th>UG Hours</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture/Class Discussions</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20 classes @ 1.5 hours/ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Viewing Assignments</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120 pages/wk (6 hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Engagement Journal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 entries/wk @ 30 mins/ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes &amp; In-Class Exercises</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 quiz/exercise per wk @ 30 mins/ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Discussion Forums</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 discussion forum/wk @ 45 mins/ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm &amp; Final Exams</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 exams @ 4 hours each (research, writing, revision)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total UG Hours: 120

ASSESSMENT, LABOR, & “GRADING”
Your work across these assignments is assessed based upon an evaluation scheme that rewards the labor, effort, and energy you put toward achieving the course and assignment objectives rather than a specific final product. This method is designed to remove as much subjective judgement on my part as possible. For each assignment or category, you will be given an explicit set of labor expectations which roughly correlate to a letter grade for that assignment. At the end of the course, your final evaluation will be determined as a function of your averages for a specific assignment category weighted according to the scale below.

ASSIGNMENT CATEGORIES: PROCESS, ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS
This course provides multiple avenues through which to assess your command of the materials and the labor you’re investing in the course (see below). Assignments are organized into three learning categories—process, analysis, and synthesis—which are each equally weighted in your final assessment. This means that the labor you do actively reading the texts, reflecting on your readings in your journals, assessing your understanding of materials via quizzes, and participating in in-class activities and Canvas discussion forums will count equally with the midterm and final exams. This also means that you will put yourself between a rock and a hard place if you fail to invest in process and analysis oriented activities.

Process-Oriented Exercises (graded; avg. for 1/3 of final evaluation)
  • Reflection Essay (RFW)
  • In-Class Assignments/Activities (ICA)
  • Active Engagement Journal (AEJ)

Analysis-Oriented Exercises (graded; avg. for 1/3 of final evaluation)
  • Weekly Quizzes (WQ)
  • Discussion Posts/Responses (DP, DR)

Synthesis-Oriented Exercises (graded; avg. for 1/3 of final evaluation)
  • Midterm Exam (ME)
Final Exam (FE)

LABOR and EVALUATION “STEPS”

Under the labor-based model, the baseline grade for the course as well as for individual assignments and assignment groups correlates to a “B” on the letter grade scale. Evaluation of course work will thus look like this:

- If you meet the “minimum expectations” for a given assignment or assignment category, you will automatically be awarded a B, no questions asked.
- Labor that exceeds or fails to meet “minimum expectations” will result in a +1/-1 evaluation equivalent to 1/3 of a grade point.
  - For example, +1 on an assignment will bump you from a B to a B+, +2 to an A-, +3 to an A, and so on. Conversely, a -1 will take you from a B to a B-, a -2 to a C+, a -3 to a C, etc.
- Students who fail to meet all the minimum expectations for a given assignment will receive no credit (i.e. an “F”).
- To receive credit for exceeding expectations, students must first meet all the minimum labor expectations.
- Not all assignments or assignment criteria will have opportunities for exceeding expectations. You either meet them or you don’t. I will clearly mark these criteria for each exercise.

So what does this look like in practice? Consider this evaluation rubric for Discussion Posts (DP) for students A and B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Expectations (B)</th>
<th>Doesn’t Meet (-1)</th>
<th>Meets (+1)</th>
<th>Exceeds (+1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributes a literary-critical analysis of a minimum of 500 words (roughly 2 double-spaced pages)</td>
<td></td>
<td>A/B (+1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains an original title that indicates something about the writer(s), text(s), topic(s), and argument/position (cr/part cr/no cr)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A/B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is organized by a clearly articulated thesis that includes both an observation and an interpretive claim (cr/part cr/no cr)</td>
<td></td>
<td>A/B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents a minimum of 2 pieces of direct textual evidence supporting that claim (cr/part cr/no cr)</td>
<td>A (-1)</td>
<td>B (+1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts to explain how each piece of evidence illustrates the claim(s) you’re making (cr/part cr/no cr)</td>
<td>A (-1)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends with a concluding statement on the significance, or stakes, of the argument—i.e. the “who cares” question (cr/no cr)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The evaluation for “student A” would be a -2, equating to a 2/3 grade point deduction, or a C+. Because the student didn’t meet the minimum expectations for each criterion, they are not eligible for exceeding expectations for assignment length. Because “student B” met each of the minimum labor expectations and exceeded assignment length and minimum evidence, they would earn a +2 evaluation (1 for each criteria), resulting in a 1.0 grade point increase, or an A. Though each
assignment will have slightly different minimum labor criteria, they will all be evaluated according to this universal schematic.

For a complete list assignment descriptions, rubrics, and labor expectations, see Appendix I at the back of the syllabus.

GRADE POINT DISTRIBUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;59.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>59.6-63.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63.6-67.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.6-69.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>69.6-73.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>73.6-77.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.6-79.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>79.6-83.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>83.6-87.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.6-89.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>89.6-93.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93.6-97.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97.6-100+</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.6-69.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESOURCES

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of every resource available to you to improve your research, writing, and critical thinking skills. Two of those are English Writing Associates and Teaching and Learning Center Writing Tutors. Both services are free to all UO students.

**English Writing Associates** are available to help students with any aspect of their writing for this course. As peer tutors, Associates are advanced English majors who have been trained to tutor writing. They are thus well-equipped to work with you one-on-one on your writing assignments, helping you understand the process of writing about literature and media while also showing you how to make your written work for this class more clear and effective. Click [here](#) to make an appointment with a Writing Associate today.

**Teaching and Learning Center Writing Tutors**, located in the “Sky Studio” on the 4th floor of the Knight Library, offer “drop-in” sessions to discuss assignments and receive feedback on class writing before handing it in. They also periodically offer workshops in grammar, argument, and other popular forms/concerns. Stop by Sky Studio and work with a tutor beginning week two each term. Click [here](#) for more information.

CLASS COMMUNICATION

Get in the habit of checking your UO email account and our course Canvas page regularly (i.e. daily) as these platforms will be our primary means of communication outside of class. Please be aware that I will not respond to emails sent after 5pm or on the weekend until after 8am on the next weekday.

CONVENTIONS OF ADDRESS

Speaking to a professor, instructor, administrator, staff member, employer, manager, or colleague is different (at least initially) from speaking/texting with a friend, family member, or other familiar relation. In a professional, intellectual context like the University, it is conventional to refer to faculty, administrators, staff, GTFs, and others by their titles (Doctor, Professor, Instructor, Coach, preferred gender/gender neutral titles, etc.) unless explicitly instructed otherwise. You should also get into the habit of including greetings, salutations, and language appropriate to such contexts in your communications. I will always respectfully refer to you according to your stated preferences and the appropriate context; I expect that you’ll reciprocate in kind to me and to your colleagues.
INCLEMENT WEATHER
In the case of inclement weather, please check the UO homepage, UO Alerts Blog, and local weather stations for information on travel, closures and cancellations. If inclement weather makes traveling to campus difficult, I will notify you by email about whether we are holding class. Whether or not I decide to hold class, you should use your own judgment about the safety of traveling to campus.

INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu (mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu)

TITLE IX POLICY AND REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES
The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based harassment, bullying, and stalking. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are required to report to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that discrimination, harassment, or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Employees are NOT required to reveal the names of survivors, however. We are also required to report instances of child abuse or endangerment.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially—i.e. those not required to report—you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options, as confidential counselors are not required reporters. You can also visit the SAFE website at https://safe.uoregon.edu/services for more information. Each resource is clearly labeled as either “required reporter,” “confidential UO employee,” or “off-campus,” to allow you to select your desired level of confidentiality.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT
The University Student Conduct Code defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available here.
COURSE SCHEDULE: Assignments are due on the date/time indicated on the syllabus. All reading assignments, viewings, and active reading journal entries for a given day should be completed prior to coming to class. Other assignments, set off in bold and red, are due on the days/times indicated.

UNIT 1: “The Structural Core of All Fiction”: An Introduction to the Romance

Week 1
Tues., Jan. 7 Welcome, Class Logistics, & Introduction to the Romance: Genre, Discourse, Political Unconscious (lecture and in-class work)

UNIT 2: The Chivalric Ideal, Epic Quests, and Poetic Form in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Thurs., Jan. 9 Reading the Chivalric Romance & Medieval Poetics (lecture and in-class work)
VIEW: On the Trail of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight with Simon Armitage (BBC Documentary)
READ: SGGK, 9-18, 195-98

Fri., Jan. 10 RFW: What Comes to Mind When You Hear “Romance”? due on Canvas by 5pm

Week 2
Tues., Jan. 14 READ: SGGK, Fitts 1 & 2 (pp. 21-95)
Thurs., Jan 16 READ: SGGK, Fitt 3 (pp. 96-153)
Fri., Jan. 17 DP1 (Group 1) due on Canvas by 5pm

Week 3
Mon, Jan. 20 DR1 (Group 2) due on Canvas by 5pm
Tues., Jan. 21 READ: SGGK, Fitt 4 (154-89)
*Bring Computers, iPads, or Phones to view/discuss comics
Fri, Jan. 24 DP1 (Group 2) due on Canvas by 5pm

UNIT 3: The Drama of Empire and Its Romantic Others in William Shakespeare's The Tempest

Week 4
Mon, Jan. 27 DR1 (Group 2) due on Canvas by 5pm
ENG 205: Genre: Romance

Tues., Jan. 28  READ: ST, “Introduction” (pp. lxiii-lxvii), “Sources” (pp. 91-105), and Act 1 (pp. 3-27)

Thurs., Jan. 30  READ: ST, Acts 2 & 3 (pp. 27-62)

Fri., Jan. 31  DP2 (Group 1) due on Canvas by 5pm

Week 5
Mon, Feb. 3  DR2 (Group 2) due on Canvas by 5pm

Tues, Feb. 4  READ: ST, Act 4 (pp. 63-87) and “The Miranda Trap: Racism and Sexism in SS’s The Tempest” (pp. 146-55)

Thurs., Feb. 6  READ: ST “The Tempest on Stage and Screen” (pp. 180-90) and CT (all)

Week 6
Mon, Feb. 10  ME (take home) due on Canvas by 5pm

Tues., Feb. 11  CONT. DISCUSSION: CT & anti-/post-colonial critique
VIEW & DISCUSS: Scenes from Julie Taymor’s The Tempest (in class)
READ: Excerpts from English romanticism (“Introduction” and “Gothic”) (Canvas)
AEJ due in class

UNIT 4: “MY HIDEOUS PROGENY:” RATIONALITY, ROMANTICISM, AND THE POLITICS OF THE GOTHIC

Fri, Feb. 14  DP2 (Group 2) due on Canvas by 5pm

Week 7
Mon, Feb. 17  DR2 (Group 1) due on Canvas by 5pm

Tues, Feb. 18  READ: MSF, 47-146

Thurs, Feb. 20  READ: MSF, 146-187

Fri, Feb. 21  DP3 (Group 1) due on Canvas by 5pm

Week 8
Mon, Feb. 24  DR3 (Group 2) due on Canvas by 5pm

Tues., Feb. 25  READ: MSF, 201-251

Thurs, Feb. 27  DISCUSSION CONT: MSF and legal/scientific ethics
Fri, Feb. 28  DP3 (Group 2) due on Canvas by 5pm

UNIT 5: ROMANTIC NATIONALISM, MANIFEST DESTINY, INDIGENOUS FUTURES IN SPECULATIVE SHORT FICTION & FILM

Week 9
Mon, Mar. 2  DR3 (Group 1) due on Canvas by 5pm

Tues, Mar. 3  READ: Jack London “The God of His Fathers,” Ernest Haycox, “A Question of Blood” (Canvas)


Week 10
Tues, Mar. 10  READ: Cutcha Risling-Baldy (Hupa, Yurok, Karuk), “Why I Teach the Walking Dead in my Native Studies Classes” and Sherman Alexie (Coer d’Alene), “The Sin Eaters” (Canvas)

AEJ DUE IN CLASS

Thurs, Mar 12  READ: Grace Dillon (Anishinaabe), “Imagining Indigenous Futurisms” (Canvas)

Week 11
Mon, Mar. 16  TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE ON CANVAS BY 5PM
Appendix I: Assignment Descriptions and Labor Criteria/Expectations

This course offers a variety of mechanisms by which your labor and investment will be assessed. Detailed instructions for individual assignments can be found via the Assignments and Modules pages on Canvas.

**PROCESS ORIENTED EXERCISES (1/3 of your final assessment)**

**Reflection Free Write (RFW):** This free writing assignment asks you to reflect on what you think you know about the “romance” (1-2 paragraphs), consider where that knowledge comes from (2 paragraphs), and outline 2-3 personal goals you’d like to set for the class (1 paragraph). You will post these on the “Reflection Free Write (RFW)” Discussion Forum located in the Modules tab on Canvas by the date indicated on the syllabus.

Labor Expectations: Participation exercise. Full credit (A) awarded for those who meet all of the minimum criteria of the assignment. No credit awarded for failing to meet any of the minimum criteria.

**In-Class Assignments/Activities (ICA):** We will conduct weekly in-class assignments/activities individually and in groups which include individual free writes, think-pair-share exercises, small group discussions, submission of end-of-class question cards, and other activities. These activities will be administered in class and can only be made up for official university, religious, or personal business worked out with the instructor well in advance.

Minimum Labor Expectations (B): Participates in and submits at least 85% of assigned in-class assignments/activities (ICAs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-5 (F)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turns in &gt;60% ICA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Active Engagement Journal (AEJ):** You are required to keep an active reading journal (“Decomposition Books” @ DuckStore) for this course in which to take notes, ask questions, make observations, and sketch out preliminary and ongoing thoughts about the readings for the week. How you choose to engage the texts or use the journal is entirely up to you. Examples of substantive journal entries are available via the assignment instructions on Canvas. I strongly suggest that you use the “Strategies for Close Reading” handout in Appendix II at the back of the syllabus as a guide for your journaling. These journals will be evaluated twice per term per the criteria below. Failure to meet either of the listed criteria will default to a lower evaluation.

Minimum Labor Expectations (B): Contributes a minimum of 2-3 full, single-spaced pages of freewriting, outlining, bullet-pointing, drawing, or other active reading practices (see Appendix II below) for greater than or equal to 80% (16/20) of reading/viewing assignments throughout the term.
Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-5 (F)</th>
<th>-4 (D)</th>
<th>-3 (C-)</th>
<th>-2 (C+)</th>
<th>-1 (B-)</th>
<th>Min. Exp. (B)</th>
<th>+1 (B+)</th>
<th>+2 (A-)</th>
<th>+3 (A)</th>
<th>+4 (A+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;= 60% pages, &gt;= 60%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, &gt;= 65%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, &gt;= 70%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, &gt;= 75%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, &gt;= 80%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, &gt;= 85%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, &gt;= 90%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, &gt;= 95%</td>
<td>2-3 pages, 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ANALYSIS ORIENTED EXERCISES (1/3 of final assessment)**

**Weekly Quizzes (WQ):** There will be roughly 8-10 unannounced short quizzes throughout the term administered at the beginning of class. Successful performance on these quizzes will require that you give careful attention to the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions/activities.

Minimum Labor/Performance Expectations: Quizzes will be evaluated according to traditional metrics (i.e., how many you get correct) and will be averaged at the end of the term.

**Discussion Posts (DP) and Responses (DR):** Each student is required to contribute 3 sets of posts/responses to the course Discussion Forum on Canvas throughout the term by the dates indicated on the syllabus. These assignments ask you to engage critically with a primary text, essay, concept, idea, or problem and to respond thoughtfully to the thoughts, arguments, and analyses of your peers. You can choose to respond to one of the discussion questions from the short context lectures, quizzes, or class discussions, or write about something else entirely. I will make group assignments that will indicate when you’re responsible for substantive posts (DP1, Group 1) or for responses (DR1, Group 2) on the course schedule by the middle of week 2. Detailed instructions, sample discussion threads, and critical analysis activities are available on Canvas.

**Rubric for Discussants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Expectations (B)</th>
<th>Meet (-1)</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds (+1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributes an interpretive analysis of a minimum of 500 words (roughly 2 double-spaced pages) in 12-point font</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contains an original title that indicates something about the writer(s), text(s), topic(s), and argument/position (cr/no cr)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is organized by a clearly articulated thesis that includes both an observation about WHAT is going on the text (i.e. the “topic” of the essay) and an interpretive claim about HOW the text goes about that work (i.e. the “argument” of the essay) (cr/no cr)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presents a minimum of 2 pieces of direct textual evidence (i.e. direct quotations/passages w/appropriate citation) supporting that claim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attempts to explain how each piece of evidence illustrates the claim(s) you’re making (cr/no cr)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ends with a concluding statement on the significance, or stakes, of the argument—i.e. the “who cares” question (cr/no cr)

Contains few typographical or other errors.

Rubric for Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Expectations (B)</th>
<th>Meet (-1)</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds (+1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributes two, 150-word substantive responses to discussion posts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies and discusses at least 1 thing that is interesting, compelling, or strong about the argument</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies and discusses at least 1 thing that might help to strengthen, nuance, or complicate the argument</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focuses exclusively on substantive issues (thesis, structure, evidence, explanation, conclusion), leaving line-level and stylistic concerns to the instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contains few typographical or other errors</td>
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</tbody>
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SYNTHESIS ORIENTED EXERCISES (1/3 of final assessment)

Midterm Exam (ME) and Final Exam (FE): Both exams will be essay in format, comprehensive in scope, and will ask you to synthesize information from across the term. They will incorporate both primary and secondary materials, information from context lectures, and relevant topics gleaned from class discussions and the discussion forum.

Rubric

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<tr>
<th>Minimum Expectations (B)</th>
<th>Meet (-1)</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds (+1)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates familiarity with most of the material covered in the class, including lectures, in-class discussions, and readings</td>
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<td>Provides largely complete, if not always comprehensive, responses to the exam prompts</td>
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<td>Advances an interpretive argument driven by an explicitly articulated thesis statement that includes both an observation about WHAT is going on the text (i.e. the “topic” of the essay) and an interpretive claim about HOW the text goes about that work (i.e. the “argument” of the essay)</td>
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<td>Evidences an identifiable line of reasoning anchored to at least 2 minor/supporting claims (more minor claims produce stronger, more nuanced arguments)</td>
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<td>Presents a minimum of 2 pieces of textual evidence—either direct quotations or gestures to specific moments in a text—to support each minor claim</td>
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<td>Attempts to explain how each piece of evidence illustrates the minor claim(s) you’re making</td>
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Gestures to the larger significance, or stakes, of the argument—i.e. the “who cares” question—in a final, concluding statement

Contains few typographical or other errors
Appendix II: Thoughts and Strategies for Performing Literary Analyses and Close Readings

To do a close reading of literature, you choose a specific passage and analyze it in fine detail, as if with a magnifying glass. You then comment on points of style and on your reactions as a reader, always using direct evidence from the text to support your claims. Close reading is important because it is the building block for larger analysis. Your thoughts evolve not from someone else’s truth about the reading, but from your own observations. The more closely and actively you can observe, the more original and exact your ideas will be. The following are some thoughts, strategies and potential questions you might consider as you think about how to respond closely, actively, and critically to a text.

Be Patient!

Close, critical, active reading—what David Mikics calls “Slow Reading”—demands patience and time, two things which many of us find ourselves possessing less and less of. It is different from other kinds of reading (and writing!) that we typically do today, much of which is designed to provide quick, easily-consumable snibbets of information seemingly about everything but that often leave us with only a superficial understanding of anything that we’ve read. Mikics writes:

Patience means a lot of things. We must be patient not to be overwhelmed by a book’s difficulties. We must be patient to let ourselves be perplexed; to figure out, by trial and error, how to ask the right questions of a book. We must be patient to put in the time and effort needed to read [and write!] well. [We must possess] a happy, and somewhat obsessive, desire for details … [anchoring] our sense of a book’s characters and its argument in small, significant moments … We must not rush to meaning, or demand that an author deliver the point in an easy, palatable way … we have to remember that struggling with a book's meanings is the whole point of reading, if reading is going to be worthwhile. (54-55, emphasis added)

For this class, I’m going to ask you to commit to slowing down, allowing yourself as much time and attention as your schedules will allow to actively immerse yourself in the texts we’ll read this term. On some days you’ll have to make strategic decisions about where to invest your time, and you won’t be able to slowly, closely, and actively engage each text. That’s okay! Just committing to making this a habitual practice will yield great rewards, a ton of pleasure, and a genuine sense of knowledge about and familiarity with the materials we cover.

Read Actively and Write It Down!

Whether reading for pleasure or in preparation for an assignment, prepare yourself to read actively. Don't read a text simply to get its information or skim it to get a sense of the main ideas and points (at least don’t confine your reading to these practices!). This method of reading is passive: you "receive" the text as you read, and you hold off making any intellectual response to it until after you've finished reading. This way of reading doesn't get you very far and doesn’t allow you to fully explore the pleasures gained by becoming “intimate” with a text.

Break the Linear Tradition

Maybe you believe that the most efficient way to write a paper is to read first, think later, and write last of all. To become an active reader, you should throw that idea in the garbage and strive to think and write—or think by writing—as you read. When you read, stop to ask questions, challenge the writer, search your soul for what you really believe about the topic at hand, etc. This is where the
mutually reinforcing practices of underlining, highlighting, annotating, and keeping a daily reading journal all come in handy. And once you’ve begun writing, go back to the text not simply to find a piece of evidence that will support your claims, but also to continually reconsider the text and your own positions about it!

**Use the Margins**

Maybe the best practical advice I can give you about reading more actively is to make use of the margins. An unmarked book is an unread book!!! Marking a text as you read it ensures that you are reading actively. Even the simple act of underlining a passage requires you to ask yourself what is most important in a text. The act of weighing importance is one way of breaking the habit of passive reading. But you can do much more in the margins than simply make note of important passages. You can ask questions in the margins. You can draw arrows, establishing obscure connections in the text. You can note patterns of imagery or language as you see them. You can locate contradictions. You can get feisty, even, and call the writer out for a debate. Remember, neither I nor any of the writers that we’ll read have the last word on any subject. **NOTE: Please DO NOT annotate library materials.**

**Enter the Conversation**

When writers compose a book, short story, poem, play, etc., they are, in a sense, inviting you into an ongoing conversation. They are taking a position in some debate and asking you to take yours. When you read actively, intellectually engage the text, and write critically about it, you are entering this conversation. However, in order to enter the conversation fully as a writer/speaker, you must first enter the conversation fully as a reader/listener. Mikics says, “The give-and-take between author and reader takes place on a two-way street. In this imaginary but essential conversation, the reader has a responsibility to keep the author interested. You will refine your perceptions, and become a better interpreter, the more time you spend trying to do justice to a [text], rather than too quickly making it into something of your own. The [text] has something to say, and you are obliged to listen carefully before talking back” (157). Pay attention to the text, underline key passages, mark up the margins with your own thoughts, and collect, organize, and expand on those ideas in longer journal entries. This will better enable you to contribute to the conversation in a way that is relevant, thoughtful, and interesting.

**Ask the Right Questions**

All critical inquiry, regardless of discipline or form, is driven by the questions we ask about our objects of study. Indeed, the questions we ask determine the conditions of possibility for how we’ll read and understand a text. Thus, to “get from perplexity to engagement” we need to identify useful questions. For literary and cultural analyses, “Useful questions connect elements of a book [or other media] together: What does the beginning have to do with the ending? How do the characters balance or argue against one another? What does a particularly striking passage sum up about the book as a whole … How does the title comment on the work it introduces” (62)? A good indication that you’re asking the right questions is if they consistently lead you back to the text rather than away from it.

**Identify the Voice**

Who is speaking? Is the narrator a participant in the action? If so, how invested are they in the narrative? If not, do they possess comprehensive knowledge of events, characters, time and place, or is their story limited to (or focalized through) one or two perspectives? Does the narrator simply describe events, or do they comment upon and evaluate characters and events (i.e. editorialize)?
Does one voice or perspective dominate the narrative, or are there competing/complementary voices vying for narrative authority and claims to “truth?” In what ways do the answers to these questions inform our reading and understanding of the text’s main ideas and arguments—i.e., it’s “basic thought(s)”

**Find the Parts**
This rule draws your attention to the structure of a text and how mapping that structure can lend formal insight into the text’s “basic thought.” Here you’re looking particularly for “the **significant changes in a work**: transformations of topic, time, place, atmosphere,” narrative voice, character, etc. “that announce such a change or that herald the beginning of a new part of the [text]” (145).

**Pay attention to beginnings and endings**
According to Mikics, structure “tells you something about the way [a text] thinks; **openings and conclusions are the irreplaceable backbone of structure**” (101). How does the story/poem/play open? What does this opening suggest about the action, characters, and events to come? How does the text end? What does the ending suggest about the text’s main argument or idea? Does the ending reinforce, revise or refute the beginning? If so, how, why and to what effect?

**Look Out for Signposts**
“A book’s signposts tell you what to pay attention to, where to direct yourself in your journey through its pages. Signposts can take the form of key words, key images, key sentences or passages,” echoes and reflections, as well as shifts in location and time. “Think of reading,” Mikics suggests, “as a kind of travel; signposts help you map out your itinerary” (101). Be on the lookout, however. Signposts won’t always provide you the most direct route; sometimes they’ll force you to double-back, take a circuitous route, or forge a new path entirely. If you’ve ever chosen the longer route in a Google itinerary, such detours, while at times tedious and time-consuming, often provide the most beauty and pleasure.

**Find the Author’s Basic Thought**
The question, “What is this book (or poem, play, movie, television series, song, etc.) **about**,” can be answered in any number of ways. You might describe basic events and characters (plot summary), elements of style, or some of the text’s main conflicts, positions, or arguments. None of these responses, however, adequately capture “the deepest and most rewarding answer to the question,” though they are crucial avenues through which to arrive there (127). When trying to find the “basic thought(s)” of a text, think in terms of its “most essential truth(s)” **as you understand it** and the means (i.e. narrative/formal/aesthetic strategies) through which it advances this position. We won’t always agree, but that’s okay. In fact, **reasoned argument and informed disagreement** are the backbones of literary and cultural analysis and of the construction of meaning itself.

**Be Suspicious**
Cultivating a healthy skepticism (which is not the same thing as despondent cynicism!) is a good thing, especially when it comes to literary and cultural analysis. Note where and how a text moves your sympathies toward a particular character or situation, but don’t go “all in” right away. As with signposts and key terms, texts will often lead you in one direction only to pull the rug out from under you in subsequent pages, challenging you to question your own motivations, investments, values and beliefs as its moral center gets progressively more messy, ambiguous, absurd, or confounding. Heroes and villains are often more complicated than they would at first appear!
Explore Different Paths
“Revision, the writer’s most basic tool, is also important for the reader. It’s always a useful exercise to imagine how the author might have begun or ended a work differently or changed a crucial moment in its plot. Develop a sense of the decisions a writer makes by practicing thought experiments:” What would the work you’re reading be like without a key character? What difference would it make if lacked this or that scene, this or that action? What if it ended earlier or later than it does? What if it was told through a different narrative voice, or presented non-linearly rather than linearly (or vice versa)? In what ways would any or all the above “revisions” impact “the basic thought” of the text? As Mikics points out, by considering such questions “you will gain a new knowledge of [and appreciation for!] how writers work, the choices they make” (168).
Appendix III: Close Reading/Critical Analysis Exercise

This exercise will be useful as you think about developing more focused discussion post analyses as well as longer, comparative midterm and final exam responses. For discussion posts, try and keep your focus sharp and sufficiently narrow (you can’t say everything about all that we’ve read in even 500-750 perfectly written words!). I suggest working your way slowly and methodically through the following exercise, providing as complete and comprehensive responses as possible. After finishing this exercise, you should have a relatively solid interpretive thesis, specific illustrations/evidence that support that thesis, and the basic skeleton for the central argument(s) of your essay.

NOTE: Though the specific illustrations in the exercise aren’t derived from the content of this course, they provide models for how you might apply the questions/exercise to your own work.

==========

1. Identify the general topic that you’re interested in exploring.
   
   Ex: The relationship between stereotype, prejudice, and cultural conflict

2. Select which text(s) you think best suit this exploration. Remember, discussion posts are intended to be short, focused assignments, so keep your selection to two texts, maximum; one is better.
   
   Ex: Johnson’s “A Strong Race Opinion” (and, perhaps, “A Red Girl’s Reasoning”)

3. In one or two sentences, explain your initial thoughts about how these texts generally address and/or treat your topic.
   
   Ex: Johnson’s essay critiques dominant representations of Indian women, while her short story presents a strong counter to those images.

4. Now, formulate a research question that specifically aligns your topic with the text(s) you’ve chosen to explore and the initial observations you’ve made above. Try and avoid generalities and be as specific as possible.
   
   Ex (vague and general): What is the relationship between stereotype, prejudice and cultural conflict in Johnson’s texts?

   Ex (more specific): In what ways does Johnson critique stereotypical representations of Native women in popular culture? Does her own short story offer alternatives?

   Ex (most specific): How and in what ways do Johnson’s short story about interracial marriage and cultural prejudice and her critique of stereotypical representations of Native women in the dominant culture mutually inform one another? What are the specific targets of her critique in “A Strong Race Opinion” and in what specific ways does she address these issues in her own short story, “A Red Girl’s Reasoning?”

5. As a provisional answer to your research question, you’re ready to move from general observation (Question #3) to a specific, interpretive claim about the text(s). An interpretive claim is
composed of two parts: a) an observation about WHAT is occurring in the text (question #3), and 2) an arguable claim about HOW (analysis) it occurs in the text and a consideration of WHY (stakes) it's significant.

Ex: In her essay, “A Strong Race Opinion,” Mohawk writer, poet, and intellectual E. Pauline Johnson criticizes dominant representations of Native women in popular culture

[Observation—the WHAT] as stereotypically shallow, ambiguous and submissive, utterly lacking in cultural and psychological complexity or individual agency of any kind. [Arguable claim—the HOW] In doing so, Johnson makes visible the constructedness and reductive nature of racial representations and refuses notions of the docile, quiet, romanticized and subservient “Indian maid.” [Stakes—WHO CARES]

6. Now, identify 2 or 3 specific examples from the text(s) that best illustrate or support your larger interpretive claim. For each, compose a single topic sentence that makes a minor claim about how you see that example/illustration functioning in the text. Then, provide a brief explanation (3-5 sentences) that clearly and fully explains how the evidence supports your argument as you claim they do. These 2-3 passages will function as analytic support for your larger interpretive claim.

a. Example/Illustration/Evidence #1
   1. Topic Sentence (minor, supporting claim)
   2. Explanation and critical commentary
b. Example/Illustration/Evidence #2
   1. Topic Sentence (minor, supporting claim)
   2. Explanation and critical commentary
c. Example/Illustration/Evidence #3
   1. Topic Sentence (minor, supporting claim)
   2. Explanation and critical commentary

7. Now compose a paragraph where you consider the broader implications—or stakes—of what you’ve examined. In other words, how does your specific reading of the text speak to other texts we’ve read or inform some of the larger issues we’ve covered in class thus far. Here you want to follow the implications of your argument to their logical conclusions and make some larger claims about both the text and your reading of it. Put differently, this is the final thought your readers will take away from your argument, so leave them with something that really drives your point home and leaves them with something to think about!