INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE
SPRING 2020

Professor Kirby Brown
Office: Canvas Chat/Conf, Phone
Office Hours: T: 10 am-noon (Canvas Chat/Conf, Phone)
R: 4:00-5:30 pm (Canvas Chat/Conf, Phone)
and by email appointment
Email: kbrown@uoregon.edu

Class Meetings
Time: Asynchronous
Place: Canvas
Phone: 541-346-5819

DEGREE SATISFYING CRITERIA
This course satisfies UO Arts & Letters and US-DIA requirements, as well as lower-division elective credits for the English Major. It also satisfies Group III and lower-division requirements for the Native American Studies minor and lower-division elective requirements for the Ethnic Studies major/minor.

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
The University of Oregon is located on Kalapuya ilihí, the traditional Indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people. Following treaties between 1851 and 1855, Kalapuya people were dispossessed of their Indigenous homeland by the United States government and forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. Today, Kalapuya descendants are primarily citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and they continue to make important contributions to their communities, to the UO, to Oregon, and to the world.

COURSE FORMAT
Due to the unique circumstances of this term, this course will be conducted asynchronously and entirely online via Canvas. What this means:

- We won’t meet in “live” sessions via Zoom, Big Blue Button, or other interfaces during our regularly scheduled class times.
- Rather, you’ll be responsible for reviewing materials (lectures, slides, online content, assigned readings) and completing assignments (reading journals, quizzes, discussion posts) at your own pace from week to week.
  - A note on deadlines: The Reflection Freewrite, Quizzes, Active Reading Journals, and any “in-class” assignments are due on Sunday by midnight of the week they are assigned (e.g., a quiz for session 1 of week 1 can be taken anytime during the week but must be completed by the following Sunday at midnight). Discussion Posts/Responses are due on the dates/times indicated on the course schedule.
- Additionally, I’ll ask that you meet with me at least four times throughout the term in individual or group “live” sessions via the Big Blue Button or Chat functions on Canvas or via phone call for those who need it. These will be scheduled later in the term.
- Finally, the syllabus, course schedule, and other logistics are subject to change throughout the term as we navigate these challenges (but also opportunities?) together. I’ll be as flexible and generous with you as possible and hope that you’ll do the same for me.
COURSE DESCRIPTION
In 1968, Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for American literature. Momaday’s award signaled for many the “arrival” of Native authors to the American literary scene and ushered in an unprecedented era of Native literary production widely known as the Native American Renaissance. While the explosion of Native writing and the critical tradition that emerged from it carved out much needed cultural and institutional spaces for Native self-representation and Native American Studies, it had the unintended effect of privileging contemporary Native novels over writing from other periods and across a variety of genres and forms. This introductory survey of Native American literature widens the net to include an array of contemporary Native self-representation across genres, forms, media, regions, and tribal nations.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Available at the Duck Store and at various online merchants)

- Thomas King (Cherokee descent), *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (TTAS; print only)
- Marie Clements (Metis), *The Edward Curtis Project: A Modern Picture Story* (ECP; print only)
- Tommy Pico (Kumeyaay Nation), *Nature Poem* (NP; print and ebook)
- Cherie Dimaline (Georgian Bay Metis Nation), *The Marrow Thieves* (TMT; print and ebook)
- Theodore C. Van Alst (Lakota), *Sacred Smokes* (SS; print and ebook)
- Cole Pauls (Tahlton First Nation), *Dakwákáda Warriors* (DW; print only)

*Additional readings, videos, music, and other media available on Canvas

**While I don’t ban the use of digital texts in class—and am cognizant of how they might be necessary for this term—I recommend that you get printed versions of the texts if possible or print out copies of any texts made available via Canvas. Research shows (see here and here) that focus, retention, comprehension, and synthesis of information increase substantially when people “read actively” (see appendix II below) from printed materials.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
- Situate conventional literary texts (poetry, novels, dramas, short stories) alongside other cultural forms in which Native peoples exercise self-representation.
- Locate Native American writers and texts within their appropriate historical, cultural, legal, political, and literary contexts.
• Gain a more complex understanding of and appreciation for the diversity and sophistication of contemporary Native American literary, intellectual, and cultural productions.

• Develop a historically grounded grasp of some of the major issues, questions, and concerns across Indian Country today, specifically the relationship between cultural production, federal policy, tribal nationhood, and sovereignty/self-determination movements.

• Cultivate capacities to engage in thoughtful and rigorous debate around questions of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, citizenship, and belonging and their intersections with concepts of Indigeneity, sovereignty, self-determination, and tribal nationhood as represented in Native American literatures.

• Build skills in evidence-based critical reasoning/argumentation and literary/cultural analysis grounded in a clearly articulated arguable claim supported by direct textual evidence and rigorous critical explanation.

ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, AND STUDENT SUCCESS
In a typical term, I expect that all students will attend class regularly, remain current with reading assignments, bring assigned texts and writing materials to class, and make substantive contributions to in-class activities and discussions. Since this course will be delivered remotely this term, we’ll need to adopt a slightly different, more flexible, more creative approach which looks something like this:

• Consistent interaction with course materials on Canvas (at least once daily)
• Submission of “in-class/in-lecture” exercises via Canvas (where applicable)
• Vigorous and energetic engagement on quizzes and in discussion forums. (I will provide detailed individual and group feedback in both venues throughout the term.)
• Participation in individual/group quarterly “check-ins” with the instructor either during open “office hours” or in individually scheduled appointments. (These will take place via the Big Blue Button or Chat functions on Canvas, or via phone call if those platforms aren't accessible or available).

Under these circumstances, the most important things you can do to ensure success this term:

• **Read** the syllabus carefully, **review** it regularly, and **coordinate** your assignments and responsibilities for the term accordingly.

• Make sure that you have access to all required course texts **as soon as possible**. **Reach out to me immediately if you’re having difficulty securing any of the texts**.

• Read the assigned texts **actively and closely**. This means taking detailed notes during your reading; highlighting, underlining, and annotating important passages in the text; and working through some of the questions posed in the “Thoughts and Strategies for Close Readings” from Appendix II.

• **Review the short context lectures and/or other materials provide on Canvas**, making sure to take detailed notes and to work through the discussion questions, free write prompts, and close reading exercises (if applicable) throughout.

• **Remain as current as possible** with all readings and assignments. This will require all of us to be more disciplined and intentional with our time than usual, while also being flexible of the unique circumstances under which we’re all operating at the moment.

• **Reach out and communicate** any questions or concerns with me. **I recommend checking your email and our course Canvas page at least once a day for the duration of the term.**

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>Lectures/Videos/Canvas</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20 classes @ 1.5 hr/ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 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>Weekly Online Quizzes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 quiz/wk @ 30 mins/ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Online Discussion Forums</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 discussion forums @ 1 hr/ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm &amp; Final Essay Exams</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2 exams @ 4.5 hrs/ea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total UG Hours: 120

ASSIGNMENTS, ASSESSMENT, LABOR, AND “GRADING”
This course employs an evaluation scheme that rewards the labor, effort, and energy you put toward achieving the course objectives rather than a specific final product. 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.

Assignments are organized into three learning categories—process, analysis, and synthesis—which are each equally weighted in your final assessment:

- **Process-Oriented Exercises** (participation and graded; 1/3 of final grade)
  - Reflection Essay (RE)
  - Active Engagement Journal (AEJ)

- **Analysis-Oriented Exercises** (graded; 1/3 of final grade)
  - Canvas Quizzes (CQ)

- **Synthesis-Oriented Exercises** (graded; 1/3 of final grade)
  - Substantive Discussion Posts/Responses (DP, DR)

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. This means that if you meet the minimum expectations for a given assignment or assignment category, you will automatically be awarded a B, no questions asked. You can gain or lose ground in the following ways:

- 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.
- Those who fail to meet all the minimum expectations for a given assignment will receive no credit.
- 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>Meets (-1)</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds (+1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributes a literary-critical analysis of a <strong>minimum of 500 words</strong> (roughly 2 double-spaced pages)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A/B (+1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contains an <strong>original title</strong> that indicates something about the topic and argument (cr/no cr)</td>
<td>A/B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is organized by a <strong>clearly articulated thesis</strong> that includes <strong>both</strong> an observation and an interpretive claim (cr/no cr)</td>
<td>A/B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presents a <strong>minimum of 2 pieces of direct textual evidence</strong> supporting that claim</td>
<td>A (-1)</td>
<td>B (+1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts to <strong>explain how</strong> each piece of evidence illustrates the claim(s) you’re making</td>
<td>A (-1)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends with a <strong>concluding statement</strong> on the significance, or stakes, of the argument—i.e. the “who cares” question (cr/no cr)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, Student A exceeded 1 assessment criteria (+1) while failing to meet minimum expectations for 2 others (-2). The evaluation for “student A” would thus be a -1 equating to a 1/3 grade point deduction, or a B-. 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 2/3 grade point increase, or an A-. Though each assignment will have slightly different minimum labor criteria, they will all be evaluated according to this schematic.

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

**GRADE POINT DISTRIBUTION**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Upper Boundary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>59.6-63.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63.6-66</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66.1-69.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>69.6-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73.1-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76.1-79.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>79.6-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.1-86</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86.1-89.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>89.6-93</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93.1-97.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97.6-100+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**COURSE CONTENT AND INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSION**

Due to the ongoing histories/experiences of settler-colonial violence, institutional and individual racism, dispossession, and genocide that frame both the colonization of the Americas and Indigenous responses to it, this course will openly engage these and related issues without censorship. If content makes engagement and participation difficult, please reach out to me to make alternative arrangements.

**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 until in-person classes resume. **Please be aware that I don’t respond to emails sent after 5pm on weekdays; I similarly don’t respond emails sent over the weekend until after 8am on the following business day.**

**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, GTIs, 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.

INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION
The University of Oregon is committed to fostering 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 uoaecc@uoregon.edu to set up any necessary accommodations for the course.

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 listed below are due on the date/time indicated on the syllabus. Other assignments, in red, are due on the days/times indicated.

Week 1 Unit 1: Introductions, Logistics, & the Stories We Tell
Session 1 READ: Syllabus and Course Schedule, including Appendix I and II
                    REVIEW: Assignment Instructions, “Biographical Introduction and Reflection Freewrite” (Canvas)
                    VIEW: Introductory Lecture/Slideshow
Session 2
READ: King, *TTAS*, pp. 1-29
LISTEN (optional): [King, *TTAS*, Ch. 1 (YouTube, audio)]
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow, “The Truth About Stories and the Power of the Stories We Tell”

CQ #1

Week 2
Session 1
READ: King, *TTAS*, pp. 31-60
LISTEN (optional): [King, *TTAS*, Ch. 2 (YouTube, audio)]
VISIT: [Artist's Bio, Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia](#)
READ: Clements, *ECP*, “Artist Statement” through p. 15
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

CQ #2

Session 2
READ: Clements, *ECP*, pp. 15-45
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

DP1 (Group 1) (Saturday, April 11, midnight)

Week 3
Session 1
READ: Clements, *ECP*, pp. 45-67
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

CQ #3

Session 2
Unit 3: Queer/Two Spirit Indigeneity and the Refusal of Expectation
READ: King, *TTAS*, pp. 61-89
LISTEN (optional): [King, *TTAS*, Ch. 3 (YouTube, audio)]
VIEW: Pico, “How Not to be One with Nature” (YouTube, audio interview)
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

DP1 (Group 2) (Saturday, April 18, midnight)

CQ #4

Week 4
Session 1
READ: Pico, *NP*, pp. 1-44
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

CQ #5

Session 2
READ: Pico, *NP*, pp. 45-75
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

CQ #6
Week 5

Unit 4: Federal Policy and the Urban Indian Experience in Contemporary Native American Short Fiction

Session 1  
READ: King, *ITAS*, pp. 121-152  
LISTEN (optional): King, *ITAS*, Ch. 5 (YouTube, audio)  
VIEW: Indigenous Metropolis: Chicago’s Urban Indians (YouTube)  
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow  
CQ #7

Session 2  
LISTEN: Theo Van Alst Interview (YouTube, audio)  
READ: Van Alst, *SS*, pp. 1-46  
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow  
AEJ #1

DP2 (Group 1) (Saturday, May 2, midnight)

Week 6

DR2 (Group 2) (Monday, May 4, midnight)

Session 1  
READ: Van Alst, *SS*, pp. 47-88  
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow  
CQ #8

Session 2  
READ: Van Alst, *SS*, pp. 89-154  
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow  

DP2 (Group 2) (Saturday, May 9, midnight)

Week 7

DR2 (Group 1) (Monday, May 11, midnight)

Session 1  
Unit 5: The Politics of Contemporary Indigenous Comics of the Pacific Northwest  
READ: “How to Read a Comic Book” and “How to Read a Graphic Novel or Comic Strip”  
READ: “Interview: Indigenous Comics Push Back Against Hackneyed Stereotypes”  
CQ #9

Session 2  
READ: Pauls, *DW*, pp. 1-56 (*DW* 1 & 2)  
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow  
CQ #10

Week 8

Session 1  
VIEW: “Keeping Our Cultures Alive: Language Revival and Indigenous Comics” (YouTube)  
READ: Pauls, *DW*, pp. 57-end (*DW* 3- Language Key)  
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow  
CQ #11
Session 2

**Unit 6: Dystopic Presents and Resurgent Futures in Indigenous Speculative Fiction**

READ: King, *TTAS* pp. 91-120
LISTEN (optional): King, *TTAS*, Ch. 4 (YouTube, audio)
READ: Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa/Yurok/Karuk), “Why I Teach the Walking Dead in My Native Studies Classes”
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

**DP3 (Group 1) (Saturday, May 23, midnight)**

**Week 9**

**DR3 (Group 2) (Monday, May 25, midnight)**

**Nov. 26**
VIEW: “Reclaiming Lost Dreams in Cherie Dimaline’s *The Marrow Thieves*” (YouTube)
READ: Dimaline, *TMT*, pp. 1-79
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow
CQ #12

**Nov. 28**
READ: Dimaline, *TMT*, pp. 80-129
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow

**DP 3 (Group 2) (Saturday, May 30, midnight)**

**Week 10**

**DR 3 (Group 1) (Monday, June 1, midnight)**

**Dec. 3**
READ: Dimaline, *TMT*, pp. 130-183
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow
CQ #13

**Dec. 5**
READ: Dimaline, *TMT*, pp. 184-231
VIEW: Lecture/Slideshow
CQ #14
AEJ #2
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)

Biographical Reflection Free Write (RE): This free writing assignment asks you to provide a short introduction of yourself to me and to the rest of the class (1-2 paragraphs), reflect honestly on what you think you know about Native Americans and where that knowledge comes from (2 paragraphs), and identify why you elected to take this class and outline 2-3 specific goals you’d like to set for the class (1 paragraph). You will post these on the “Introduce Yourself!” Discussion Board 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 the minimum criteria of the assignment. No credit (F) awarded for failing to meet any of the minimum criteria.

“In-Class” Assignments/Activities (ICA): We will conduct periodic “in-class” assignments/activities individually which include individual free write exercises, submission of post-reading/discussion questions cards, etc.

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

Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Expectations (B)</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
<th>+3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turns in &gt;60% ICA</td>
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<td>Turns in 95% ICA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turns in 100% ICA</td>
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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 assignments throughout the term. These labor expectations apply to both hard copy and online journal formats.
Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-5</th>
<th>-4</th>
<th>-3</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>Min. Exp. (B)</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
<th>+3</th>
<th>+4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Analytic-Oriented Exercises (1/3 of final assessment)

Quizzes: There will be roughly 10 weekly quizzes throughout the term administered via Canvas consisting of both comprehension (who, what, when, where) and short analytic/interpretive (how, why) components. 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 a traditional “average” rubric wherein labor is captured in the number of submissions made, performance, and whether you avail yourselves of the opportunity to take them again to improve your score. NOTE: Quizzes may be taken up to 3 times without penalty and to improve your score. Canvas will apply your highest score to your gradebook. REMEMBER: If you take a quiz a 2nd or 3rd time, you MUST take the entire quiz again; I therefore encourage you to compose and save your short answer and essay responses in a 3rd party app and then cut and paste them into the quiz interface.

Synthesis-Oriented Exercises (1/3 of final assessment)

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 a literary-critical analysis of a minimum of 500 words (roughly 2 double-spaced pages)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Contains an original title that indicates something about the topic and argument (cr/no cr)</td>
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<td>Is organized by a clearly articulated thesis that includes both an observation and an interpretive claim (cr/no cr)</td>
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<td>Presents a minimum of 2 pieces of direct textual evidence</td>
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supporting that claim

Attempts to explain how each piece of evidence illustrates the claim(s) you’re making (cr/no cr)

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.

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<th>Rubric for Respondents</th>
<th>Meet (-1)</th>
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<td>Minimum Expectations (B)</td>
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<td>Contributes two, 150-word substantive responses to discussion posts</td>
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<td>Identifies and discusses 1 thing that is interesting, compelling, or strong about the argument</td>
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<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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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. 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 slow, 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 gaining an intimate knowledge of the details of 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, each building upon and reinforcing the other. 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! Knowledge is never final; rather, it is built recursively by continually revising and reevaluating what we previously thought about what we knew/know about a text (or anything else).
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; draw arrows, establishing obscure connections in the text; note patterns of imagery or language as you see them; locate contradictions and ambiguities; 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 rented or 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)”

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/comic
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?

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).

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. 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).