

FOUNDATIONS OF THE ENGLISH MAJOR: CONTEXT
Profs. Laskaya and Pyle

Course Description

The Foundations of the English Major is a three-course sequence (ENG 303, ENG 304, ENG 305) that introduces students to the discipline of English as it is practiced at the University of Oregon. The sequence provides English majors with a common intellectual experience and a foundation for future coursework in literary, media, and cultural studies and folklore. All English majors are required to take 303 and then (*as of Fall 2020*) can choose to take one or both ENG 304 and 305. In 2020-21, ENG 303 and 304 are offered; in 2021-22, ENG 303 and 305 will occur.

ENG 304 is the second term of the year-long Foundations of the English Major series, and it is offered every other year. Winter term 2021, ENG 304 will address the following questions: What is a context? How do texts and history interact? How do precursors, genres, other works of art and literature create an important context for any particular text? How do texts borrow or translate material from other sources, contemporary or not? How can we understand the contexts of reception and re-presentation as well as textual production? We will investigate these questions in relation to literary history, intellectual and aesthetic history, political history, and the history of different cultural formations and categories such as art, gender, race, sexuality, class, psychology, human relationships, religion, aesthetics, and materiality.

Across the term, the course will demonstrate how histories are, themselves, recovered and created – products of intellectual activity and ideological forces – more than merely given facts. We will pursue these issues, studying texts chosen from two different time periods—the Medieval and the Nineteenth-Century—in order to examine the historical forces that contribute to the production of literary and cultural texts as well as their receptions and re-reproductions up to our own historical moment. This historical range of textual production allows us to explore ways different artists, scholars and fields within Anglophone literary and cultural traditions interpret the complex relationship between artistic production and the varieties of historical context. Key texts for Winter 2021 will include The Bayeux Tapestry, Chaucer’s Miller’s Tale, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Salomé*.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have

- (1) gained a strong understanding of the importance and centrality of ‘context’ to textual analysis in the discipline of English.
- (2) gained an understanding of ways reading for ‘context’ differs from other interpretive techniques.
- (3) become familiar with a variety of ways context may influence a text and/or our reading of it.
- (4) gained a strong introductory understanding of how to apply such techniques variably to different forms and genres, and
- (5) engaged with, practiced, and begun generating their own interpretations of texts in relation to contexts in discussion and multiple writing assignments.

ENG 304 large class lectures/sessions occur Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:15-1:45 on Canvas-Zoom. Students also enroll in a one-hour small discussion section with a GE (Graduate Student Employee) who will provide an additional, discussion-section syllabi. Pre-requisite: ENG 303. Pre- or Co-Requisite: ENG 205.

Required Course Materials:

- The Bayeux Tapestry (slides of the object provided on Canvas)
- Selected Fables of Marie de France and Aesop (provided on Canvas)
- The Miller's Tale (provided online and/or on Canvas), along with additional materials, including The Knight's Tale, selection from the General Prologue, Fabliaux texts, Visual Art
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Norton Critical Edition, Second Edition)
- Oscar Wilde (selected texts and contexts, provided on online and/or on Canvas)
- Some secondary readings on primary texts (provided on Canvas or in the Norton Critical text)
- Reading Questions or Introductions to help you prepare for lectures and assignments. All handouts will be made available on Canvas.
- Lecture sessions will be recorded and uploaded after each class.

Contact information and office hours for professors and GEs:

Prof. Laskaya, email: laskaya@uoregon.edu

Office hours (via Canvas Chat): Mondays 10-11:30 am, Thursdays 2:00-3:30 pm, or by individual appointment on Chat or Zoom.

Prof. Pyle, email: trespyle@uoregon.edu

Office hours (via Canvas Chat): Wednesdays & Fridays 1:00-2:30 pm, or by individual appointment on Chat or Zoom.

Sabrina Sherman, email: ssherma2@uoregon.edu

Office hours (via Zoom using sign-up sheet located on individual section Canvas sites): XXX, or by appointment.

Chris Ivy, email: civy@uoregon.edu

Office hours (via Zoom using sign-up sheet located on individual section Canvas sites): XXX, or by appointment.

Remote Learning Success:

Student success in remote learning environments shares much in common with successful learning strategies you use in regular classrooms. Actively engage the course by preparing all the assigned readings (avoiding distractions and seriously concentrating) and by doing your best on all assignments. Read and reread the material assigned for each class rigorously before attending lecture and discussion sections.

Communication is KEY. Check Canvas and your UOregon email nearly every day for updates concerning all your courses, and be sure you keep track of assignments and the course schedule. Ask your GEs or professors questions when you have them and, if possible, connect with other students in the course.

There are some differences with remote learning that you should think about in order to be as successful as possible: You won't have the structure of scheduled classes to help keep you on track,

so it is crucial for you to ***practice effective time management***. Creating a study schedule has shown to be helpful for students learning remotely. To stay on track, use a calendar, phone app (reminder), or a paper agenda to keep track of due dates and study times. You need to be more independent in your learning. Students who learn best from going to class may be challenged by remote learning.

We encourage you to ***be active in the course and with the reading*** by reviewing course material and giving yourself some 'thinking time' beyond reading. Take notes on video lectures and readings. Download texts onto paper copies and ***physically annotate or gloss each assigned reading*** before and perhaps after lecture. Write down your own questions about, and responses to, texts, lectures, or discussions. Read our literary texts out loud. Call, text, zoom, or message with someone else in our class or speak with a friend or family member about what you are learning. Put what you learn into your own words and reflect on it. Comparing notes with a study partner or a small group can assist you with the course; please feel free to collaborate as you learn (however, see caveat under 'academic integrity' below).

Since lectures will be recorded and available on Canvas, primarily because we are having to work remotely, each of ***you will be able to review lectures and large class sessions***. See the tip sheet on 'active reading' (on Canvas soon).

If you need additional assistance, contact your GE first. The UO also offers study skills and time management assistance. Check out <https://engage.uoregon.edu/> or <https://owl.uoregon.edu/> The UO has compiled a list of other support services you can access remotely, including tutoring, technology troubleshooting, advising, counseling, and more: <https://remote.uoregon.edu/student>

Useful Resources when Reading, Writing, and Citing

For unfamiliar words, <https://www.merriam-webster.com> offers a high quality online dictionary; it is also a standard source to assist you with your own writing. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers extensive advice on grammar and usage, as well as clear guidelines for proper citation according to both MLA and Chicago formats. See <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl>

For words whose meanings may have changed over time, such as words in Wilde and Shelley, use the *OED* (Oxford English Dictionary), which tracks such changes and can help you figure out what meanings are likely/possible/impossible in those text. Since we will read Middle English (ME) selections in translation, you may find the *OED* useful to get at the translation's nuances. On the library's homepage, click on "databases," then on the letter O, then on the *OED* (scroll down to 'Oxford') and use your DuckID to log in.

Nota Bene (abbreviated as 'NB' means 'Note well!'): For Medieval English texts in their original languages, the *OED* (Oxford English Dictionary) **IS NOT** reliable or preferred. If you want to explore specific Middle English words in the original Miller's Tale, consult the Middle English Dictionary (MED) from the University of Michigan. The MED can be difficult to navigate, because standardized spelling did not exist in the Middle Ages; contact Prof. Laskaya if you have difficulty using this free online resource: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>

SCHEDULE (subject to slight changes: **Please See Canvas** for complete up-to-date information)

WEEK ONE

U 1/5 **Introductions:** The aims and trajectory of the course. Why study texts in relation to context? What is a context? What are the relationships between text and its contexts? YouTube clip: “Reading Text and Context” (Produced by UT Austin Dept of English)

Section I: Medieval texts and contexts

H 1/7 The Bayeux Tapestry: Visual Narrative and Historical Context

WEEK TWO

U 1/12 The Bayeux Tapestry: Visual Narrative and Literary context, selections from Marie de France’s *Fables* and a few from Aesop; Bestiary (on Canvas)

H 1/14 Precursors and image/cultural sources for tapestry design (i.e., Norse tapestry and ships), influence of actual landscape and architectural design on imagery and representation on tapestry.

WEEK THREE

***M 1/18 Short essay due on Tapestry and ‘Bestiary context’ (see assignment for details)**

U 1/19 Materiality: cloth, thread, embroidery; objects and things represented on the tapestry. Secondary Reading provided on Canvas.

H 1/21 The Bayeux Tapestry as Colonial text: domination and resistance: Norman and Anglo-Saxon points of view within the visual narrative. Secondary Reading provided on Canvas.

WEEK FOUR

U 1/26 Chaucer, *The Miller’s Tale*. First: The text itself. Second: Miller-Narrator. How is the Miller depicted in the General Prologue? Relationship between tale and teller.

H 1/28 *Miller’s Tale* in the context of genre: Fabliaux. Issues of Gender and Age, Secondary Reading provided on Canvas.

WEEK FIVE

U 2/2 *Miller’s Tale*. The context of another text: Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale* and ‘Quyting Select portions from Lee Patterson, “The Miller’s Tale and the Politics of Laughter,” in *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 244-279, provided on Canvas.

H 2/4 *Miller’s Tale*. Imagery, Kolve and Kendrick theses. Goliardic humor. Art history as context.

***M 2/8 Context paper on either Bayeux or *Miller’s Tale* due. 1250-1350 words: (see assignment for details)**

Section II: Nineteenth-century texts and contexts

WEEK SIX

U 2/9: Lord Byron, "Prometheus," "Darkness," from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Canto III. Percy Shelley, "Mutability," "Mont Blanc," "The Sea of Ice" (Norton, 295-305). Mary Shelley, Introduction to the 1831 edition (Norton, 165-169). Percy Shelley, Preface to the 1818 edition (Norton, 5-6). J. Paul Hunter, Introduction to the Norton Edition (ix-xviii). British Romanticism as Context.

H 2/11: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Volume I (Norton, 7-60). Richard Holmes, "Mary Shelley and the Power of Contemporary Science" (Norton, 183-194). Marilyn Butler, from "Frankenstein and Radical Science" (Norton, 404-409). Discourses of Science and Discovery.

WEEK SEVEN

U 2/16: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Volume II (Norton, 61-105). Selections from Milton, *Paradise Lost*. Genesis, 2.4-23 (Norton, 289-295). Percy Shelley, Fragment "On Love" (Canvas). Marilyn Butler, from "Frankenstein and Radical Science" (Norton, 409-416). Cultural Reading as Context.

H 2/18: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Volume III (Norton, 107-161). Percy Shelley, "On *Frankenstein*" (Norton, 213-215). Chris Baldick "The Reception of *Frankenstein*" (Norton, 240-248). William St. Clair, from "Frankenstein's Impact" (Norton, 254-262). The Open Contexts of Reception and Referral.

WEEK EIGHT

***M 2/22 Short essay due on a *Frankenstein* passage "in context" (see assignment for details)**

U 2/23: Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," "A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated," "Preface" to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. David Friedman, from *Wilde in America: Oscar Wilde and the Invention of Modern Celebrity*. Walter Pater, from *The Renaissance*. Wilde and British Aestheticism.

H 2/25: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Neil Bartlett, from *Who's That Man? Wilde and the Figure of the "Dandy": "the love that dares not speak its name."*

WEEK NINE

U 3/2: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Jeff Nunokawa, from *The Tame Passions of Wilde*. Wilde's Otherness, Wilde's "Monstrosity"

H 3/4: Oscar Wilde, *Salomé*. *The New Testament: Mark*, 6:21-29. *Matthew*, 14.6-11. Peter Brown, from "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity." Tydeman and Price, "Staging *Salomé*." Images by Beardsley, Moreau. Wilde's (Contextual) Transgressions.

WEEK TEN

F 3/12 Context Paper due: *Frankenstein* or Wilde in context: 1250-1350 words (see assignment for details)

U 3/9: Shelley & Wilde's Futures: From *Frankenstein* to *Bladerunner* and Wilde to *Velvet Goldmine*. Brief contemporary literary and cinematic texts, including clips from Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* and Todd Haynes' *Velvet Goldmine*. Context Unbound.

H 3/11 Text and Context: Revisited and Reviewed. Concluding Reflective Conversation and Final Exam Review.

FINALS WEEK

***FINAL** Short-Essays Exam: **Conducted on Canvas** during Finals Week at the time scheduled by the Registrar: **8-10 a.m., Thursday March 18th**.

Participation

Come to class lecture and discussion sessions having read/reviewed the assigned material and prepared to discuss it with your instructors and peers. Please arrive to class sessions on time, with materials on hand (course readings and implements for taking notes); be ready to focus on the day's activities. Lectures may not be copied, taped, or videotaped, but they WILL be uploaded to Canvas for your review and as a resource, should you need to consult them. Copying, distributing or sharing lecture video/audio files is not allowed; these files are for the use of members of our immediate course community only.

We will often use the chat function during lecture which will allow students to write questions or comments on readings and lecture material. We will turn to questions shared in chat between sections of lecture and/or at the end of a day's lecture. Chat creates a permanent file, so we can see each individual's participation in addition to your careful listening during lecture and your work in open discussion. Your questions and comments are important but may be more difficult to work with in Zoom than in a live classroom. If we don't get to your question or comment, your participation in chat still records your active learning, listening, and thinking. Some follow up on Chat comments can then occur in discussion sections for any questions needing further exploration OR ones we didn't get to.

The participation grade (see "Grades" below) rewards 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. Participation can take many forms: asking questions, offering ideas, making room for others to contribute, visibly paying attention. Conversely, you can hurt your participation grade by talking over others, not listening, not treating others with generosity and respect, or by distracting others.

Please attend and concentrate on lectures and discussion meetings and do not prevent others from focusing on course material. Since we will all be remote, turn off any technology not needed for our lecture and discussion sessions. Surfing the internet or working on other tasks while class discussions or lectures are underway will inhibit your own learning. Any activity that disrupts or distracts others from course material obviously may inhibit teaching and learning, so please refrain from that. Read or reread the UO Code of Conduct regarding Classroom and learning expectations. Please be considerate and respectful of those around you and online with you.

Zoom Etiquette

During large lecture class sessions, we may have over 75 people online. We urge you to use your cameras; but we do ask that individual microphones remain off unless we are in a discussion portion

of class and you are addressing the class. If you find your own internet connection freezing, turning off your own individual camera can sometimes help stabilize lecture sound and image. But we'd like to leave this up to you. You will be invited to write out questions, thoughts, comments at points during or after the lecture. In discussions that will punctuate the main lecture segments, we'll move some comments and questions from Chat into the live discussion (more about how this will work when we meet). Zoom's 'raised hand' feature will be another way you can let us know if you would like to speak or have a question. If you feel overlooked, please understand the challenges of the remote large-lecture environment, but also please know we welcome your follow-up questions and comments in small discussion sections as well as in office hours!

During small-discussion section classes, please participate with live video camera on, if at all possible. Everyone's "live" visual presence will help build community within each section and can often help clarify questions or comments. Disembodied communication is challenging, to say the least. The number of live video feeds during discussion section meetings (typically 25 or fewer) places less stress on bandwidth and will, we hope, work. Your presence is crucial in both lecture and discussion sections.

Attendance

Attending both lectures and discussion sections consistently is a way you commit to your own education. **This is particularly important for an English Major, for whom the close engagement with texts and contexts is paramount.** Class sessions, as well as written work, provide opportunities for you to participate and demonstrate your commitment to your English Major.

One discussion section absence is allowed, in case you are ill or absolutely need to miss a section meeting; consistent attendance and participation in discussion section meetings will figure into your final course grade.

You are responsible for work due or assigned on days you are absent. If you are ill or face a major challenge, contact your GE in advance of any missed class to touch base and find out what you will need to make up before next class. Always check Canvas and email to stay up with assignments, due dates, readings and so on.

Grades

Beginning Winter term, the UO has returned to its normal grading policies and deadlines. ENG 304 can only be taken for a grade by English Majors; and it must be passed with a solid 'C' grade to count toward the English Major requirements.

Final course grades will be based on:

- 10% Participation in section discussion and lecture chat
- 15% Quizzes (5 best out of 6 quizzes)
- 15% Short 'context' essays (due 1/18 and 2/22)
- 40% 2 Formal 'Context' Papers (due 2/2 and 3/12)
- 20% Final Exam (3/18)

**All major assignments and participation must be completed to pass the course, whether taken for a Grade or P/NP.

Grading Scale

A+ 100	B+ 88-89	C+ 78-79	D+ 68-69	
A 93-99	B 83-87	C 73-77	D 63-67	
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	F 0-59

Assignments are due by the day/time indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments will be docked approximately 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late, unless explicit arrangements have been made in advance with your GE discussion instructor (see “Extensions” below). Assignments that are extended will be judged late, if not handed in by the written and confirmed extended deadline.

Extensions

You may ask for an extension; the earlier the better. When you contact your GE, please let them know how long an extension you are requesting. Using email, confirm the date and time limits of the extension in writing. This allows the teaching team to maintain equity among the extension requests and eliminate misunderstandings. In case of a looming or unexpected disaster, consideration will be given if you keep your instructors in the loop and communicate in advance. Stay in touch.

Academic Integrity: The University of Oregon values academic honesty. Students are informed of the University’s policies and 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. If you need a quick review of our campus community's assumptions about academic integrity and conduct, see the UO Conduct Code: <https://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct>

The writing assignments in ENG 304 will be analytical and ask you to apply what you’re learning in our course; they will not require outside research. Materials to explore context will be provided. You may find yourself curious about something or wanting more information at times; great—read on, and *bravo* for curiosity! However, students will not receive higher grades simply because they read beyond course materials or use research in papers or exams.

Please consult the UO website: <https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism/styleguides> for information on documentation, should you need it, and for discussions of how to avoid plagiarism. See your GE if you have any concerns about documentation and/or academic honesty. For this course, an honest and obvious effort to document is absolutely critical and far more important than commas, abbreviations, or 'correct' formatting. Either MLA or Chicago Style provide acceptable resources and formats for advanced work in literature.

Course policy on Academic Integrity: All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. Any use of sources (ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) beyond our lectures and discussion must be properly documented. This includes ideas you get from your classmates (discussion and kicking ideas around is encouraged, so long as you document where discussion with a peer has impacted your argument). Also document any ideas you get from websites as well as books and other media. You are not allowed to cut and paste from internet sites into your paper. N.B. Most internet essays aimed at students are not written at the college level. Lifting material from this work, even in the case that you are not caught, often results in a lower grade. In other words, rely on your own grey matter, and wrestle well, yourself, with the course material. Protect the integrity of your own work and that of others’. In cases of clearly established

plagiarism or cheating, a final course grade of “F” will be recorded, and all incidents will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, as required by the University.

Inclusion and Accessibility

This is an inclusive learning environment. We will do our best to assist any student facing challenges. We recognize our texts are overwhelmingly drawn from white, hetero-dominant cultural material and encourage you to think about ways each may directly, or subtly, contribute to (or resist) oppressive power dynamics. Our purpose is to help you hone your skills of textual/contextual analysis, but we hope you will also reflect on issues of power as they arise in the material, given the textual features of each text. As we will discuss the first day of class, contextual analysis can disturb our initial assumptions about what a passage, a poem, or a narrative may mean. The work we do this term can apply to your subsequent readings of texts from any historical period and writers from all backgrounds, as well as any communication you hear, see, or read, whether literary or not.

Please notify one of the professors teaching this course by the end of week 2 if there are aspects of the instruction or course design that result in disability-related barriers to your participation, so that we may make accommodations in line with what the Office for Accessible Education recommends. It is your responsibility to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu for resources and support.

NB: If your work with AEC determines you may need accommodations, **you must meet with your GE or one of the faculty** within a week of meeting with the AEC to discuss details of the accommodations.

Course Content

You should be aware that the texts we will read this term deal with adult themes and subject matter. Encountering, analyzing, and discussing aesthetic, political, and cultural differences—including differences that challenge and even offend current day beliefs and ideals—and learning about the histories that helped shape current urgent debates, struggles, and conflicts are essential aspects of the discipline of the English major and the work of majoring in English. We believe that cultivating these skills will help best prepare students to live as effective and ethical citizens. To develop these skills, we remind all of you that it is vital that each of you is able to take risks and explore arguments—arguments you may continue to revise or may move away from. Similarly, we ask each of you to be respectful of viewpoints with which you may disagree strongly.