

LOGISTICS

Class Meetings: MWF, 11:15-am 12:05pm, Academic Success Center Room 300
Professor Matt Hooley, mhooley@clemson.edu, Strode Tower 317, 864-656-3151
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30, and MW by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

Literature allows people to make sense of themselves in the world. Novels, poetry, polemic, drama, and popular culture offer us a chance to understand the political histories that shape our lives and to imagine other ways of living. This introduction to literary criticism will mobilize significant critical approaches to the relationship between power and literature to demonstrate that literary criticism is far from the arcane or specialist tradition it's sometimes made out to be. Rather, criticism is an indispensable way that we engage with and make sense of the narratives that constitute our experience and our worlds. The course will unfold over three units, the first of which opens essential questions: what is literature; what does mean to engage in a "critical" relationship to it; is "the literary" an unduly expansive, unstable, or restrictive category?; why do we rely on literature to make sense of experience?

The second unit considers the relationship between literature, criticism, and memory. The texts in this unit are interested in the idea that one thing literature offers us is a way into the gaps and silences of history. The primary texts in this unit—Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*—excavate histories of colonialism and violence in Haiti and reveal (among many other things) that insofar as we already find ourselves implicated in history, so too are we already immersed in narratives that constitute history and its silences. Criticism, in this context, is about understanding ourselves as actors and products of the operation of power across time and memory.

The final unit of the course asks what kinds of literary critical practices we can use in the face of the unthinkable. Here, "unthinkable" refers to those people, places, and histories that are kept invisible by the structures of power that organize our lives. In this unit we'll specifically consider how race, gender, and incarceration determine which experiences are made thinkable, memorable, normal, significant and which are not. What does it mean to take a critical stance toward the "distribution of the sensible"? If it may be trite to say that literature can "change the world," is it possible that literature and literary criticism could change how much of the world it's possible to change?

COURSE GOALS

To understand what literature is, what relation it has to the non-literary, how and why to adopt a critical stance with relation to it. To learn essential skills of reading, argumentation, and imagination. To improve our relation to creativity, memory, history, and power.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Daily Participation, 25% of your final grade

I'll calculate your participation by adding together three scores, every class session: preparation for class (5pts), in-class writing (5pts), active learning and listening (5pts). Every day that we have a class meeting there are 15 total points possible. If you come to class having read all of the assigned reading, awake, and ready with ideas to share, that's 5 points. Every day we'll have an in-class writing and I'll grade that writing out of 5 points. Finally, as long as you are interested, generous, supportive, active, and engaged during class, you'll receive another five points. Over the course the term there are 585 possible participation points. I'm happy to share with you how you're doing with your participation and to brainstorm ways to improve.

Take Home Essays, 60% (3 x 20%) of your final grade

Three times during the term, I'll distribute a prompt and instructions for you to complete a take home essay. I'll distribute this via Canvas well before the date of the take home essay and we'll have time in class to answer questions that you have. You should take the time of class session itself (plus another hour or so) to complete the essay and return it to me via Canvas. The goal of these essays is two-fold. First, they will be chances to practice specific skills of literary criticism: argument making, evidence gathering, and close reading. Second, they will give you the chance to synthesize ideas relevant to specific units in the class. Each of these units is organized around a set of questions that are suggested above in the course overview (and that we'll add to, together). Your take home essays are the place you have to test out answers to these questions. Your take home essays need only be between 2-4 pages long, and there will be specific guidelines for how to complete each successfully.

Final Essay, 15% of your final grade

At the end of the course, you'll write a 5-8 page essay examining one of the course texts in greater detail. You may also write about another text, as long as it is thematically relevant to the course and you get permission from me to write about it well ahead of time. Your final essay will be a work of literary criticism, which means that it will be a piece that makes an argument about a given text in order to say something about the significance of that text and/or how it functions as a work of art in the world. For most students, this essay will look like a conventional critical essay, with an introduction and statement of argument, well organized paragraphs that bring evidence to support that argument, and a conclusion. However, you don't have to write in that genre. If you are interested in writing a part-creative/part-critical essay, or some other kind of criticism, I would enthusiastically welcome that (but please touch base with me first to plan out what you'll do, and how we'll make sure that you can be evaluated fairly).

COURSE MATERIALS

You should buy/acquire these four books on your own, before it's time to read them for class:

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*

Beacon Press, 1997, ISBN: 978-0807043110

Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
SoHo Press, 2013, ISBN: 978-1616953492

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
Vintage Press, 1997, ISBN: 978-0679732761

C. D. Wright, *One Big Self*
Copper Canyon Press, 2007, ISBN: 978-1556592584

These books are available at the University Bookstore. They are also available online (e.g. Amazon) and from whatever local bookstore you may be near if/when you're not at Clemson. They shouldn't cost you much more than ten dollars each, however I am very aware that the cost of textbooks and of attending college is extraordinary in general and so if you have trouble obtaining these, please make an appointment to talk with me. These books will also be on reserve for you at the Clemson University Library. All other course materials are available via our course site on Canvas. On the reading schedule, these materials are marked (c).

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Unit 1, What is Literature? Why Criticism?

Week 1

8/23	No Reading
8/25	Heaney, "Digging" (c)

Week 2

8/28	Smith, "Rereading Barthes and Nabokov" (c)
8/30	Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (c)
9/1	Foucault, "What is an Author?" (c)

Week 3

9/4	Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" (c)
9/6	Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury" (c)
9/8	Take Home Essay Exam 1

Unit 2, Memory & the Present

Week 4

9/11	Trouillot, <i>Silencing the Past</i>
9/13	Trouillot, <i>Silencing the Past</i>
9/15	Trouillot, <i>Silencing the Past</i>

Week 5

9/18 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*
9/20 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*
9/22 Morrison, "Site of Memory" (c)

Week 6

9/25 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
9/27 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
9/29 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*

Week 7

10/2 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
10/4 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
10/6 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*

Week 8

10/9 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
10/11 Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*
10/13 Take Home Essay Exam 2

Unit 3, Critical Thinking & the Unthinkable

Week 9

10/16 Fall Break, No Class
10/18 Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (c)
10/20 Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (c)

Week 10

10/23 Ranciere, from *The Politics of Aesthetics* (c)
10/25 Ranciere, from *The Politics of Aesthetics* (c)
10/27 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Week 11

10/30 Ellison, *Invisible Man*
11/1 Ellison, *Invisible Man*
11/3 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Week 12

11/6 Ellison, *Invisible Man*
11/8 Ellison, *Invisible Man*
11/10 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Week 13

11/13 Ellison, *Invisible Man*
11/15 Ellison, *Invisible Man*
11/17 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Week 14

11/20 Take Home Essay Exam 3
11/22 Thanksgiving, No Class
11/24 Thanksgiving, No Class

Week 15

11/27 Foucault "Panopticism" (c)
11/29 Berger, "Ways of Seeing" (c)
12/1 Gilmore, from *Golden Gulag* (c)

Week 16

12/4 Wright, *One Big Self*
Deborah Luster images (online)
12/6 Wright, *One Big Self*
Deborah Luster images (online)
12/8 Calhoun+McCormick "Slavery, The Prison Industrial Complex" (c)
Wilson "Carceral Architectures" (c)
Beller, "Angola Prison and the Shadow of Slavery" (c)

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Respect and Support for Each Other

It's only possible for us to achieve our goals for this term if we are able to rely on each other to think, talk, and write together. Therefore, it's a requirement for this class that we prioritize treating each other with respect, compassion, and support. This means far more than simply not being disengaged or hateful. It means actively giving energy to care for and about the other people in class.

Attendance

Three times during the term, you may contact me at least 24 hours before class, and let me know that you will not be able to make it to class. I'll send you a prompt for your in-class writing and you'll be responsible for sending it back to me. I'll grade the writing as I normally do, and you won't lose any additional points for that day (i.e. it's still possible to get 15 participation points for these days). If you don't let me know in advance that you'll be absent, you can still do the in-class writing, up to two days late, for those five points for writing (but you'll lose the 10 points for being in class and participating). If you are absent more than six times during the term, it won't be possible for you to pass the class.

Other Stuff

If the university is closed because of inclement weather (or any other reason), all students will receive full participation points for that day and any additional assignments due that day will be pushed to the next class date. If I am late to class, you are to wait 10 minutes before assuming that something unforeseen has prevented me from teaching class that day. Your feedback to the second take home essay will include your midterm grade.

Accessibility

University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries or conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, course design, technology used for curricular purposes, or other campus resources. Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let me know, and make an appointment to meet with a staff member in Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. You can make an appointment by calling 864-656-6848, by emailing studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu, or by visiting Suite 239 in the Academic Success Center building. Appointments are strongly encouraged – drop-ins will be seen if at all possible, but there could be a significant wait due to scheduled appointments.. Students who receive Academic Access Letters are strongly encouraged to request, obtain and present these to their professors as early in the semester as possible so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to follow this process each semester. You can access further information here: <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/ccampus-services/ssds>.

Title IX

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.. This policy is located at www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix. Mr. Jerry Knighton is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator. He also is the Director of Access and Equity. His office is located at 110 Holtzendorff Hall, 864.656.3184 (voice) or 864.656.00899 (TTDD).

RESOURCES

Bookstore: <https://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/book-store/>

Library: <https://libraries.clemson.edu/>

Writing Center: <https://www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/writing/>

Student Health Services: <https://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/student-health/>