

English 211: Literature and Intermediate Composition
Literature, Justice, and Judgment

Spring 2014 / 4F6 (T3, 4) and 4F4 (T5)

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To read well... is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object.

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854)

Clarity. Courage. Ambiguity. Context. These perceptions gain meaning and momentum through the processes of literature.... Life is given nuance between the lines.

—Jason Armagost, *“Things to Pack When You’re Bound for Baghdad”* (2006)

Overview: This semester, we will read a range of literary works that force us to grapple with some of the most fundamental and difficult questions confronting human beings: What is justice? How do we determine what is right and wrong? Through what kinds of processes should we choose—and enforce—these definitions, and what is the appropriate response to violations of moral and ethical norms? How do the legacies of past wrongs influence and shape the way we live in the present? And what role do narrative, art, and the imagination play in helping us to answer such questions? As we think through these and other issues together, we will pay special attention to the ways literary texts express their ideas not simply through their content but also through their form—that is, not simply through *what* they say but *how* they say it. In so doing, you will develop crucial skills of analysis and interpretation; hone your ability to craft oral and written arguments that are clear, complex, and significant; and support your claims with compelling evidence. Perhaps most important, you will grow as a reader, speaker, writer, and thinker, cultivating intellectual habits and capacities that will be vital to your future both within and beyond the Air Force.

Required Texts (be sure to purchase these specific editions):

- J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*. New York: Penguin, 2010. ISBN 9780143116929
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. New York: Vintage, 2004. ISBN 9781400033416
- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994 (Folger Shakespeare Library). ISBN 9780743482837
- Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Three Theban Plays*. New York: Penguin, 1984. ISBN 9780140444254
- Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2001. 9780486414102
- Short readings available on SharePoint (print hard copies for yourself)

Recommended Texts/Resources (available in the library and/or online):

- Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed.
- *MLA International Bibliography*. Available online at:
<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/search/advanced?sid=3b4e29e8-f296-4e45-94d1-9409ceac689f%40sessionmgr14&vid=2&hid=13>

- Lexis-Nexis Academic (news and legal archive). Available online at: <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>
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SECTION-SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS AND EXERCISES

Note Card Responses: For each lesson on which there is only a reading assignment due, you will prepare a short response to a question about the assigned text(s) posted in the “Guiding Questions” section of our SharePoint site (see below). You are required to write your response on a 3x5 inch note card; please write only on the front of the card, and list your name, section number, and the date/class session at the top of the card. Use complete sentences, and cite specific evidence from the reading to support your thoughts. The purpose of this exercise is to help you focus your ideas for class and to give me a sense of your thoughts about the day’s reading. There are 25 class sessions for which you can complete a note card, and you must submit at least 21 note cards by the end of the term. Note cards are due at the start of each class; late cards are not accepted, and you may not submit a note card for a day you are not present (unless your absence is prearranged and excused). These note cards will count toward your informal writing grade, and all cards you submit will be graded. Falling below the minimum number of note cards will adversely impact your grade.

Participation: This course requires your active, informed, and energetic participation. Participation counts for 16% of your final grade (roughly as much as each of the first two paper assignments), and as such it will have a significant impact on your overall course performance. You will receive feedback about your class participation at the midpoint of the term. Besides attending all class meetings and bringing the appropriate materials to class (e.g. readings, essays), to receive a strong participation score you must also contribute in a meaningful way to the discussion in every class session. To “contribute in a meaningful way” signifies to answer a question, ask an informed question, respond to a colleague’s point, or put forth your own idea, and in so doing to move our conversation forward. In other words, both the quantity and the quality of your contributions matter. Your comments should emerge from your engagement with the readings, and thus you should be able to refer to specific page numbers to support your points. So that we can engage in genuine face-to-face discussions, laptops are prohibited unless a special class activity (e.g. student presentation) requires their use.

Oral Presentation: The questions, themes, and texts we will discuss in class are relevant to the present. To explore these connections between literature and our world, you will give an oral presentation in which you identify a cultural artifact (e.g. song, news story, film or TV clip, public service announcement, etc.) that connects to our course. Though it will be up to you how exactly to execute your presentation, you must: describe the artifact and provide relevant context; offer an interpretation of the artifact, pointing to specific evidence (e.g. words, images, etc.) to support your claims; show how the artifact connects to our class themes and/or texts; explain what this connection teaches us; and pose questions to generate discussion. Your presentation should be 6-8 minutes long. We will set a schedule for the presentations early in the term.

Final Essay Proposal: In preparation for your final paper, you will submit a 2-page proposal that includes: the tentative argument you will make about your primary text; a potential “so what?” factor; and a list of 3-5 secondary sources you will use to advance your argument. This assignment will count toward your informal writing grade.

Midterm Meeting: At the midpoint of the course, right after PROG, you will schedule an individual meeting with me. We will discuss your performance in the course thus far, focusing in particular on your first formal essay and your class participation, and we will chart out goals for improvement in the second half of the class. In preparation for this meeting, you will complete a short reflection assignment.

Assessment: Your performance in this class will be based on the quality of your three major essays, as well as on the strength of your class participation, your oral presentation, and the informal writing that you will complete throughout the term. All written work will be assessed based on the *clarity*, *complexity*, and *precision* of the *argument*, *evidence*, and *analysis* you put forth. Your final grade will be calculated according to the percentages outlined below.

Grading Breakdown

Before PROG

Informal Writing: 7%

Participation: 8%

Close Reading Essay: 15%

After PROG

Informal Writing: 7%

Participation: 8%

Criticism Essay: 15%

Oral Presentation: 10%

Final Essay: 30%

N.B.: In order to pass the course, you must complete all assignments and average a passing grade on the three major essays.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS

Course SharePoint Site: Announcements, questions to guide your reading of the assigned texts, electronic versions of course documents, and other useful information will be available on our SharePoint site, which you can reach at:

<https://eis.usafa.edu/academics/english/courses/211/Laski>.

Communication: E-mail is an official mode of correspondence for this class. As such, you are responsible for all communiqués I send to your USAFA e-mail address. E-mail is also the best way for you to contact me.

Extra Instruction: I am available for extra instruction should you need it. Send me an e-mail, and we will work together to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time. Please note that while I will not review complete essay drafts, I will gladly listen to your ideas and help you to think through the steps of your argument or a particularly challenging paragraph or two. Should you wish to have someone review a draft of your paper, please visit the Writing Center. Be sure to seek any assistance you may need well in advance of paper deadlines.

Course Connections: While not required beyond your oral presentation, finding connections to the ideas and texts we study in class in sources such as songs, popular culture, current events, news articles, etc. is highly encouraged and will only help your participation grade. Post your contributions to the “Course Connections” section of our SharePoint site.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments outlined below on the course calendar will be discussed in class on the day on which they are listed. Please read the assigned piece(s) by this date, review the guiding questions posted on SharePoint, mark up key passages in the text, complete your note card, and come prepared to engage in a lively discussion about the text(s). Note that electronic versions of our readings are not permitted; you must bring a paper copy of whatever work(s) we are discussing with you to class.

Writing Assignments: All written work is to be submitted **in hard copy form** at the **beginning** of the class session in which it is due. Please submit all your major essays in the **blue folder** that I will give to you, and keep your papers in this folder until the end of the term. You must also upload your essays to www.turnitin.com. Late assignments will be penalized. Because of the frequent writing assignments required for this course, and so that I can return your graded work promptly, extensions will not be granted except under extraordinary circumstances. Only typed papers will be accepted; please double space your essays, set your margins to one inch, and use a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) at the 12 pt. size. Number your pages in the upper right-hand corner, only print on one side of each page, and staple your essay before turning it in. Be sure to give your paper a provocative title that speaks to the essay's argument (e.g. not "Essay 1"). Finally, follow the guidelines set forth in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*; for details, see our SharePoint site.

Documentation and Academic Integrity: Crucial guidelines and resources regarding documentation standards for your written work and the Dean's policy on academic integrity are posted on our SharePoint site under "Documentation Resources." Be sure to review these items. You are required to abide by these regulations; failure to do so will hurt your grade and may cause you to commit plagiarism inadvertently.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. How Does Literature Matter? The Tools of the Trade

<u>Class</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1	Tues 7 Jan	Introductions
2	Thurs 9 Jan	Reading Day (read "The Blue Hotel," no note card)
3	Mon 13 Jan	Stephen Crane, "The Blue Hotel"
4	Wed 15 Jan	Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"
5	Fri 17 Jan	James Wright, "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota" Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Days"

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

II. Antigone's Law: Allegiance, Resistance, and Wisdom

6	Wed 22 Jan	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> (pp. 59-85)
7	Fri 24 Jan	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> (pp. 86-104)
8	Tues 28 Jan	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> (pp. 105-128)
9	Thurs 30 Jan	Due: Argument Exercise

III. "This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine": Power, Revenge, and Forgiveness

10	Mon 3 Feb	William Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i> (Act 1)
11	Wed 5 Feb	Shakespeare, <i>Tempest</i> (Act 2)
12	Fri 7 Feb	Shakespeare, <i>Tempest</i> (Act 3)
13	Tues 11 Feb	Shakespeare, <i>Tempest</i> (Act 4)
14	Thurs 13 Feb	Shakespeare, <i>Tempest</i> (Act 5 and Epilogue)

Presidents' Day

15	Tues 18 Feb	Due: Close Reading Essay
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IV. Between I and You, Self and Other: Representation, Recognition, and Just Community

16	Thurs 20 Feb	Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (pp. 1-10)
17	Mon 24 Feb	Whitman, "Song of Myself" (pp. 10-38)
18	Wed 26 Feb	Whitman, "Song of Myself" (pp. 38-54)

NCLS

19	Tues 4 Mar	Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "To Stand Between: Walt Whitman's Poetics of Merger and Embodiment" Due: Criticism Roadmap Worksheet
20	Thurs 6 Mar	No English 211 Class (Midterm Conferences)
21	Mon 10 Mar	No English 211 Class (Midterm Conferences)
22	Wed 12 Mar	No English 211 Class (Midterm Conferences)

*Recognition***V. “Not A Story to Pass On”: Narrative, Memory, and the Names of History**

23	Mon 17 Mar	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (pp. 3-59)
24	Wed 19 Mar	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (pp. 60-124)
25	Fri 21 Mar	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (pp. 125-195)

Spring Break

26	Tues 1 Apr	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (pp. 199-277)
27	Thurs 3 Apr	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (pp. 281-324) Morrison, “A Bench by the Road”
28	Mon 7 Apr	Due: Criticism Essay

VI. “One Just Man”: Guilt, Complicity, and Redemption

29	Wed 9 Apr	J.M. Coetzee, <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> (pp. 1-64)
30	Fri 11 Apr	Coetzee, <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> (pp. 65-87) Due: Preliminary Question(s) for Final Essay
31	Tues 15 Apr	Coetzee, <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> (pp. 89-139)
32	Thurs 17 Apr	Coetzee, <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> (pp. 141-180)
33	Mon 21 Apr	Due: Final Essay Proposal (<u>bring 3 copies</u>)
34	Wed 23 Apr	Franz Kafka, “In the Penal Colony”
35	Fri 25 Apr	Due: Coetzee/Kafka Exercise
36	Tues 29 Apr	Final Essay Argument Workshop Due: Final Essay Argument Worksheet

VII. Imagination, Art, and the “Mutilated World”

37	Thurs 1 May	Sherman Alexie, “Capital Punishment” C.K. Williams, “The Nail”
38	Mon 5 May	Adam Zagajewski, “Try to Praise the Mutilated World”

39	Wed 7 May	Due: Final Essay
40	Fri 9 May	Robinson Jeffers, "The Answer" Due: Final Exercise