

ENGL8876: Issues and Methods in English Studies
Eric Weiskott
Fall 2022, T 2:00–4:25pm
Office hours: T 10:00–11:00am (Stokes S407) or by appointment

This course offers an introduction to the field of English studies, with focus on problems of method revolving around the field's burning question, What is literature? We read a range of recent scholarship, exploring approaches, methods, and issues of interest, including formalism *vs.* historicism, literary and cultural theory, poetics, periodization, and digital humanities. Primary works assigned are drawn from different centuries and all major genres, mainly from Britain. Students write either a research paper on a primary text or a substantial position paper on an issue or a method.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the BC Bookstore)

Arden of Faversham, ed. Catherine Richardson (Bloomsbury, 2022)

W. H. Auden, *Another Time* (Faber & Faber, 2019)

Henry Fielding, “*Joseph Andrews*” and “*Shamela*”, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies (rev. ed.) (Oxford, 2008)

Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, trans. Dmitri Nabokov (Vintage, 1989)

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf, 2014) (O'Neill Library has a digital copy, but for the full effect you have to hold it in your hands)

SCHEDULE

I. Close

What is literature?

Aug 30 Wasser, *The Work of Difference*, introduction
 Wellek, “The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art”

Formal specificity, genre distinctions, and historical granularity

Sept 6 Herbert, “Longing,” ed. Hutchinson
 Kornbluh, *The Order of Forms*, introduction
 Kramnick and Nersessian, “Form and Explanation”
 Strier, “How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can’t Do without It”
 *Discussion post 1 due on Canvas

Sept 13 Horton, “On Liberty and Slavery” (poetryfoundation.org/poems/52307/on-liberty-and-slavery)
 Shelley, “Ode to Liberty,” ed. Reiman and Freistat
 Fry, “The New Metacriticisms and the Fate of Interpretation”
 Jackson, “Historical Poetics and the Dream of Interpretation”
 *Discussion post 2 due on Canvas

Sept 20 Auden, *Another Time*
 King, “The Scale of Genre”

Nowell Smith, "Historical Poetics and the Register of History"

*Discussion post 3 due on Canvas

II. Oscillating

Structure and concept: reading theories

- Sept 27 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, ch. 1
Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading"
*Discussion post 4 due on Canvas
- Oct 4 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ch. 1
Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," introduction and pt. 1 (*Dissemination*, pp. 63-119)
- (Oct 11) MONDAY SCHEDULE: NO CLASS
*Topic study due (2-5 pp.)
- Oct 18 Nabokov, "Cloud, Castle, Lake"
Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*
Nieubuert, "Cincinnatus' Pharmacy"

Discipline and verse: poetics

- Oct 25 Jackson, "Who Reads Poetry?" (Melville, "The Portent")
Solberg, "Imagining the Bob and Wheel"
Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody*, ch. 1
- Nov 1 Chaucer, *Fortune*, ed. Benson
Chaucer, *Truth*, ed. Benson
Chaucer, *Gentilesse*, ed. Benson
Chaucer, *Lak of Stedfastnesse*, ed. Benson
Nelson, "Poetics of the Rule"
Pronunciation (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/pronunciation)
OPTIONAL: Manuscripts (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/manuscript-guide)
- Nov 8 Lowell, "Man and Wife" (poets.org/poem/man-and-wife)
Lowell, "Skunk Hour" (poetryfoundation.org/poems/47694/skunk-hour)
Rankine, *Citizen*
Rankine, [on Lowell]
Javadizadeh, "The Atlantic Ocean Breaking on Our Heads"
- Nov 10 field trip to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston

III. Far

The shape of time: periodization

- Nov 15 Simpson, "Trans-Reformation English Literary History"
Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, ch. 3
[recommended: begin Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*]
- Nov 22 Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*
Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality"
Orlemanski, "Who Has Fiction?"

Literature by the numbers: digital research

- Nov 29 Allington, Brouillette, and Golumbia, "Neoliberal Tools (and Archives)"
(lareviewofbooks.org/article/neoliberal-tools-archives-political-history-digital-humanities)
- Eve, *Digital Humanities and Literary Studies*, introduction and conclusion
- Dec 6 *Arden of Faversham*
Arden of Faversham, ed. Richardson, pp. 37–51 ("Authorship," minus "Alice – murderous strength")
- Gary Taylor, "Finding 'Anonymous' in the Digital Archives"
- Vickers, "*Arden of Faversham*, the Authorship Problem"
- Dec 9 *Paper/portfolio due (15–25/10–15 pp.)

GRADING

- Discussion posts 15%
- Oral presentation (to be scheduled), 5–15 min. + 1-page paper 15%
- Paper/portfolio, 15–25/10–15 pp. 40%
- Participation 10%
- Topic study, 2–5 pp. 20%

ASSIGNMENTS

The Discussion posts, due Tuesday mornings, should reflect your initial reactions to the material from the first half of the semester. They can, but need not, articulate an argument about the material. The topic study is an introductory essay on a problem, topic, or research or teaching question arising from the course material. Or choose either of the following alternative options: (1) a book review: a descriptive and evaluative review of a recent (past 1–2 years) scholarly monograph in your field or related to the course material, or (2) a small-scale digital project. The paper is either (1) an article-length research project that engages with prior scholarship and argues for its point of view in detail or (2) a substantial position paper on an issue or a method. Alternatively, you may complete a substantial digital project arising from the course material. Lynch School students may instead complete a teaching portfolio and/or lesson plan relating to the course material. Each student will also prepare one "most important bit" oral presentation (to be scheduled) of 5–15 minutes, supported by a 1-page paper turned in the same day via email.

OBJECTIVES

This is a 'toolkit' course. In addition to practicing different styles of academic writing, you will explore the issues and methods that structure the profession of literary studies, with focus on canonical texts from different periods and in different forms, and scholarship published since 2016. The goal is to become self-reflective about the place of your work in the field, to try out alternative paths through the field, and to use new-to-you theories and methodologies to sharpen your readings of individual works of literature. You are invited to relate the theoretical writings and innovative methods introduced in the course to your own areas of expertise and to primary texts you are familiar with.

PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend each class having completed the assigned reading. Students should come to class prepared to actively discuss the language, rhetoric, and literary form of assigned primary texts and the arguments and ideas of assigned secondary criticism. This is a discussion-based class, and you typically will not need laptops or smart phones.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Boston College places great value on academic integrity (bc.edu/bc-web/academics/sites/university-catalog/policies-procedures.html#tab-academic_integrity_policies). I have a zero tolerance policy for intentional plagiarism. All quotations or paraphrases of sources must be cited parenthetically or in a footnote (examples: libguides.bc.edu/c.php?g=44446&p=281300).

ACCESSIBILITY

If you are a student with a disability seeking accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities.

TITLE IX MANDATORY REPORTING

Please be aware that as a Boston College faculty member, I am obligated to report to the Student Affairs Title IX Coordinator any case of sexual misconduct that any student discloses to me.