

English 480, Fall 2011
TTh 5:10-6:25, Buttrick 221
Rachel Trousdale
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Buttrick 307, x. 6209
Office hours MW 2-3, TTh 4-5, and by appointment

Senior Research Seminar in English Literature

This course marks the culmination of your English major. Unlike most other English literature courses, which are defined by a genre, theme, author, or historical period, English 480 focuses on identifying, articulating, and responding to significant research questions—initially in the works of others and then as crucial stages in the development of your own critical essay (about 25 pages of writing). Writing a work on this scale lets you develop interests and skills acquired in your other courses, but the senior seminar also asks that you move beyond the level of inquiry and expression demonstrated in those courses and that you produce your best as well as your most sustained written work.

Your essay should be focused on a well-designed research question to which you respond with carefully shaped analysis of literature and other texts that contextualize your literary analysis. Those whose essays are exemplary and show potential for significant expansion may apply to extend their work as independent projects (English 490) in the spring semester.

Texts:

All readings are posted on Moodle. Please print out readings and bring them to class on the days they are assigned.

Calendar:

I. PREPARATION: THINKING, READING, WRITING

Th 8/25 **Objectives:** Syllabus

Library resources: 5:30 pm, McCain 211
Primary Text assignment
Writing groups
Reflective writing

T 8/30 **Due:** Primary Text exercise

Objectives: Workshop Primary Text exercise
Guidelines for meeting with advisors

Th 9/1 **Read:** Kristal McKenzie, “Mansfield Shall Cure You: Doctoring the Female Body in *Mansfield Park*” (480 essay from 2007)

Objective: McKenzie’s essay: research question, outline
Secondary Source assignment

T 9/6 **Read:** Neil Simpkins, “A Paroxysm of Joyful Tears: Tears, Sexuality, and Performative Gender in *The Lamplighter*” (480 essay from 2009)

Objectives: Simpkins’ essay: secondary sources, introduction
Prospectus assignment

Th 9/8 **Due:** Secondary Source exercise

Objectives: Workshop Secondary Source exercise
Faculty research presentation: Dr. Willie Tolliver

T 9/13 **Read:** Poems by Elizabeth Bishop

Objectives: Reading primary texts (Bishop)
Essay Plan assignment
Faculty research presentation: Dr. Peggy Thompson

Th 9/15 **Read:** Lee Edelman, “The Geography of Gender: Elizabeth Bishop’s ‘In the Waiting Room’”

Objectives: Edelman’s essay: contextualizing primary readings
Introduction assignment

T 9/20 **Read:** Ann Hoff, “Owning Memory: Elizabeth Bishop’s Authorial Restraint”

Objectives: Hoff’s essay: incorporating secondary sources, audience

Th 9/22 **Due:** Prospectus

Objectives: Workshop prospectuses
Procedures for October

II. DRAFTING

Class does not meet during this phase. Several assignments are due this month, however:

T 9/27 Revised Prospectus, annotated bibliography, and summary of discussions due

T 10/4 Essay Plan due

T 10/11 Introduction due

T 10/18 10-15 pages of draft due

III. REVISING AND PRESENTING

Class meetings resume.

T 11/1 **Due:** Complete draft

Objective: Workshop drafts

Th 11/3 Presentations

T 11/8 Presentations

Th 11/10 Presentations

T 11/15 Presentations

Th 11/17 Presentations

T 11/22 Presentations

Th 11/24 Thanksgiving Break. Class does not meet.

T 1/29 **Due:** Final draft

Objective: Workshop final draft

Th 12/1 **Due:** Essay

Objective: Party! Time TBA.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, I expect we will all be

- a. better speakers, able to
 - formulate descriptions of the essays read
 - articulate comments and questions on the readings
 - respond directly to classmates' remarks and questions
 - provide helpful critiques of others' writing
 - clearly present to the class the central question and major arguments of your essay
- b. better readers, able to
 - identify the central question or imaginative context that defines an author's purpose
 - analyze the structure of a work as it responds to a central question or problem
 - recognize the sources and influences of critical or creative work
 - use others' scholarly writing as models or pushing off points for parts of your own work
 - analyze a variety of texts in order to develop a central question and respond to it with an effective argument in your essay
- c. better writers, able to
 - break down the process of writing a long work into manageable stages
 - articulate and, where appropriate, adapt your central research question
 - discuss literature with subtlety, precision, and purpose
 - tell a story, make it engaging and exciting for the reader
 - incorporate additional sources (historical, biographical, critical, theoretical, etc.) as they are useful in responding to your central question
 - shape your analysis of sources into a sustained and well organized essay
 - document all sources using MLA parenthetical form
 - use language powerfully, creatively, and with precision

In sum, you will do what you have done for many courses, but you will be polishing and enhancing those abilities, so that you can write the best essay of your career as an English major.

Grading:

Your final grade for the course will be weighted in the following way:

Essay: 50%. Your project advisor and I will consult to determine your essay grade.

Presentation: 15%

Participation: 10%

This grade will include exercises like the Primary Text Analysis, the Secondary Text Analysis, and any work we do in class. Incomplete or missing work will lower your participation grade by one or two points.

Process: 25%

Prospectus: 5 points

Plan: 3 points

Introduction: 2 points

Partial draft: 5 points

Complete draft: 10 points

Policies:

Absences: This class is a seminar, and in order to function its members must be present and participating. If you are absent without an excuse more than once, your class participation grade will be lowered by three points for each unexcused absence. Unexcused absence or lateness during final presentations will entail a double penalty. Please contact me as soon as possible to explain an excused absence. When you are absent for any reason, you should borrow notes from a classmate to catch up on what you missed. If you are absent during a workshop, you should arrange to give your writing partner comments outside of class.

Lateness: Lateness is disruptive to the class. If you are late without a compelling excuse more than once, your class participation grade will be lowered by one point for each unexcused lateness.

Late papers: Grades for late papers will be lowered by three points for each day that they are late. Please turn in a hard copy of your paper to me; email attachments are acceptable only in special circumstances and by prior negotiation. Ask your project advisor whether he or she would prefer printed copies or email attachments for assignments.

Academic integrity is expected. You must do your own work. All sources in your essay must be cited carefully. Violations of the honor code will be taken very seriously. Keep detailed notes from the beginning, and update your bibliography as you add sources. Please consult with me or your advisor if you have questions regarding proper acknowledgement and documentation of borrowed words and ideas.

Accommodations: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see Kelly Deasy in the Office of Academic Advising to register for services. If you receive an accommodation checklist, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Course evaluations: At the end of the semester, you will receive an e-mail asking you to submit online course evaluations. Please fill them out! I pay very careful attention to them. I want to know what you thought so that I can improve this course in the future. Course evaluations are also used by the college during faculty performance reviews.

This syllabus is the combined work of many members of the English department, including Peggy Thompson, Christine Cozzens, Charlotte Artese, and Willie Tolliver. I am grateful to them for their permission to adapt it.