

ENGL 6110-01 (Seminar in American Literature I)
Reading Edgar Allan Poe: Historical and Theoretical Contexts

Summer Session II 2015
MW 10:00 am -12:30 pm
TLC 1204 (Writing Center Seminar Room)

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Office Hours:
MW 9:00 – 10:00 am; 12:30 – 1:00 pm
And by appointment

Course Description: This course will provide a broad textual and scholarly introduction to Edgar Allan Poe's life and writings and then move toward a consideration of Poe's wide-ranging influence on contemporary genre fiction and critical theory. Along the way, we will investigate why this nineteenth-century writer continues to captivate the critical and creative imaginations of academics, fiction writers, cultural theorists, and American popular culture at large. While we will read a few of poems, like "The Raven," our primary focus will be on Poe's fiction and nonfiction essays. We will read selections from David Reynolds (*Beneath the American Renaissance*) and several other scholars of nineteenth century American literature and culture to contextualize Poe's writing as part of broader popular and intellectual currents in the nineteenth century. But we will also consider Poe in the context of "writing ahead," as a precursor to some important developments in genre fiction and cultural/literary theory. Among these, we will consider science fiction and horror, reading some twentieth century and contemporary writers who have been influenced by Poe. For example, along with reading Poe's truly wondrous and strange novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, we will read H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and Mat Johnson's more recent *Pym: A Novel* (2011), a really cool, funny, satirical, thought-provoking revision of Poe's original novel that takes aim at contemporary popular culture in America. We will also consider how contemporary literary theory provides a useful lens for understanding Poe (and vice versa). Among others, we will utilize Julia Kristeva's groundbreaking work on horror, including her influential study on abjection, *Powers of Horror*. The course will not presume any prior knowledge of theory, which can be difficult to navigate the first time through. Indeed, the purpose of including these theorists is to introduce them to graduate students who have an interest in theory and to show what practical applications such theorists might have to interpreting writers like Poe.

Learning Outcomes: 1) Students will demonstrate an enhanced familiarity with the characteristics that have traditionally distinguished literary periods, as well as a developed awareness of the social forces, historical events, and cultural interests that define such epochs; 2) Students will understand and appreciate the significance of an author's unique contributions to nineteenth-century American literary history, as well as comprehend the continuities expressed by those contributions within the American literary traditions; 3) Students will be conversant with the specific cultural context that gave rise to a literary movement, theme, or trope, and comprehend the manner in which the literary productions both shaped and were shaped by that context; 4) Students will demonstrate in both oral and written work a discipline-specific critical facility through convincing and well supported analysis of course-related material; 5) Students will be capable of conducting independent and meaningful course-related research and synthesizing it in the form of a correctly documented research paper prepared according to current professional standards.

Grading Scale: Students will be assigned a letter grade for each assignment ranging from A+ to F based on the following numerical scale. The numerical grade will be used when calculating the final average at the end of the semester. Graduate students can only receive the following grades: A, B, C, F, W, or WF.

97-100 = A+	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	below 70 = F
94-96 = A	84-86 = B	74- 76 = C	
90-93 = A-	80-83 = B-	70- 73 = C-	

Assessment:

10%	2 Presentations on Secondary Criticism
10%	4-5 Response Papers (one page each)
20%	Critical Essay (5-6 pages)
50%	Final Seminar Research Essay (15 pages)
05%	Research Essay Prospectus
05%	Annotated Bibliography / Research Review

Required Texts: Thompson (ed.), *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe* (Norton Anthology); Silverman, *Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* (a biography of Poe); Johnson, *Pym: A Novel*; Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*; Muller and Richardson, *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*. All of these should be available at the bookstore or on Amazon. Other readings will be available electronically via CourseDen.

Preparation and Attendance: You are participants in a professional degree program, and I expect you to take your responsibilities in this seminar seriously. Because this seminar is discussion oriented, your presence, careful preparation, and active participation are crucial to your success. I expect you to be present and on time for all seminar meetings. Readings and other assignments should be completed in advance of each session. I expect you to be prepared to participate actively in our seminar discussions. Because of the collaborative nature of our work, you should make every effort to be present and prepared when others are depending on you. If you are going to be absent, you should let me know in advance. Late work will not be accepted unless you make arrangements with me in advance and you have a legitimate reason (a serious medical or family emergency) for turning in work after it is due. In the case of excused absences, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with me to complete assignments you have missed immediately upon your return. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in a zero or grade reduction for work not submitted on time.

If you find it unavoidable to miss class, be aware of the following guidelines: 1) Two (2) absences are allowed during the summer session. Every absence thereafter will result in a 5 point reduction in your final grade average regardless of the nature of the absence. I do not make distinctions between excused and unexcused absences, so you should use your allotted absences wisely. Unplanned or unexpected occurrences are likely, so be prepared to use absences for these events only; 2) Entering class late and leaving class before it is over will count as an unexcused absence, unless you have a legitimate reason for doing so. Reasons related to outside employment or work in other classes are not legitimate excuses for leaving class early or arriving late; and 3) Excessive absences, tardies, or other disruptions that affect this class may result in your administrative withdrawal from this course with a failing grade.

Seminar Presentations (10%): Beyond your weekly, active participation in seminar discussions, each participant will be responsible facilitating discussion of two reading assignments in the seminar. Presentations will include preparation of a written outline. I will provide you with more information about presentation assignments as we proceed.

Response Papers (10%): To facilitate our discussions in the seminar, participants will prepare one-page response papers to be read/presented to the seminar. You can expect to prepare approximately 4-5 responses during the summer session. Responses should be tightly focused on a single idea or critical question. They can focus on any aspect of the seminar reading assignments for that week. Response papers will be turned in after class on the due date and receive a grade. Additional guidelines for writing response papers will be posted on CourseDen.

Critical Essay (20%): A critical essay (5-6 typewritten pages) will focus on a thesis-based analysis of one of the assigned literary works in the seminar. Guidelines for the essay will be posted on CourseDen prior to the due date. Essays will be assessed on the basis of an argumentative thesis, organizational structure, interpretive content, use of supporting evidence from the literary work, standard grammar, MLA paper format, and writing style.

Seminar Research Essay (50%): The research essay (15 typewritten pages) will represent the culmination of your study in this seminar. Your essay should analyze a primary literary text/s and show evidence of utilizing one of the critical methods or theoretical approaches presented in the seminar. Your essay can focus on any aspect of Poe studies that interests you, pending approval of your research prospectus. While you can elect to focus your study on any of the primary texts written by Poe assigned in this course, you can also analyze other texts not covered in this seminar, as long as they are linked in some specific way to Poe (his texts or ideas). This includes contemporary texts, both written and visual (movies or television). I encourage you to use your research and writing to focus on texts that may be more central to your own emerging professional areas of interest. I *expect* papers from this seminar to be of sufficient quality that with revisions they can be submitted to academic conferences or for possible publication. I will provide you with more specific information about the requirements for the research essay as we proceed. The essay is due on the date listed in the syllabus. A prospectus (5%) and a research review (5%) are required as part of this process. You will have an opportunity to share your prospectus with participants in the seminar.

Extra Credit Policy: I do not give extra credit for additional assignments in this course. Students should focus on successfully completing the requirements listed above.

Writing Format and MLA Documentation Style: All written assignments should utilize Modern Language Association (MLA) format, including use of Times New Roman typeface and 12 point font. Guidelines for all major writing, grammar, and format requirements can be found in the *MLA Handbook*. An abbreviated version of this information can be found on CourseDen. I will use these guidelines when I assess your writing and presentation assignments. I encourage you to be thoroughly familiar with them.

Late Assignment Policy: I realize that extenuating circumstances sometimes occur; therefore, you are allowed to turn in the first critical essay one class period late without penalty, if you make arrangements with me to do so in advance. You must email me prior to class on the day the assignment is due to make your request. This policy applies **ONLY** to the critical essay, not to the final essay which is due on the Friday before grades are due on Monday. Submitting the final research essay late will require processing an incomplete course request. If you think this is going to be necessary, please meet with me in advance to determine if such a request is appropriate. Other written work (especially if it is due as part of a presentation assignment) should be completed on time since it is usually related to specific topics or works we are covering in class. If these assignments cannot be presented or submitted on time, please communicate with me in advance. Assignments that are turned in or presented late will be penalized as follows:

Turned in late (after the start of class) or after the due date: 1/3 of grade (e.g., B to B-)

Turned in one day after due date: 2/3 of grade (e.g., B to C+)

Turned in by the next class period: (e.g., B to C)

Turned in more than one week after due date: docked two grades (e.g., B to D)

Turned in more than two weeks after due date: F (50)

Not turned in at all: Zero

Please note that if you miss or submit late in-class assignments or presentations, additional deductions may be added to the list above.

Assistance with Assignments: I will be available to meet with you prior to the essay and other assignment deadlines to discuss paper topics, possible ideas for a thesis, and other questions you may have about the writing process. While I will not proof-read drafts of your essays, I will answer specific questions that you might have about drafts of any of your assignments, *if* you arrange to meet with me in advance. Please note that I probably will not be able to offer any substantial assistance if you wait until the last minute or request to meet with me the day the assignment is due.

Electronic Devices: Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before entering class. No text messaging or phone calls are permitted during class. Laptops should be used for class-related work only.

CourseDen (D2L) & Technology: This is a technology-supplemented course; therefore, you need to be familiar with CourseDen (<http://westga.view.usg.edu>) and have basic technology skills to participate in this course. Reading and homework assignments, lecture notes, and other supplemental information related to this course will be posted on CourseDen. General information about CourseDen is available online including student tutorials. Let me know if you need assistance with using the UWG online platform.

UWG Email: The official email communication method for all UWG classes is through campus email (MyUWG). UWG students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. This email account is the official means of communication between the university and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email. Please use your UWG email when communicating with me about this course. Do not use outside email accounts. You can also communicate with me about this class through CourseDen.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. If you have a registered disability through UWG that requires accommodation, see me at the beginning of the semester so that I can work with you to determine what accommodations might be needed. For further information about accessibility services: http://www.westga.edu/studentDev/index_8884.php.

Credit Hour Policy: The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

University of West Georgia Honor Code: At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this class, including essays, quizzes, and materials submitted for a grade. The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student's

conduct record at UWG. Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student's account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. It is your responsibility to report instances of academic dishonesty if you see them occur.

UWG Honor Code: <http://www.westga.edu/handbook/59.php>

Department Policy on Disruptive Behavior: Students may be dismissed from any class meeting during which they exhibit behavior that disrupts the learning environment of others. Such behavior includes—but is not limited to—arriving late for class, allowing cell phones to ring, speaking disrespectfully to the instructor and/or to other students, checking email or texting, and using personal electronic devices. Each dismissal of this kind will count as an absence and will be applied toward the course attendance policy. If you have concerns about disruptive behavior or would like to talk about the classroom environment or your participation in the class, please set up a time to meet with me. For more information see http://www.westga.edu/vpsa/index_4615.php

Conferences and Outside Assistance: I am available to meet with you outside of class to discuss your progress in this class, upcoming and graded writing assignments, research topics, or reading assignments we are currently studying. If you are having trouble with the material in this course or have questions and/or concerns you would like to discuss, please set up a time to meet with me. My office hours are listed above, but I will be glad to meet with you at other mutually convenient days and times during the week.

NOTE: Please make a paper and/or electronic copy of all written work you turn in to me, in case it is misplaced or lost. I will not give you credit for work you claim to turn in that I do not have in my possession.