

English 1600
Critical Thinking, Literature, and Composition (3 units)

Professor: Ms. Laura Peet

Virtual Office Hours: Thursdays from 3-4:30pm

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Class Meets: October 5 to Dec 14

Prerequisite: English 1500 with a grade of C or better

Prerequisite knowledge/skills: Before entering the course, the student should be able to

- ✓ Write good expository prose,
- ✓ Read good prose intelligently,
- ✓ Demonstrate techniques in library research and in writing a term paper,
- ✓ Show competency in writing within the four modes of discourse; narration, description, exposition, persuasion,
- ✓ Demonstrate a vocabulary enriched by several hundred new words,
- ✓ Exhibit an understanding of connotation and denotation of meaning in context,
- ✓ Show the origins and developmental stages of the English language, and
- ✓ Demonstrate understanding of grammar and mechanics.

Total Hours: 10-12 hours per week (8 week schedule, half semester)

Catalog Description: This course focuses on critical thinking and composition through reading of essays, poetry, drama, and fiction. It introduces critical evaluation, develops techniques of analytical, critical and argumentative writing, explores inference, evidence, inductive and deductive reasoning, identification of assumptions, underlying conclusions, and other terms of logical thinking, and continues expository writing (8,000 words minimum).

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, a successful student should be able to:

- ✓ Demonstrate critical thinking skills
 - Show mastery of critical thinking terms
 - Recognize errors in thinking
 - Distinguish opinion from fact and valid arguments from unclear and/or invalidly reasoned arguments
- ✓ Read analytically so that they can?
 - Evaluate college-level material from a variety of sources

- Analyze critically and interpret and explain connotations, denotations, implications
- Know the major literary genres
- Find, evaluate, and use outside sources including professional criticism to develop their writing
- ✓ Write essays in which they
 - Use a clear thesis, good organization, and logical support
 - Develop an argument using persuasion, deductive and inductive reasoning, draw inferences, and make conclusions
 - Use developing and supporting details, examples, data and evidence, and substantiate their interpretations with specific evidence from text
 - Use outside sources, carefully researched and correctly documented
 - Improve and correct logic, style, mechanics of their writing
 - Revise content after considering instructor's and peers' written comments.

Type of Class/Course: Degree Credit

Texts:

1. A Handbook or Critical Approaches to Literature (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, and Willingham)
2. Frankenstein by Mary Shelly
3. Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Proctored Exams: None

Assignments: In addition to the *Handbook or Critical Approaches to Literature*, students will read Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress," Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown," Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, and William Shakespeare's tragic play *Hamlet*. Inspired by the in-depth discussions of these texts from the Handbook, the student will create four original essays on each of these texts, demonstrating insight well beyond a basic summary of plot or theme.

Additional Comments: The essays represent the student's demonstration of critical thinking, so analysis of these works that make sophisticated connections with supporting material and examples will be the most relevant and convincing. I want to see evidence of your learning with deep and complex ideas supported by rich, engaging, and pertinent details, as well as evidence of analysis, reflection and insight. This course literally introduces the student to a whole

new world of differing perspectives through deep readings on critical approaches to the four works mentioned above. It is a rare opportunity to learn a lot about a few treasured texts instead of learning a little about many.

Essays: Each essay should be 4–6 pages, double spaced with one inch margins, size 12 font, Times New Roman or Ariel. Each essay should reflect a close reading of the text concerned, revealing greater meaning than a mere synopsis or rehashing of plot. After reading all the approaches and perspectives available on each text, each student will find their imagination ignited with something he or she wants to say about it. The best writing will always quote some part of the text and analyze its meaning or connect it to important theories or establish its current social or cultural relevance. The critical thinking part of the course is where the student comes up with his or her own perspective on the texts studied in class. I will evaluate the essays with an eye towards how well each student avoids logical fallacies in their thinking and analysis. The Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature illuminates many diverse ideas and opinions, opening up each text with insights for the student's mind. Out of that, the student can reliably be expected to form an interpretation of the text's signification or meaning. The student will be able to connect different ideas, images, feelings, or facts by analyzing the text while dressed in the full armor of the history of critical thought that came before. The possible approaches to the text and the ways the student might address their analysis are unlimited. The essays must be intelligent and thoughtful, demonstrating an effort to provide insight beyond a basic summary of plot with proper page reference without summarizing beyond the need to establish his or her insight. The students study a poem, a short story, a play, and a novel in greater depth than is possible in most other classes, so the essays should reflect this fact.

Journals: Each week when an essay is not due, a journal on your reading is due. This will be a one to two page reaction to your reading. It is an opportunity to explore your ideas and feelings regarding what you read. You can try out a thesis for your paper on my too, if you like, but I want it to be a reading response and not a paper draft. The format of the journal should follow the guidelines of the papers.

Readings: There is a pattern to the assignments. Students read the central text under study first (“To His Coy Mistress”, *Frankenstein*, *Hamlet*, and “Young Goodman Brown”) and submit a journal entry, then read the literary approaches to the text from chapters 2–5 and submit a journal entry, then read the literary approaches to the text from chapters 6–9 and submit a journal entry, and then write an essay on the central text for submission.

First Assignment: This assignment should take place before you start the semester officially or soon after starting. Read Chapter One of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* and then read the Epilogue. That will give you a good foundation for the start of the course.

Deadlines and Commitments:

Semester starts October 5th.

Week 1: You should read “To His Coy Mistress” by Andrew Marvell, available in the back of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. Turn in your journal on that reading by Oct. 9th. This is a crucial time not to be late because if I am going to add any students from a waiting list, it will be at this time, and it will be because someone has not been in communication with me at this point in the course. Then, read the sections in chapter 2–5 that pertain to the text you read and turn in your journal entry by Oct 14th.

Week 2: Read the sections in chapters 6–9 that pertain to the text you read in week one and turn in your journal by Oct. 16th. Write essay on “To His Coy Mistress” and turn it in by Oct. 21st.

Week 3: Read *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, available in the TC bookstore, and turn in your journal for that reading by Oct. 26th. Read the sections in chapters 2–5 that pertain to the text and turn in your journal by Oct. 30th.

Week 4: Read the sections in chapters 6–9 that pertain to the text you read in week 5 and turn in that journal by Nov. 2nd. Write an essay on *Hamlet* and turn it in by Nov. 6th.

Week 5: Read *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, available in the TC bookstore, and turn in your journal for that reading by Nov. 10th. Read the sections in chapters 2–5 that pertain to the text you read in week 5 and turn in your journal by Nov. 13th.

Week 6: Read the sections in chapters 6–9 that pertain to the text you read in week 5 and turn in your journal by Nov. 16th. Write an essay on *Frankenstein* and turn it in by Nov. 20th.

Week 7: Read “Young Goodman Brown,” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, available in the back of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* and turn in your journal for that reading by Nov. 23rd. Read the sections in chapters 2–5 that pertain to the text you read in week 6 and turn in your journal by Nov. 30th.

Week 8: Read the sections in chapters 6–9 that pertain to the text you read in week 7 and turn in your journal by Dec. 4th.

Week 9: Write an essay on “Young Goodman Brown” and turn it in by Dec. 11th. Do not be late because I have my own deadline for turning in grades that same week, and I will be hard pressed to meet it.

Attendance: This is based on the student’s ability to turn work in on time and to keep the instructor informed. The instructor may drop students who don’t turn in work when it is due, but don’t assume that I will. Some students have remained in the class and failed it because they didn’t take care of their responsibilities in dropping the course. Falling behind in assignments has a negative domino effect on the rest of the assignments for the semester, and in an online course, you are responsible for reminding yourself when assignments are due. Communicating with me regarding your situation is the key to your success. Don’t be afraid to let me know what is going on if you are going to be a little late. I will not accept any work that is more than a week late for any reason.

Grading:

Essay 1 = 20% of your grade

Essay 2 = 20% of your grade

Essay 3 = 20% of your grade

Essay 4 = 20% of your grade

Journals = 20% of your grade

Plagiarism on any part of a paper will result in zero points. Give credit where credit is due when you use the words or ideas of others in your essays. Use proper MLA formatting for in-text citations and works cited pages.