

**ENGL 1200:
Interpretation of Literature:
Literature and Media**

Instructor:

Class Time:

Office Hours:

E-Mail:

Department Main Office: 308 EPB

Course Supervisor:

Course Modality:

Course Description:

This class explores how literature has reinvented itself over the last two centuries by minding developments in media and communications technologies. How, this class asks, have these developments impacted the themes and forms of literature over time? And what can the history of these changes tell us about our own virtual moment?

With social media platforms and other technologies virtualizing our lives at an unprecedented pace, has the fundamental nature of human experience changed? Do we see ourselves and one another differently through the eyes of Instagram and Zoom? Remember differently through Facebook walls and smartphone lenses, voice recordings and videos? Love and be loved differently across the digital space of Tinder and other dating apps? As art across varied media (literature, film, photography, radio etc.) continues to formally and thematically register these changes, its study provides rare opportunities to reflect on this ongoing restructuring of our private and social realities. We will exploit these opportunities as they present themselves in the work of writers like Hanif Abdurraqib, Sylvia Plath, and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, filmmakers like Charlie Brooker and Spike Jonze, and painters like Charles Sheeler and Richard Milward.

Course Outcomes:

- Students will use and refine their skills of reading, speaking, and writing to respond critically and thoughtfully to literary texts and course themes.
- Students learn to see themselves as readers, recognizing the influence of individual differences (such as gender, ethnicity, geography) and experiences on interpretation.
- Students will consider the connections between individual texts and broader cultural contexts.

Required Texts (located at Hawk Shop)

- *The Bell Jar* (Sylvia Plath, ISBN: 9780060837020, Harper-Collins Publishers, \$9.93)

Required Resources

- Netflix subscription for relevant weeks (\$8.99 for select months)
- Select film rentals (~\$2.99-3.99 per film)

Required Materials

All additional readings are located on ICON (icon.uiowa.edu). **You are responsible for having them handy for class on the day we discuss them.** Failing to bring a copy of the assigned text(s) to class on the day we discuss them will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

Grading Policy

15% Essay 1
15% Essay 2
15% Midterm Exam
15% Final Exam
10% Assignments
15% Discussion Posts
15% Participation

Pass or Fail – Final Portfolio (**Note: this is required for all General Education Literature students. You will not pass if you do not submit.**)

You may access your grades on ICON at any time during the semester, and are always welcome to meet with me to discuss what you are doing well, how you could improve, and what you can work on for future assignments. You will receive an assignment sheet for each major project, explicitly outlining my expectations. I will be as clear as possible, but please ask for clarification if you need it. Doing an adequate job and fulfilling the assignment's basic criteria is considered average (in other words, C-level) work—nothing is really wrong with it, yet nothing is exceptional. To produce B-level work, you must fulfill assignment requirements with a higher-than-average level of effort, competence, creativity, and enthusiasm. In order to receive an A, you must demonstrate exceptional skill, completing the assignment with sophistication, critical insight, creativity, and care. Please note that these grading criteria are department-wide.

Statement on Arithmetic Rounding of Grades

Grades are calculated using the UI computational scheme that assigns letter grades according to an agreed university-wide formula. Results will *not* be rounded up arithmetically. Hence, for example, 79.99 is a C+ not a B-.

Grades are calculated according the following scale:

The top grade is A	B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	F: 59 and below
A: 94-100	B: 84-86	C: 74-76	D: 64-66	
A-: 90-93	B-: 80-83	C-: 70-73	D-: 60-63	

A grade of C

You can earn a C by attending class regularly and punctually, completing with competence all of the work assigned and participating regularly in class activities. This requires 1) adequately meeting all criteria for assignments, and 2) completing reading assignments on time and being prepared to share your opinions on the texts in class and during discussions.

A grade of B

You can earn a B by fulfilling all of the C requirements while demonstrating a significantly higher level of effort and competence on all work assigned for the class. To earn a B you must show an interest in energetically, creatively, and critically engaging with the material and assignments. B work typically reflects independent thinking. The B student is self-reflexive

and often asks questions such as “How can I make my work better? How can I revise this? How can I make my work unique and interesting? How can I help the class have productive and energetic discussions?”

A grade of A

To receive an A in the course, you must surpass the requirements for B work as well as demonstrate high-level critical thinking and original analysis. A students interrogate all sides of issues enthusiastically in order to clarify their own opinions. A students don’t skip class, fail to honor deadlines for any reason, or show up unprepared to discuss the reading. A students will instead be willing to make intellectual discoveries and demonstrate an effort to inquire further into commonly understood issues.

A grade of D

You can earn a D by not fulfilling your responsibilities outlined under “Grade of C” criteria, and/or failing to show respect for or interest in your fellow students’ presentations of ideas. A D student is a student who has many excuses but few completed assignments. For example, D students often fail to turn in reading responses and then claim later that they were ill or had a family emergency. D students are generally disinterested students who refuse to take an active role in making the class energetic and productive.

Final Examination Policies

Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not make travel plans until knowing [this final exam information](#).

There will be a take-home midterm and a final exam for this course, per department requirements. The format for these exams will be provided in time. On the midterm and final, you will be required to identify key literary devices, analyze passages from select texts, and support literary critical claims in ways similar to the work you will be conducting in your smaller assignments, discussion posts, and major essays.

Final Portfolio:

Each student in Gen Ed Lit is required to construct a Reflective Learning Portfolio for the course. The portfolio will must be submitted to ICON at the end of semester. It is one document that includes 1) copies of all major writing assignments and 2) a final 500-word reflective paper on what you have and have not learned in the course. This is not meant to be an ‘evaluation’ of the course material or me as an instructor; rather, you are to consider your own growth as a writer, reader, and thinker throughout the course. This is a departmental requirement and is expected of all Gen Ed Lit students. Failure to submit this assignment will result in the student receiving an F for the course, as per department guidelines.

24/7 Policy for Discussing Graded Work: With regard to any assignment at any point in the semester, I am happy to speak with you about what you did well, how you could improve, and what you can work on for future assignments. In order to keep conversations relevant, constructive, and useful to you, please discuss graded assignments with me no sooner than 24 hours after the assignment is returned and no later than 7 days after return. I will gladly email with you to set aside office-hour time or set up an appointment to talk in person. **I will not discuss grades over e-mail. You must come to office hours or schedule an appointment if you wish to discuss grades.**

Absences and Attendance:

Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities. See the [CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](#). Students may use [this absence form](#) to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused.

I expect you to be in class and on time every day; absences should only occur in rare and unavoidable circumstances, as a missed day means missing out on instruction, learning time, and thinking opportunities. Anytime you are absent, look for ICON updates and check with a peer to find out what you missed. In the case of an **excused absence** (those caused by documented illnesses, family emergencies, religious obligations, or authorized University activities), the student will be offered a certain amount of leeway to receive credit for work missed. However, that finite amount of leeway hinges upon the student discussing such situations with me. Students are responsible for providing documentation for excused absences and for finding out about work missed during absences. (You can find an “Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class” form on the Registrar’s website under “Forms for Students.”)

An **unexcused absence** will negatively affect the student’s grade, including that of participation in discussion and other class activities. Each absence will reduce your class participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. You also cannot earn points for reading notes, participation, or in-class activities on days when you are absent. Either a late arrival to class or leaving class early will result in half an absence. Please make an effort to be in class on time, ready to participate as soon as class begins. Any student who is absent for more than a total equivalent to three weeks of course meetings risks failing the whole course.

Any time you are absent or late, you will want to look for ICON updates and check with a peer to find out what you missed. **You are responsible for getting any notes from a classmate if you miss class.** I recommend exchanging contact information with a classmate early in the semester in case of such an event. **Please note that missing class is not an excuse for failing to submit an assignment on time. Assignments are given well in advance and should be nearly complete by the due date; you should not be just beginning them.**

Workload Expectations:

For each semester hour credit in this course students should expect to spend two hours per week preparing for class sessions. This is a three-credit hour course, so your average out-of-class preparation per week is six hours. This will fluctuate throughout the semester; some weeks will be a bit lighter and others more intense.

Participation:

Please remember it is the quality of your comments that matters most, not the quantity. In-class comments should demonstrate that you have spent time thinking critically about the text and can offer us new insights that advance class conversation. **If you are not participating in class, then it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to earn a B or better. The expectation is that you will use class time to develop as a thinker and help your classmates do the same.**

Submitting Written Work and Late Assignment Policy

All outside written work must be uploaded to the designated ICON dropbox by the date and time

stated on the reading schedule. Technical difficulties are not an excuse for late work. It is your responsibility to make sure you see a confirmation screen—ICON has this feature built-in, so you will know if something doesn't upload. For work that is submitted electronically, **make sure you use a Word document** and that it uploads successfully. **I will only accept assignments in Word (.doc or .docx) format. Microsoft word is available for free via the university.** If your assignment does not upload it may be because the document is not a word document.

Late major assignments will be docked 1/2 letter grade for every day late up to three days after the due date, beginning as soon as the original due date has passed. A paper due at 8 p.m. turned in at 8:30 p.m. that night, for example, will be docked 1/2 of a letter grade. Late major essays submitted over three days after the due date will not be accepted. Late minor assignments will not be accepted.

If necessary, **please reach out ahead of time to request assignment extensions.** More often than not, I am willing to extend deadlines when politely asked, so please feel free to reach out should something come up during the semester. When granted, of course, assignment extensions will not result in late penalties.

Calendar of Course Assignments

This tentative calendar is **subject to change**. Updates will be posted to ICON and/or shared in class. **Students are responsible for tracking course activities, readings, and assignments as the semester progresses.**

A Note of Caution

Many of the texts we are reading depict or discuss violence. Every person in our class brings years of lived experiences with them into the classroom, and **all class discussions should be respectful** of this fact. If you are at all concerned about the content of any texts, please don't hesitate to discuss your concerns with me. Taking care of yourself is crucial for academic success. I have listed confidential resources beneath the university's "Sexual Harassment" policy. *Note midterm dates and significant deadlines. The master calendar can be found here: <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/academic-calendar>.*

Week 1: Virtual Reality

Tuesday: Introductions

Thursday:

Watch: Charlie Brooker, Michael Schur, Rashida Jones; dir. Joe Wright, "Nosedive" (2016), *Black Mirror* (2011-) (Netflix)

Read: Hanif Abdurraqib - "And What Good Will Your Vanity Be When The Rapture Comes" [<http://www.bkmag.com/2016/11/14/we-arrived-as-witness/>]

Listen: Hanif Abdurraqib - "And What Good Will Your Vanity Be When The Rapture Comes" [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZxsRiKJje8>]

Handout: **Assignment 1: Reflection**

Week 2: Social (?) Media

Tuesday:

Watch: *The Hater*, dir. Jan Komasa (2020, Netflix) (*trigger warning: violence)

Submit to ICON and share: **Assignment 1: Reflection**

Thursday:

Read: Charles Dickens, "The Signal Man" [on ICON]

Review: "Luddites' Nightmares" Series [on ICON]

Handout: **Assignment 2: Short Story**

Week 3: Social (?) Media

Tuesday:

Continue: Charles Dickens, "The Signal Man"

Continue: "Luddites' Nightmares" Series [on ICON]

Submit to ICON and share: **Assignment 2: Short Story**

Thursday:

Read: Hanif Abdurraqib, "The Crown Ain't Worth Much"

Listen: Hanif Abdurraqib, "The Crown Ain't Worth Much"

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqIrUf-SCFw>]

Read: Review: “Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib’s The Crown Ain’t Worth Much Elevates the Terrain,” [<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2017/09/pending-hanif-willis-abdurraqibs-the-crown-aint-worth-much-elevates-the-terrain>]

Read: Interview: Julia Cooper Interview [<https://hazlitt.net/feature/brief-bright-collection-hours-interview-hanif-willis-abdurraqib>]

Post: **Discussion Post 1**

Week 4: Poetry as Letters

Tuesday:

Read: W.D. Snodgrass, “Heart’s Needle” (1959)

Listen: Snodgrass reading Cycle 7, “Heart’s Needle”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZojrSj_O20]

Read: Poetry Foundation biography [<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/w-d-snodgrass>]

Post: **Discussion Post 2**

Thursday:

Continue: Read: W.D. Snodgrass, “Heart’s Needle” (1959)

Week 5: Poetry as Letters

Tuesday:

Continue: Read: W.D. Snodgrass, “Heart’s Needle” (1959)

Present: One Cycle of “Heart’s Needle”

Thursday:

Continue: Presentations on “Heart’s Needle”

Handout: **Essay 1 Prompt**

Week 6: Instructional Break

Week 7: Mediating Trauma

Tuesday:

Read: Edward Kamau Brathwaite, “Kumina” from *Born to Slow Horses* (2005)

Read: Brathwaite Bio (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/kamau-brathwaite>)

Listen: to Brathwaite an extract of “Kumina” (<https://youtu.be/PbHQAK2J7NA>, Brathwaite begins at 1:58)

Post: **Discussion Post 3**

Thursday:

Read “Hawk”

Continue: “Kumina”

Friday:

Optional Submission: **Body Paragraph**

Week 8: Essay Week

Tuesday:

Bring: **Intro Paragraph for Workshop**

Thursday:

Watch: *Her*, dir. Spike Jonze (2013) (Netflix)

Post: **Discussion Post 4**

Discuss midterm format

Saturday: **Submit Essay 1 on ICON**

Week 9: Midterm Week

Tuesday: **Midterm Review**

Thursday: **Midterm**

Week 10: Media Spectacles

Tuesday:

Watch: Nocturnal Animals (2016), dir. Tom Ford (*trigger warning: sexual violence)

Read: Sylvia Plath, “Daddy” and “Lady Lazarus” (1965)

Post: **Discussion Post 5**

Thursday:

Watch: Night Crawler (2014), dir. Dan Gilroy

Continue: Sylvia Plath, “Daddy” and “Lady Lazarus” (1965)

Post: **Discussion Post 6**

Week 11: Media Spectacle

Tuesday:

Read: Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963), Ch. 1-4

Post: **Discussion Post 7**

Thursday:

Read: Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963), Ch. 5-8

Post: **Discussion Post 8**

Week 12: Media Spectacle

Tuesday:

Read: Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963), Ch. 9-14

Post: **Discussion Post 9**

Thursday:

Read: No additional reading

Write/Share: **Assignment 3: Psychic Landscape**

Week 13: Media Spectacle

Tuesday:

Read: Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963), Ch. 15-20

Post: **Discussion Post 10**

Thursday:

Watch: *Sylvia* (2003), dir. Christine Jeffs

Post: **Discussion Post 11**

Week 14: Song, Sound and Sense

Tuesday:

Read: Ted Hughes, “A Short Film”

Read: Ted Hughes, “Cadenza”

Post: **Discussion Post 12**

Thursday:

Write/Present: **Assignment 4: Song Lyrics Close Reading Assignment**

Week 15: Plot Lines

Tuesday:

Watch: *Stranger than Fiction* (2006), dir. Marc Forster

Post: **Discussion Post 13**

Thursday:

Final Review

Essay 2 Due by Class

Week 16: Finals Week

Final Exam Due

Portfolio Due