

English 1100, Section 175  
Literary Interpretation:  
The Value of Literature for Authors, Readers, and Society  
Fall 2018

Instructor: Mr. Luke McCarthy  
Email: [lucas.j.mccarthy@wmich.edu](mailto:lucas.j.mccarthy@wmich.edu)  
Website: <http://lucasjmccarthy.com>  
Office: Sprau Tower, Room 712

Time/Day: 10:00-11:40 a.m. T/Th  
Room: Dunbar 2210  
Final Exam: Thursday, Dec. 13, 8-10 a.m.  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

More office hours are available upon request. Please do not hesitate to email me if you want to arrange a time to meet!

**Required Course Materials (All Available at the WMU Bookstore):**

- Norton Introduction to Literature, Shorter Twelfth Edition
  - Editor: Kelly J. Mays
  - W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
  - ISBN-10: 0393623572
  - ISBN-13: 9780393623574
- James Joyce, *Dubliners*
  - Norton Critical Edition
  - Editor: Margot Norris
  - W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
  - ISBN-10: 0393978516
  - ISBN-13: 978-0393978513

**Course Description**

An introduction to the study of literature, aimed at developing abilities to read literature and write about it with skill, sensitivity, and care. Students will read poetry, drama, and prose fiction, and through the writing of several papers will be introduced to terms and methods of formal study of literature. Course required for entry into most upper-level English courses. This course satisfies General Education Area I: Fine Arts. Prerequisite: ENGL 1050 or BCM 1420 or BIS 1420 or IEE 1020; with a grade of "C" or better in any prerequisite. 4 hours

**Course Overview**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of literature while bridging the gap between basic composition courses and more advanced English courses, which generally do not focus primarily on developing composition skill. Instead, the study of literature, as a field of study within the humanities, involves analyzing textual evidence for a variety of other reasons that we will explore over the course of the semester. For that exploration, the principle focus of this course will be on covering the major concepts, methods, and theories of literary analysis while considering this question: what value does literature provide? To answer this question, the class will engage in a guided but student-led inquiry into what value literature can provide to authors, individual readers, and society. Furthermore, the class will consider how the conscious or unconscious promotion of particular values can affect the interpretation of

literary works (and vice versa). In the process of addressing these issues, students will read and consider examples of fiction, poetry, and drama drawn from a wide array of authors and time periods. Students will also do a “deep dive” into a particular work of literature by a specific author: James Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914). While this course is not primarily a composition course, particular attention will also be made to developing the skills students need to present original arguments that are clear, well-organized, ethically supported, and persuasive. By building on a succession of assignments and short papers, students will culminate the semester with a paper on a work of the student’s choice that models the quality that students will face in upper level English courses. The final exam will consist of multiple in-class essay questions covering the topics that the class discussed over the course of the semester. By the end of the semester, students will gain an understanding of literary study as a valuable enterprise that provides a unique and significant perspective on humanity through its focus on literary texts.

### **Course Calendar**

You will be required to read selections of short fiction, poetry, drama, and critical essays as the semester progresses. Assignment sheets will be provided for each assignment prior to each due date. All the requirements and due dates for your assignments and required readings will be detailed at the class calendar located here: <https://lucasjmccarthy.com/teaching/engl-1100-fall-2018/engl-1100-calendar-fall-2018/>. Assignment sheets and handouts will be provided through the course calendar. Links will be provided in the entries for particular class periods and in a complete list at the bottom of the page. The calendar will also notify you of any material that, due to copyright distribution restrictions, is being provided through Elearning instead. That calendar will serve as the official record of what is due and when. I will be updating and revising the calendar as the semester continues. I suggest you bookmark it, because you will need to look at it constantly.

### **Course Recaps**

After every class, I intend to provide a concise summary of the class discussion as a blog post on my website. Links to those posts can be found on the right side of the course calendar, and at the top of every page on my site (click “posts”). The direct link is here: <https://lucasjmccarthy.com/posts/>. Besides providing students who miss class an account of what was covered, the posts will be a resource to help you study for the final exam. If after class I have any additional thoughts to add to that class period’s discussion, I may also include those in the class recap. Because I intend this class to be an ongoing inquiry by students, I will also be using the class recaps to document the most significant unanswered questions that arise as we progress through the semester. Hopefully, your contributions to class discussions will help address some or all of those questions. Therefore, I would get in the habit of reading the latest course recap to help remind you of where our ongoing inquiry is taking us. Finally, I will not require anyone to do so, but if you respond in a comment on my site to any course recaps, I will consider that contribution when determining participation for that class period. Those responses can be anything you like, provided that it is somehow related to the course recaps. Please be advised, however, that my site and any comments on it will be public, so please do not post anything you do not want the world to read. You will need to make sure that your

post includes sufficient identifying information, such as your first name, somewhere in the comment so I can tell who is providing the comment.

### **Additional Resources:**

- <https://elearning.wmich.edu/>
  - I will be providing various class materials and learning aids through Elearning. I will also update the site with your grades and attendance records on a regular basis. While most assignments will need to be printed out and turned in during class, you will also be turning in certain assignments through Elearning. For those assignments, you must submit documents as a Word or PDF file in the appropriate Dropbox for the assignment.
    - You can generally save your work as a PDF by selecting “save as” in your program’s menus or choosing to “print to PDF” in your printer options.
    - If you submit multiple versions of the same thing, I will look at whatever the last submission is unless you instruct me otherwise.
    - If technical difficulties prevent uploading the work to dropbox, then students may email the work to me as a last resort.
  - It is your responsibility to know how to access the site and submit your work.
- <https://lucasjmccarthy.com/>
  - My site, including the course calendar and class recaps.
- [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_style\\_introduction.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html)
  - The Purdue Owl MLA guide is an excellent resource for those needing guidance on following proper MLA citation.

### **Grade Scale**

Your final grade will be based on the following percentages:

A (4.0):	93-100%	C/B (2.5):	78-82%	D (1.0):	60-67%
B/A (3.5):	88-92%	C (2.0):	73-77%	E (0):	59 and below
B (3.0):	83-87%	D/C (1.5):	68-72%		

At the end of the semester, I will round each student’s calculated grade to the nearest percentage. Example: a 72.513 calculated semester grade (a possible D/C) will be adjusted to a 73% (C).

### **Course Requirements**

Your final grade in the course will be calculated from the following weighted components, most of which will be discussed in more detail in subsequent assignment sheets:

- Portfolio: 15% of your overall grade.

- Near the end of the semester, a portfolio consisting of a reading journal and responses to various group questions will be turned in and graded as an entirety.
- Journal:
  - Throughout the semester, you will be keeping a journal summarizing the daily readings and including your personal reactions to those readings.
  - Each class period, be prepared to read portions of your journal to the rest of the class.
- Group Questions:
  - Prior to most class periods, there will also be questions posed to various groups of students that will require a written response. I will constantly be changing groups, and each student will need to respond individually by writing no more than a page. I may give groups time during class to discuss with each other what they wrote. Later, I will ask members of the group to share their thoughts with the entire class.
- All journal entries and question responses can be entered into the same notebook and/or collected in the same folder. They do not need to be typed and will not be graded on grammar or spelling. These are expected to be quick, stream-of-conscious writings that “prime” your mind for class discussion, so do not spend considerable time on them.
- Grading: All students whose portfolios show a good faith effort to do the assigned work and complete the readings on time will receive an A (100%). Failing to do so will result in a lower grade depending on my judgment of how much of the semester coursework was completed: either a B (85%), a C (75%), a D (60%) or an E (0%)
- Quizzes—5%
  - Through Elearning, I will be periodically assigning various short quizzes due before the next class period. These quizzes will be timed and cannot be resubmitted, so you will need to be prepared to finish them once you start them. The quizzes may be of various formats, including multiple choice, matching, or short answer. I will detail the format, time limit, and general subject matter for each quiz when they are assigned.
- Reading Responses: 10% of your overall grade.
  - Short Essays: You will each need to write four 1-3 page essays due on individually assigned days.
  - Creative Project: You will each be responsible for a creative project related to current events that you will present to the class on individually assigned days.
  - Each of your scheduled due dates will be provided on a page that will be accessible through a links on the class calendar.
  - Grading: The short essays and the creative project are together graded purely on how many of them you completed on time:
    - All 5: A (100%)
    - 4: B (85%)
    - 3: C (75%)

- 2: D (60%)
  - 1 or less: E (0%)
- For each essay to qualify as completed for grading purposes, they must generally be clear, well-organized, ethically supported, and persuasive. If for some reason a given essay fails to meet these standards, I may give you an opportunity to revise it by the end of the semester.
- The complexity of the assignment for each essay will increase as the semester progresses, so I would make a special effort to complete the easiest ones assigned at the start of the semester.
- Seminar Paper Revision Process: 10%.
  - Primary work choice: 5% of your Revision Process Grade
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Rough Thesis: 5% of your Revision Process Grade.
  - Annotated Bibliography: 40% of your Revision Process Grade
  - Updated Rough Thesis & Outline: 15% of your Revision Process Grade
  - Rough Draft: 20% of your Revision Process Grade
  - Individual Conference: 15% of your Revision Process Grade.
- Final Exam: 25%
- Seminar Paper Final Draft: 25%
- Class Participation: 10%

### **Classroom Participation**

After our first class period, I will be assigning each student a participation grade each class based on my observations of each student's contributions within the classroom. To do well in this class, you will need to be present on time, be prepared, and be an active participant in our classroom community. Your classroom participation will be graded on all the activities we may do in the classroom, such as class discussions, classroom writing activities, and peer review of another student's work. Each of you will be called on to discuss any assigned readings, and no one can expect to hide in the back of the room. Periodically, you might be asked to respond to a creative writing prompt. You are not expected to be a creative genius, but you should still try to have fun and do your best.

Each of us is expected to be respectful and supportive of the work of others. Your classroom participation grade will be based in part on whether you treat your classmates with the dignity and respect they deserve. Hate speech, bullying, or disrespectful treatment of others will not be tolerated.

Please expect others in our class to read your work. Furthermore, I may ask you to share your work with the class or may discuss your work myself with the rest of the class. While our classroom is a safe place, I suggest you write about topics you feel comfortable sharing with others.

Your class participation each period will be graded based on the simplified grading system below:

- Check: Student showed a good faith effort to do his or her best work.

However, some of you may receive the following instead:

- Check Plus: Student showed exceptional insight or effort.
- Check Minus: Student showed an insufficient effort to do his or her best work
- Incomplete: Student failed to attend class, failed to participate at a level deserving credit, or failed to turn in work deserving credit.

If for whatever reason I cannot differentiate the basis for distinguishing work worth a check plus from a check or check minus, I will default to entering the grade as a check plus. For example, if we just watch a movie in class, I might not have sufficient opportunity or evidence to distinguish exceptional participation that day. In that situation, I would instead record a check plus for everyone instead of checks.

For calculating your final grade, the check system will be converted to grade percentages as follows:

- Check Plus: 100% (A)
- Check: 85% (B)
- Check Minus: 73% (C)
- Incomplete: 0% (F)

Because none of us can be excellent every class period, your lowest three class participation grades will be dropped.

### **Late Work**

**Unless stated otherwise elsewhere, all assignments must be printed out and physically turned into me during class on the day the assignments are due.** If you cannot make it to class but still want to turn it in on time, you must turn it in electronically through Elearning as a Word or PDF file using the “Assignments” dropbox by the start of the class period or else it will be late.

You can turn in late work at any time prior to 11:59 pm on the Friday of final’s week by uploading it the “Late Work” dropbox, and I will grade it. However, I cannot guarantee that I will have time to provide significant feedback on late work. The grade of any late work turned in after the due date will be reduced by 3% each day late to a maximum of a 15% reduction. For your reading responses, this policy will impact how much any late papers contribute to your total response grade. For instance, while turning in four papers is generally sufficient for an 85%, if one of those papers was a day late, the final grade would be a 82%.

### **Attendance Policy**

You should plan on attending every class period. Rather than track a grade for each in-class activity, your final grade is based on the premise that you were present in class and participating. You are therefore only allowed a maximum of three absences before grade penalties will be assessed. For every absence after the third, irrespective of cause, your overall final grade drops by ONE GRADE for each additional absence. For example, a

student with 5 absences whose overall grade at the end of the term is 93% (an A) will drop 2 grades (A and BA). Thus, the final grade will be a B.

I will be taking attendance at the start of every class. If you fail to be in class on time when I take attendance, you will be marked absent. If you arrive late to class, you will need to stay after class to persuade me to change your record from absent to present. I will not discuss your late arrival during class. I dislike having to give directions again and/or make the rest of the class wait because someone has arrived late. Because arriving late disturbs the class, you should always be in class on time if you want to ensure being recorded as present. If you leave early, you will need to persuade me on why I should not change your attendance for the day to absent. Being present entails being present from the moment class begins until the moment the class ends.

Except for exceptional circumstances, I generally do not excuse absences. Requests for being excused, such as for serious illness or team activities should be accompanied with documentation and/or contact from other university officials. Absences due to religious observances should be discussed with me prior to the absence. Generally, you should save your absences for unexpected events, like car trouble or a death in the family.

Because attendance involves more than merely being physically present, if you seriously disturb my classroom, refuse to participate during class, or otherwise violate the text or spirit of university policies or the policies contained in this syllabus, I will mark you as absent.

### **Patterns of Poor Attendance**

WMU is committed to ensuring that all students succeed. As part of this initiative, I will be reporting individual student attendance problems to WMU's registrar's office. If you have missed more than three classes or if I see a pattern of poor attendance that may jeopardize your success in this class, I will report this to the registrar. I do this not only because of the importance of academic success but also because I will be concerned for your welfare. Poor attendance can be a sign that a student is going through a difficult period and needs help. If the registrar's office determines that a student is missing multiple classes or appears to be in jeopardy of failing a class or multiple classes, they may contact your residence hall director, resident assistant, or other student support person at the university to make sure you are well and to see what can be done to help you succeed.

### **Perfect Attendance**

At the end of the semester, anyone who has never had an unexcused absence during the entire semester will have his or her overall grade adjusted up by 1%. Many times, I have had this seemingly small bonus be enough to earn a student a higher grade.

### **Computers**

You are required to have computer access for work and correspondence for this class. If you do not have a personal computer, there are computer labs on campus (such as in Dunbar 4214 or the library).

Having your own laptop could be useful. If you have a laptop, you may bring it to class. However, you may only use your laptop when I give you permission to do so. Your laptop cannot distract you from classroom discussions.

Having your laptop open when I have not given you permission to do so will negatively affect your classroom participation grade and may result in you being marked as absent. If you need your laptop to keep notes, please talk to me beforehand for permission.

### **Cellphones**

Cellphone use is strictly prohibited in our class. I expect all cellphones to be turned off. If I see you using a cellphone, I will only ask you once to put it away. If I see you using it again that class or your cellphone becomes a routine distraction each class, I will ask you to stay after class to discuss whether I should start marking you as absent due to cellphone use. I will not count you as attending class if you spend the time interacting with your cellphone instead. Please be aware that trying to hide that you are using your cellphone under your desk or behind your body does not work. I know what you are doing.

If for some reason it is necessary for you to check a cellphone during class, you will need to ask for my permission beforehand. My response will generally be “no,” except in special situations—such as if you are a parent who needs to stay available for your minor children.

### **Email**

You are encouraged to contact me via email should you have any questions or concerns. Please allow me at least 24 hours to respond. I cannot guarantee I will see your email about your paper sent 4 hours before it is due!

### **Pen and Paper**

Please come prepared for class with paper and a pen or pencil.

### **Assignment Format**

I expect all assignments and project materials to be submitted in Times New Roman, size 12 font, double spaced, MLA format, with one-inch margins, and no extra space between paragraphs.

### **Academic Honesty Policy**

Students are responsible for making themselves aware of and understanding the University policies and procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. The academic policies addressing Student Rights and Responsibilities can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=974> and the Graduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=25&navoid=1030>. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s) and if you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing.

You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

### **Conduct**

Students and instructors are responsible for making themselves aware of and abiding by the “Western Michigan University Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Stalking Policy and Procedures” related to prohibited sexual misconduct under Title IX, the Clery Act and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Campus Safe. Under this policy, responsible employees (including instructors) are required to report claims of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator or designee (located in the Office of Institutional Equity). Responsible employees are not confidential resources. For a complete list of resources and more information about the policy see [www.wmich.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.wmich.edu/sexualmisconduct).

In addition, students are encouraged to access the Code of Conduct, as well as resources and general academic policies on such issues as diversity, religious observance, and student disabilities:

- Office of Student Conduct [www.wmich.edu/conduct](http://www.wmich.edu/conduct)
- Division of Student Affairs [www.wmich.edu/students/diversity](http://www.wmich.edu/students/diversity)
- University Relations Office <http://www.wmich.edu/registrar/calendars/interfaith>
- Disability Services for Students [www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices)

### **Writing Center**

The Western Michigan University Writing Center is a free consultation service for all WMU students, where experienced writing consultants help writers of all levels and all abilities. Consultants help writers to determine strategies for effective communication and to make academically responsible choices at any stage in the writing process and on assignments in any field of study. Both appointments and drop-in sessions are available. The Writing Center is located in 1343 Ellsworth Hall. To learn more information, including hours of operation, and to make an appointment, visit the website: [www.wmich.edu/casp/writingcenter](http://www.wmich.edu/casp/writingcenter).

### **Students with Disabilities**

Both in compliance with and in the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I would like to work with you if you have a disability that is relevant to the work in this course. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss reasonable academic accommodations, please contact me in a timely fashion at the beginning of the semester. You may also contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at 269-387-2116 (or at [wmich.edu/disabilityservices](http://wmich.edu/disabilityservices))

NOTE: If you have questions regarding access to the materials for this course, you should contact me immediately.

### **Fifteen Minute Rule**

If for whatever reason I am fifteen minutes late for the start of our class, please check your email. If there is no email from me stating otherwise, you are free to go.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By participating in class discussions and assignments, the average student in this course will be able to do all of the following by the end of the semester:

- I. Identify under time constraints eighty percent of (1) the major concepts, methods, and theories of analysis of fiction, poetry, and drama covered in the course, AND (2) a list that the class develops together of the kinds of value that authors, individual readers, and society can find in literature;
- II. While using examples from fiction, poetry, or drama, provide a clear, well-organized, and accurate summary under time constraints of (1) the major concepts, methods, and theories of literary scholarship, AND (2) the different values that the class has identified together for what authors, individual readers, and society can gain from literature;
- III. Use a given concept, method, or theory of literary analysis to present a clear, well-organized, ethically supported, and persuasive argument that (1) interprets the meaning of an example of fiction, poetry, or drama, AND (2) promotes an identified literary value for authors, individual readers, and/or society;
- IV. Using a particular work of fiction, poetry, or drama, present a clear, well-organized, ethically supported, and persuasive argument breaking down (1) how multiple concepts, methods, or theories of literary analysis could affect—individually and together—an interpretation of the same work’s meaning, AND (2) how authors, individual readers, and society could each find similar or different kinds of literary value in the same work.
- V. Present a clear, well-organized, ethically supported, and persuasive appraisal of (1) how well a particular combination of various concepts, methods, and theories used in the analysis of the same work of fiction, poetry, or drama could together suggest its meaning, AND (2) how well that interpretation provides multiple kinds of literary value for authors, individual readers, and/or society;
- VI. Compose an original analysis of a work of fiction, poetry, or drama that (1) is clear, well-organized, ethically supported, and persuasive, (2) uses a combination of concepts, methods, and theories of literary analysis, AND (3) argues for an interpretation of the text that best maximizes its literary value, given a particular academic audience.