

Humanities 270

Revolutions in Literary Analysis

Meeting Time: M/T/W/R/F 9:00 am-12:00 pm
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Term: May 2018
Office Phone: 309-556-3287
Office Hours: M/F 12:00-2:00 pm

UNIVERSITY COURSE DESCRIPTION

For decades, microanalysis of texts (close reading) has been the cornerstone of literary analysis. This course examines the relationship between close reading and a revolutionary trend in literary analysis: distant reading. Students will learn distant reading methodology (including data analysis and visualization) to reinvigorate the interpretation of literary history.

SECTION DESCRIPTION

Whether students realize it or not, they have been taught to analyze literature with close reading, a methodology for interpreting and understanding small selections of text in service of a larger argument. In the first unit of this course, students will examine the emergence of this methodology in the early twentieth century while considering its assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses as an analytical tool. In the second unit of the course, students will learn the basic processes of distant reading, a new methodology for the study of literary texts built on the assumption that close reading's microscopic scale inhibits a broader, data-driven understanding of literary history. At the end of the semester, students will utilize both close reading and distant reading methodologies to create final research projects focused on a self-generated literary or cultural topic. Throughout the semester, students will use two nineteenth-century novels that fictionalize the reading process as primary research sources. Although HUM 270 requires students to utilize free digital tools for data-driven analysis of literature, no previous technological knowledge is required. Students are free to use the computers in our classroom lab or bring their own devices.

TEXTS

All readings will be provided in electronic form. However, if students wish to purchase physical copies of the primary texts, they should utilize these editions:

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. 2nd ed., Broadview, 2002. ISBN: 9781551114798

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein: The Original 1818 Text*. 3rd ed., Broadview, 2012. ISBN: 9781554811038

TOOLS

Students will be required to learn the basic processes of distant reading. These free tools are the most appropriate for beginners:

Google Books Ngram Viewer, <https://books.google.com/ngrams>

Lexos, <http://lexos.wheatoncollege.edu>

Voyant Tools, <https://voyant-tools.org>

GENERAL EDUCATION: LITERATURE CATEGORY GOALS

In keeping with the overall goals of the General Education program, in particular the goals of developing students' capacities for critical thinking, intellectual independence, and imagination, their understanding of cultural relationships, their capacities for expressing and communicating ideas, and their abilities to make judgments and assess value, all in the context of active learning, courses in the "Literature" category seek to:

- 1) help students to recognize and understand the importance of the structure and style of a literary text;
- 2) encourage students to engage their imaginative faculties when they read;
- 3) enable students to connect the literature they read to the cultural and social contexts in which it was written or which it portrays;
- 4) develop students' ability to interpret literary texts.

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

Final grades will be calculated according to the following distribution:

Close Reading	10 %
Distant Reading Self-Analysis	15 %
Independent Research Project	25 %
Midterm Exam	10 %
Final Exam	15 %
Reading Quizzes	10 %
Participation	15 %

GRADING OF COURSE PERFORMANCE

All work will be graded on a 100-point scale. At the end of the semester, final grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

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

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

The requirements and grading criteria for a particular assignment will be described on a separate assignment sheet. Assignments may be summarized as follows:

Close Reading: a short essay (900 words) that utilizes close reading methodology in order to support an interpretive argument about the first half of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*

Distant Reading Self-Analysis: an essay (1,500 words with at least five substantial visualizations) that uses distant reading methodologies to examine students' own writing

Independent Research Project: a project (2,400 words or equivalent with at least eight substantial visualizations) in which students combine close reading with distant reading of a literary corpus (of at least five texts) in order to answer a research question

Midterm Exam: an exam in which students demonstrate proficiency in close reading

Final Exam: an exam in which students demonstrate proficiency in distant reading

Reading Quizzes: brief, unannounced quizzes at the beginning of course sessions to verify student reading and comprehension

*Note: Late work will not be accepted. Students must pass the Close Reading, Distant Reading Self-Analysis, Independent Research Project, Midterm Exam, and Final Exam in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

PARTICIPATION

HUM 270 combines a critical history of traditional literary interpretation (close reading) with new approaches to understanding textual trends (distant reading). As such, students will frequently engage in discussion of both literary texts and reading methodologies. Therefore, active participation throughout the semester is required of all students. Expected types of participation include: completing the assigned readings, contributing daily to course discussions, asking incisive questions, responding respectfully to classmates' ideas, and approaching all course activities with enthusiasm. Students should also refrain from using cellphones, tablets, or laptops for purposes unrelated to HUM 270. Participation will be assessed midway through the course and at the end of the term. Additionally, students may ask for an assessment of their participation score at any point during the term.

ATTENDANCE

Students are required to attend all sessions of HUM 270. However, students are granted two no-questions-asked absences to account for emergencies, illnesses, etc. Beginning with the third missed session, students will receive a penalty of five points for each absence. For example, a final grade of 90 would be lowered to 80 in the event of four total absences. The professor does not discriminate between excused and unexcused absences (with the exception of university-sponsored events); therefore, students must use their two no-questions-asked absences wisely.

OFFICE HOURS/EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Office hours will be held between 12:00 and 2:00 pm on Monday and Friday. Students are encouraged to visit office hours with questions, concerns, or course-related topics for discussion. If students would like to meet at another time, they should contact the professor via email in order to set up an appointment. Students also should feel free to email the professor at other times with questions or concerns. However, the professor requires face-to-face meetings to review drafts. The professor checks his email inbox every weekday at 2 pm. In order to receive an answer on a particular day, students must email the professor before this time.

SUBMISSION OF WORK

All documents should be submitted electronically via Google Docs before the beginning of the listed course session. All student work will be returned electronically with grades and comments.

PLAGIARISM

Because HUM 270 is an exploration of literary and cultural ideas, intellectual dishonesty will not be tolerated. As such, students should not use the ideas or language of others in course assignments without proper attribution. Additionally, students should not repurpose assignments from previous courses. Cases of plagiarism may lead to failure of the assignment or course. Students can and should ask the professor for help or clarification related to citations at any point in the semester. However, they should seek this guidance before submitting their work.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Students are expected to complete the listed readings before the designated date. Assignments should be submitted at the beginning of the listed class session.

Unit I: Close Reading

5/9 (W)	Course Introduction
5/10 (H)	John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Cleanth Brooks, <i>The Well Wrought Urn</i> (139-52)
5/11 (F)	Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "What Was 'Close Reading'?: A Century of Method in Literary Studies"
5/14 (M)	Jane Austen, <i>Northanger Abbey</i> (Chapter 1-15)
5/15 (T)	Close Reading Due
5/16 (W)	Jane Austen, <i>Northanger Abbey</i> (Chapter 16-end)
5/17 (H)	Claudia L. Johnson, <i>Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel</i> (28-48)
5/18 (F)	Midterm Exam

Unit II: Distant Reading

5/21 (M)	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> (Preface-Chapter VII)
5/22 (T)	Franco Moretti, "Style, Inc. Reflections on Seven Thousand Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850)" Kathryn Schulz, "What Is Distant Reading?"
5/23 (W)	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> (Chapter VIII-end)
5/24 (H)	Anne McWhir, "Teaching the Monster to Read: Mary Shelley, Education, and <i>Frankenstein</i> "
5/25 (F)	Distant Reading Self-Analysis Due Mandatory Individual Conferences in Afternoon
5/28 (M)	NO CLASS (MEMORIAL DAY)
5/29 (T)	David K. Elson, Nicholas Dames, and Kathleen R. McKeown, "Extracting Social Networks from Literary Fiction"
5/30 (W)	NO CLASS (Optional Skype Conferences)
5/31 (H)	NO CLASS (Optional Skype Conferences)
6/1 (F)	Independent Research Project Due Final Exam