

ENGL 170: 'O Blessed Rage for Order': The Monster and the Detective

Term: Fall 2019
Section Number: 32850R
Meeting Time: MWF 10:00-10:50am
Location: THH203

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Findeisen
Office Location: THH 402H
Student Hours: 9:00 – 10:00AM MWF
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Course Description and Objectives

English 170 is a general education course that uses two distinct narrative genres to think about how/why humans impose order on a chaotic world. The questions we cover in this course may look very similar to the kinds of questions found in other courses across campus, but what makes humanistic modes of inquiry different is that they are introspective. A scientist can determine the natural laws governing patterns in nature, and a computer engineer can build a program that identifies patterns where they exist, but artists, historians, and philosophers ask what those discoveries mean to human experience.

Some questions we will ask over the course of the semester will include: To what extent do humans interpret patterns, and to what extent do we make them? Are genres defined by essential or accidental properties? Is “knowing” a form of “doing”? What’s the difference between a “detective story” and a story about crime and redemption? Is the monstrous a reflection of ourselves, or reflection of the other?

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- [Objectives Chosen By Class]
- [Objectives Chosen By Class]
- [Objectives Chosen By Class]
- [Objectives Chosen By Class]

Required Texts:

Books

- Melville, Herman. *Benito Cereno*. ISBN: 978-0486264738
- Moore, Alan. *Watchmen*. ISBN-13: 978-1401245252
- Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lolita*. ISBN: 0-679-72316-1
- Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. ISBN: 978-0060913076
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. ISBN: 978-0393927931
- Whitehead, Colston. *Zone One*. ISBN-13: 978-0307455178
- Selections from Blackboard.

Movies (available to stream on Netflix and Amazon Video).

- Nolan, Christopher. *Memento*.
- Moffat, Steven and Mark Gatiss. *Sherlock*. “A Study in Pink.”
- Kubrick, Stanley. *2001: A Space Odyssey*.
- Scott, Ridley. *Alien*.

Attendance and Class Participation

This course thrives on engaging dialog and friendly interaction with other people. Everyone will be called upon to participate in an ongoing critical conversation utilizing active learning techniques and sustained discussion, which will factor into your participation grade. After four absences, your participation grade will begin to decline.

Assignments

Reading Responses: Because ENGL 170 is not a lecture course, we cannot achieve our goals without first completing the assigned readings. Our classmates expect everyone comes to class prepared for discussion, which means we will have completed the responses up to our own high standards and are prepared to ask questions and respond to one another. The reading responses are short (**one, full page**). They must demonstrate that we have sufficiently read the assignment and have thought about the prompt. They will often ask to engage in sophisticated analysis of the course material, which means *quoting the assigned texts is necessary*. A few students will read their responses at the beginning of class, so if you do not have a laptop, print them out and bring them with you .

Short Papers: Short papers (five to seven pages) will test our ability to grapple with and “solve” literary problems through critical interpretation. We want to utilize class concepts to analyze the ways in which texts work to create their meanings. We will be evaluated on our ability to write clearly and respond directly to the prompt, employ textual evidence, define concepts, and sustain an original argument.

Group Presentation: In small groups, you will be responsible for learning and then “teaching” your fellow classmates the content of an academic article that relates to one of the books. You will then be responsible for guiding the class discussion while we read it. Part of the assignment will be to develop our own grading/evaluation criteria. We will give ourselves ample in-class time to talk about what makes an effective presentation/class discussion.

Quizzes: In order to ensure that we are utilizing knowledge over the course of the semester, we use quizzes to help guide our reading and prepare for the exams. *Quizzes are not punitive (!!)* and are instead used to reinforce our recall of specific concepts central to our shared conversation. For the most, quizzes will ask you to either define or identify a concept we’ve covered in class the previous day, although I will also ask questions about past ideas/reading to ensure you are retaining essential information over time.

Exams: This course will have a cumulative final exam. The exams contain four areas: terms and definitions, authors and works, short answers, and analysis. Everything covered in class is fair game, so I strongly suggest **taking notes** while listening to lectures and presentations, as well as **while you’re reading**. Please pay special attention to passages we read together in class and literary terms marked on the syllabus.

Grading Policy:

Quizzes (15%)
Group Presentation (15%)
Final Exam (20%)

Participation (10%)
Papers (40%)

Additional Policies

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* (see <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>).

Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct (at <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* (see <http://equity.usc.edu>) or to the *Department of Public Safety* (see <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>). This is important for the safety whole USC community.

Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* provides 24/7 confidential support (see <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm>), and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources (see sarc@usc.edu).

Support Systems:

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students (see <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>).

The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations (http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html).

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction

will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology (see <http://emergency.usc.edu/>).

Week 1: Introduction

Monday, August 26, 2019

Homework: Read Van Engen, "Reclaiming Claims" (Blackboard).

Response 1.

Wednesday, August 28, 2019

Homework: Read Graff, "How Periods Erase History" (Blackboard).

Friday, August 30, 2019

Homework: Watch *Memento*.

Response 2.

Week 2: Objectives

Monday, September 2, 2019 (CLASS CANCELED IN RECOGNITION OF WORKERS)

Wednesday, September 4, 2019

Homework: Research student-led discussion either at the library or on the Internet. Consider your own experiences in discussions both *inside and outside of class*. Come to class prepared to advocate for a particular method for leading discussion.

Friday, September 6, 2019

Homework: First, watch *Sherlock*. Then, read "The Slaughterhouse of Literature" (Blackboard).

Response 3.

Week 3: Detectives

Monday, September 9, 2019

Homework: *Benito Cereno* (37-66)

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

Homework: *Benito Cereno* (67-104)

Response 4.

Friday, September 13, 2019

Homework: *The Crying of Lot 49* (Chapters 1 and 2)

Week 4: The Apophenia Planetarium

Monday, September 16, 2019

Homework: *The Crying of Lot 49* (Chapters 3 and 4)
Response 5.

Wednesday, September 18, 2019

Homework: *The Crying of Lot 49* (Chapters 5 and 6)

Friday, September 20, 2019

Homework: Read “Responding to Fiction”
Paper 1.

Week 5: Group Project Planning

Monday, September 23, 2019

Homework: Project Planning

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

Homework: Project Planning

Friday, September 27, 2019

Homework: Shelly, *Frankenstein*

Week 6: Abject Monsters (Group 1)

Monday, September 30, 2019

Homework: Shelly, *Frankenstein*

Wednesday, October 2, 2019

Homework: Shelly, *Frankenstein*
Response 6.

Friday, October 4, 2019

Homework: Nabokov, *Lolita*.

Week 7: The Devil Inside (Group 2)

Monday, October 7, 2019

Homework: Nabokov, *Lolita*.

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

Homework: Nabokov, *Lolita*.

Friday, October 11, 2019

Homework: Nabokov, *Lolita*.

Week 8: Every Single One of Us, The Devil Inside

Monday, October 14, 2019

Homework: Nabokov, *Lolita*.

Response 7.

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Homework: Nabokov, *Lolita*.

Friday, October 18, 2019 (CLASS CANCELED: FALL RECESS)

Week 9: Who Watches the Watchmen? (Group 3)

Monday, October 21, 2019

Homework: Moore, *Watchmen*

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Homework: Moore, *Watchmen*

Friday, October 25, 2019

Homework: Moore, *Watchmen*

Week 10: The Killing Joke

Monday, October 28, 2019

Homework: Moore, *Watchmen*

Response 8

Wednesday, October 30, 2019

Homework: Moore, *Watchmen*

Friday, November 1, 2019

Homework: Whitehead. *Zone One*.

Week 11: It's Easier to Imagine the End of the World (Group 4)

Monday, November 4, 2019

Homework: Whitehead. *Zone One*.

Wednesday, November 6, 2019

Homework: Whitehead. *Zone One*.

Friday, November 8, 2019

Homework: Whitehead. *Zone One*.

Response 9

Week 12: It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)

Monday, November 11, 2019

Homework: Whitehead. *Zone One*.

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

Homework: Whitehead. *Zone One*.

Friday, November 15, 2019

Homework: Read, Clover "Her Body, Himself"
Watch, *Alien*.

Response 10.

Week 13: Writing Literary Analysis

Monday, November 18, 2019

Homework: Read, "The Uneven U" (Blackboard).
Write a sample Uneven U paragraph.

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

Homework:
Write Draft of Paper 2. Print three copies and bring them with you to class.

Friday, November 22, 2019

Homework:
Paper 2

Week 14: Open the Pod Bay Doors, HAL
Monday, November 25, 2019

Homework: Watch Kubrick, *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Wednesday, November 27, 2019 (Class Cancelled: Thanksgiving)

Friday, November 29, 2019 (Class Cancelled: Thanksgiving)

Week 15: Class Choice (Group 5)
Monday, December 2, 2019

Homework: Class Choice

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

Homework: Class Choice

Friday, December 6, 2019

Homework: Class Choice
Response 11.

Week 16: Class Choice

Monday, December 9, 2019

Homework: Class Choice

Wednesday, December 11, 2019

Homework: Class Choice

Friday, December 13, 2019

Homework: Class Choice

Monday, December 16, 2019
Final Exam (8:00AM – 10:00AM)