

ENGL 240 – Literary Arts – Spring 2024



MWF 1–1:50pm
THH 203



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office hours: W 2–3 & F 12–1
THH 402H



Aubrey Beardsley, Design for the front wrapper of Leonard
Smithers' *Catalogue of Rare Books*, No. 6 (1896)

Course Description

This course explores what literature is, how it works and how we might read and respond to it, and why we should care in the first place. To the latter question, Oscar Wilde would say that literature creates reality (and not the other way around); Percy Shelley would say that language-makers are the true source of cultural and political power; while Audre Lorde would say that literature names “the nameless so it can be thought.” By the end of the semester, you will develop your own answer. You can think of the course as a taster: you’ll get the flavor of key literary genres and forms, gain familiarity with ingredients of style, and sharpen your sense of your own literary palate—what you like, and what you want to learn more about over the rest of your undergraduate education and beyond.

We begin by discussing the “what” of literature, engaging basic formal components of literary language such as diction and syntax, and touching on genres across poetry and prose fiction. We continue by thinking about the “how,” taking up the way that interpretative frameworks shape our reading and writing. And we finish with the “why,” placing particular emphasis on contemporary answers about literature’s role in the world we live in today, including in works by Kiese Laymon, Natalie Diaz, and Patricia Lockwood.

This class is designed for English majors to get to know one another and to get to know a USC faculty member in a small seminar setting. It is also designed for anyone who has ever stayed up long past their bedtime because they couldn’t put down a book.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe literary language with reference to diction, imagery, syntax, and tone
- Use critical techniques such as observation, summary, paraphrase, argument, and counterargument
- Creatively experiment with word choice, lineation, syntax, and stanzaic structure

- Apply theoretical frameworks to interpret literary texts
- Reflect on literature’s philosophical, cultural, and political value, as well as its relevance to your life

Course Books

M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (2008)
 Kiese Laymon, *Heavy: An American Memoir* (2018)
 Natalie Diaz, *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2020)
 Patricia Lockwood, *No One Is Talking About This* (2021)

Note: no electronic books—physical copies only!

All other course readings will be posted to Blackboard. Readings should be printed out and brought to class.

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

This seminar is designed around weekly intensive work rather than building to cumulative, high-stakes assignments. As such, it depends on your curiosity, your willingness to take intellectual risks, and your lively engagement with the readings, with one another, with me, and with yourself.

On four class days, in lieu of reading for class you will complete **four short creative exercises** designed to experiment with building blocks of literature: words, lines, sentences, and stanzas.

You will keep a **commonplace book** in which you copy passages that puzzle, interest, or please you. This book will be a record of your developing literary tastes, and will serve as a resource for a **reflective essay** on how you read now and how you would like to learn to read in the future.

You will post **ten entries** to the course blog, each entry practicing a particular literary skill such as observation, analysis, paraphrase, argument, and the like. These literary skills will be further developed in an **analytic essay**.

Assignment	Points
Creative Exercises (4 at 25 points each)	100
Commonplace Book	100
Participation	150
Course Blog	150
Analytic Essay	250

Final Grade: A 930–1000; A- 895–929; B+ 870–894; B 830–869; B- 795–829; C+ 770–794; C 730–76

Note on AI

This course is designed to help you grow as a reader, a thinker, and a writer. This growth requires direct contact with language, even if that contact involves making mistakes or hitting creative dead-ends. AI cannot do your learning for you!

Any use of AI to help you write will be considered a violation of the academic honor code and may result in failure for an assignment or in the class. This includes the use of Grammarly to suggest alternative words or sentence constructions. There are many AI apps out there; please ask if you have any questions about what constitutes an improper use of AI.

Schedule of Readings			
	Topics	Readings	Tasks
Week 1 Jan 8	Introduction Unit 1: What		
Jan 10	<i>Words</i>	"Western Wind" Robert Herrick, "Upon Julia's Clothes" William Wordsworth, "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" Emily Dickinson, "After great pain, a formal feeling comes" Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"	
Jan 12		Gerard Manley Hopkins, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" Audre Lorde, "Coal" Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried" Namwali Serpell, <i>The Old Drift</i> pp 1–2	Blog Post #1
Week 2 Jan 15		MLK DAY – NO CLASS	
Jan 17		John Donne, "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" Adrienne Rich, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" Countee Cullen, "Incident" Tommy Blount, "Pedestrian" Solmaz Sharif, "LOOK"	
Jan 19		Alice Munro, "Miles City, Montana"	Blog Post #2
Week 3 Jan 22		Creative Exercise 1: Words	
Jan 24	<i>Lines</i>	"Fowles in the Frith"	

Jan 26		Emily Dickinson, "Wild nights!" Langston Hughes, "Harlem" Dorothy Parker, "Unfortunate Coincidence" Sylvia Plath, "Morning Song"	
		William Wordsworth, from <i>The Prelude</i> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" Walt Whitman, from <i>Song of Myself</i> , Song 24 Stevie Smith, "Thoughts About the Person from Porlock"	Blog Post #3
Week 4 Jan 29		William Butler Yeats, "Leda and the Swan" W. H. Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" Jean Toomer, Portrait in Georgia" Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish"	
Jan 31		William Shakespeare, Sonnet 15 John Milton, "Methought I Saw My Late Espoused Saint" Claude McKay, "America" Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays" Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"	
Feb 2		Creative Exercise 2: Lines	Blog Post #4
Week 5 Feb 5	<i>Sentences</i>	William Blake, "Proverbs of Hell" Walter Pater, from <i>The Renaissance</i> , on La Gioconda Dylan Thomas, "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower" Gwendolyn Brooks, "the rites for Cousin Vit" Elizabeth Bishop, "At the Fishhouses"	
Feb 7		John Berryman, Dream Song 4 James Joyce, from <i>Ulysses</i> Salman Rushdie, from <i>Midnight's Children</i>	
Feb 9		Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" Vladimir Nabokov, from <i>Lolita</i>	Blog Post #5
Week 6 Feb 12		Jane Austen, from <i>Emma</i> Toni Cade Bambara, "The Lesson"	
Feb 14		Creative Exercise 3: Sentences	
Feb 16	<i>Stanzas</i>	Thomas Wyatt, "They Flee from Me" Andrew Marvell, "The Mower's Song" John Keats, "La Belle Dame sans Merci" Claudia Rankine, from <i>Don't Let Me Be Lonely</i>	Blog Post #6

Week 7 Feb 19		PRESIDENTS' DAY – NO CLASS	
Feb 21		*PROF B TRAVELING – ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS* John Donne, "The Sun Rising" Alfred Tennyson, "The Lotos-Eaters" William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" Louise Erdrich, "I Was Sleeping Where the Black Oaks Move"	
Feb 23		*PROF B TRAVELING – ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS* Ottessa Moshfegh, "Bettering Myself"	Blog Post #7
Week 8 Feb 26		Percy Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind" Philip Larkin, "Sad Steps" Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz" Elizabeth Bishop, "Sestina"	
Feb 28		Creative Exercise 4: Stanzas	Blog Post #8
Mar 1	Unit 2: How	M. NourbeSe Philip, <i>Zong!</i> , "Notanda," "Os"	
Week 9 Mar 4		Christina Sharpe, "The Wake" Philip, <i>Zong!</i> , "Sal"	
Mar 6		Eve Tuck and C. Ree, "A Glossary of Haunting" Philip, <i>Zong!</i> , "Ventus," "Ratio"	
Mar 8		Review	
		SPRING BREAK	
Week 10 Mar 18		Édouard Glissant, "The Open Boat," "Closed Place, Open Word," "Concerning the Poem's Information" Philip, <i>Zong!</i> , "Ferrum"	
Mar 20		Kandice Chuh, "The Difference Aesthetics Makes" Philip, <i>Zong!</i> , "Ēbora," "Glossary," "Manifest," "Gregson v. Gilbert"	
Mar 22		Review	
Week 11 Mar 25		Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation" Maya Deren, <i>Meshes of the Afternoon</i>	
Mar 27		José Esteban Muñoz, "Queerness as Horizon" Mark Doty, "Tiara"	

Mar 29		Danez Smith, "Tonight, in Oakland" Janelle Monae, "Pynk" Field trip to Broad Museum	
Week 12 Apr 1		Lauren Berlant, "Cruel Optimism" Teju Cole, "Incoming"	Analytic Essay Due
Apr 3		Review	
Apr 5		Kiese Laymon, <i>Heavy</i> , "Been"—"Boy Man"	
Week 13 Apr 8		Laymon, <i>Heavy</i> , "Black Abundance"	
Apr 10		Laymon, <i>Heavy</i> , "Home Worked"	
Apr 12		Laymon, <i>Heavy</i> , "Addict Americans"	
Week 14 Apr 15		Natalie Diaz, <i>Postcolonial Love Poem</i> , "Postcolonial Love Poem"—"Run'n'Gun"	
Apr 17		Diaz, <i>Postcolonial Love Poem</i> , "Asterion's Lament"—"The First Water Is the Body"	
Apr 19		Diaz, <i>Postcolonial Love Poem</i> , "I, Minotaur"—"Grief Work"	
Week 15 Apr 22		Patricia Lockwood, <i>No One Is Talking About This</i> , Part One	
Apr 24		Lockwood, <i>No One Is Talking About This</i> , Part Two	
Apr 26		Concluding	
Week 16			Reflective Essay Due

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of

the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.