

## English 200C: Literary Analysis



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Office Hours: T/R 9:9:30, W 12-2  
(no appointment is necessary during office hours)  
whenever my office door is open, and  
by appointment at other times

### Description and Goals

What are the best ways to understand a story, poem, or play? Why aren't all interpretations created equal? When reading literature, should we try to figure out what the author intended? English 200C is designed to help students learn to analyze literature creatively and systematically. Though you don't have to be an English major to succeed in this course, English 200C will be intellectually demanding and is specifically designed to hone the reading and writing skills of English majors. To succeed, you'll need to be hard-working, creative, open-minded, and an active learner. We'll spend the first few weeks mastering the basics of formalism - the art of analyzing how a work's form helps create its meaning. During this section of the course, the readings will be relatively short - a series of poems - but you'll be expected to delve very deeply into their form and meanings. Once students have mastered the basics of formalist analysis, we'll move on to study some key aspects of literary theory. Class will be collaborative and discussion-based, with lots of in- and out-of-class writing and group work.

### Texts and Materials

Marc Polonsky, *The Poetry Reader's Toolkit: A Guide to Reading and Understanding Poetry*  
Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (second edition)  
A loose-leaf lightweight binder (paper or plastic) to hold your notebook entries

### Electronic Resources

A website for English 200C will be under continuous development throughout the semester at the URL <http://www.jadwin.net/200>. It will contain this syllabus with any updates, links to electronic resources other materials, and downloads of assignments, handouts, and other materials. E-mail me (ljadwin@sjfc.edu) with ideas and suggestions for links to the English 200C website.

### Requirements

**Homework Notebook Writings** (totaling 50% of your final grade). Prepare for class by writing responses to study questions on the day's readings. These writing assignments will help you better understand and internalize the readings so that you come to class well-prepared to learn and to contribute your own ideas.

These writing assignments must be typed, double-spaced, at least 2 pages long, in a 10- or 12-point font, with 1-inch margins, double-spaced, titled, and carefully proofread. They will be evaluated on the basis of their completeness, originality, and presentation; assignments with more than one sentence-level error per page will be heavily penalized and may receive an "F," no feedback, or both. Sorry, but for security reasons (viruses/worms), it is impossible for me to accept e-mailed papers.

**Exams** (totaling 50% of your final grade). There will be two midterms (10% each of your final grade) and a final exam (15% of your final grade). See the calendar below for details.

**Attendance and Participation** (15% of your final grade). *There is no substitute for showing up.* Aim to miss no more than 2 classes. If you have a serious emergency, such as a death in the family, auto accident, hospitalization, etc., please contact me in advance or as soon as possible because it may be desirable for you to withdraw from the class rather than fail outright. More than 2 absences and more than two tardies will affect your final grade and may cause you to fail the course.

**Participation.** Students who participate constructively in class learn more, increase the quality of the class, and introduce important ideas and questions. If you participate regularly and constructively (listening attentively to everyone in the class and speaking often) you will receive a high grade, based on my estimate of the value of your contribution, in this category. Conversely, if your participation is negative - whispering with friends, passing notes, chowing down on a noisy meal, leaving litter behind, sleeping in class, etc. - you will receive a lower grade.

If you miss class, have another student discuss his or her notes with you. Then, if you have further questions that they are unable to answer, contact me. You're responsible for finding out about any assignments, due dates, and announcements and for fulfilling them on time. Extra handouts and worksheets will be available after class on the front of my office door, and on the website, for pickup or download anytime.

### Statement for Students with Diagnosed Disabilities

In compliance with St. John Fisher College policy and applicable laws, appropriate academic accommodations are available to you if you are a student with a disability. All requests for accommodations must be supported by appropriate documentation/diagnosis and determined reasonable by St. John Fisher College. Students with documented disabilities (physical, learning, psychological) who may need academic accommodations are advised to make an appointment with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities in the Student Development Center, Kearney 211. Late notification will delay requested accommodations.

### How to Prepare for Class

All readings listed on the calendar below are required and you will be tested on them as well as on the information and ideas I present in class.

- *Though readings may seem short in number of pages, you are unlikely to understand any reading fully until you have read it at least three times.*
- Read with your pen in hand; take notes, underline and look up all unfamiliar words and memorize the terms in the "terms" column below.
- Consider forming a study group with friends from class. You can compare readings, discuss writing assignments, and prepare for exams together.

Wk	Date	Reading	Homework Notebook Writing	Terms and Main Ideas
1	1/12	Introduction	None.	Literary analysis, formalism, close reading, <i>explication de texte</i> .
2	1/17	Reading: Polonsky, "Why Poetry?"	Respond to all the questions on 9-12 (do this in your notebook, not your book).	narrator, enjambment
	1/19	Reading: Polonsky, "Emotions"	Respond to the paragraph on 33 that includes "in a journal entry."	denotation, connotation, archetype, tone
3	1/21	Reading: Polonsky, "Images"	Respond to to the two paragraphs on 49 that include "in a journal entry."	concrete, abstract, sensory, sensual
	1/23	Reading: Polonsky, "Stories"	Respond to the paragraphs on 103 that begin "in a journal entry."	parallel structure, medicine wheel, ballad
4	1/31 2/2	Reading: Polonsky, "Sound"	Respond to the paragraph on 136 that begins "in a journal entry."	assonance, rhyme, rhyme scheme, internal rhyme, slant rhyme, meter, foot, blank verse, spondee, trochee, anapest, dactyl, free verse, quatrain, sonnet (Petrarchan/Elizabethan) , haiku, sestina
5	2/7 2/9	Reading: Polonsky, "Metaphors, Similes, and Symbols"	Respond to the paragraph on 177 that ends "in a journal entry."	Simile, metaphor, personification, symbol
6	2/14 2/16	Reading: Polonsky, "A Grab Bag of Devices"	Write a journal entry in response to the question on 207 titled "Unearth a Poem" using the poem "Spoils" on 201.	Line breaks, allusion, motif, synecdoche, metonymy, synesthesia
7	2/21	Reading: Polonsky, "Irrationality, Dreams, and Paradox "	Write a "dream" poem of your own in response to the instructions on 230-1. Have fun!	Rationality/irrationality, dream, Zen Buddhism, paradox
	2/23	Reading: Polonsky, "Welding it Together"	No writing assignment today. In class, we will spend time reviewing for the midterm.	

Wk	Date	Reading	Homework Notebook Writing	Terms and Main Ideas
8	2/28	<b>MIDTERM.</b> The midterm will require you to explicate several short poems and to define terms we've learned so far.		
	3/2	Reading: Barry, "Introduction" and the three proof-texts (in the back of the book)	Respond to the "Stop and Think" exercise on 8.	"SQ3R" as a technique to remember when reading theoretical texts.
9	3/7 3/9	Reading: Barry, "Theory before 'Theory': Liberal Humanism"	None.	form and content; organic form; I A. Richards, William Empson, F. R. Leavis, John Locke; Aristotle's <i>Poetics</i> ; types of theory named on 33; totalizing notions or ideas
SPRING BREAK! YEAH!				
10	3/21	Barry, "Structuralism"	Respond to the "Stop and Think" exercise on 45-6.	Ideas of Saussure; Levi-Strauss; Barthes; <i>langue</i> and <i>parole</i> , signifier and signified; Barthes's five codes (in class we will go over these and, as a group, we will complete the Stop and Think" exercise on 57-8).
	3/23	Programming day - no class today.	None.	
11	3/28	Barry, "Structuralism" (continued from 3/21)	Respond to the "Stop and Think" exercise on 55.	
	3/30	<b>MIDTERM.</b> The midterm will require you to explicate several short passages and to define terms we've learned so far.		
12	4/4 4/6	Barry, "Poststructuralism and Deconstruction"	Deconstruct this famous passage from the <i>Declaration of Independence</i> : "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. . . ." Try to <i>read the text against itself</i> , unpacking its binary oppositions, omissions and assumptions.	Decentred view; post-structuralism; Derrida; <i>aporia</i> ; absence; <i>lacuna</i> ; reading the text against itself; binary oppositions; the verbal, textual, and linguistic stages of deconstructive process.
13	4/11 4/13	Barry, "Postmodernism"	Respond to the "Stop and Think" exercise on 90-1 using the Nazi holocaust of WWII (murdering Jews, homosexuals, dissidents, gypsies, and others) as your example.	Postmodernism; modernism; high modernism; asceticism; Habermas and modernity; Lyotard and totalizing discourses and 'Grand Narratives'; Baudrillard, <i>simulacrum</i> , 'loss of the real,' representation, hyperreal.
14	4/18 4/20	Barry, "Narratology"	Familiarize yourself, if necessary, with the familiar tale "Cinderella," then write a short analysis of a feature film that incorporates the Cinderella structure, showing how this example uses the structuring elements. Example: <i>Pretty Woman</i> .	Narrative, story, <i>anagnorisis</i> , <i>hamartia</i> , <i>peripeteia</i> , Propp, morphology, and morphemes (Propp's word for these story elements); Genette, <i>mimesis</i> , <i>diegesis</i> ; focalizers and narrators; analeptic and proleptic narratives; <i>in medias res</i> ; frame narratives; direct and tagged speech.
15	?	<b>FINAL EXAM.</b> The final will be <i>cumulative</i> and will require you to define key terms (short answers) and perform a critical reading of a text selection (poetry or prose; you will have a choice of excerpts).		