

Course Syllabus

Weds. & Fri., 8:30-9:50	Instructor: Calista McRae
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1. Course Description

LIT 230 aims to help you become a sharp observer and effective communicator. Because of this, it focuses on short, slow, careful reading assignments, and brief pieces of critical writing. You will read and discuss poems, plays, and fiction (as well as some near-plays on the screen and a few screen adaptations of fiction); make claims about how the content and form connect in each; and find evidence for your claims. Most meetings will ask you to consider your own writing at a careful, slow pace, and you'll also each select one poem or bit of very short fiction to "teach" your classmates, in a five-minute presentation.

2. Course Goals

- Apply the method of "close reading" to multiple genres
- Practice writing by using various brainstorming, revision, and editing strategies
- Make conscious decisions about writing mechanics, by paying close attention to others' verbal choices
- Understand basic grammatical terms and how to analyze grammatical effects
- Identify a range of genres and sub-genres, and discuss how individual writers handle the expectations within them
- Recognize the contribution of literature to human emotional and intellectual life

3. Prerequisites

ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 with a C or higher; ENGL 102 may be taken concurrently as a co-requisite.

4. What you have to buy

No text required for purchase (readings are up on Canvas), but you may need to rent several films.

5. Warning!

Quite a few of the works assigned are disturbing or controversial. There are sexual references, strong language, and some violence. More specifically, there are also references to genocide (in Hemon), the implied violent death of a child (Brooks), dementia (Otsuka), domestic violence (Cole), suicide (Gunn), and offscreen harm to animals (McDonagh). In discussions, think about your classmates; respect for one another should be a consideration at all times. You are always welcome to talk with me further about any text before or after class.

6. Assignments

one-page response 1 [8:30 AM, Fri. Sept 13]	10
one-page response 2 [8:30 AM, Fri. Oct 4]	10
one-page response 3 [8:30 AM, Fri. Nov. 1]	10
one-page response 4 [8:30 AM, Fri. Nov. 15]	10
final essay [evening of Wed. Dec. 11]	20
short in-class presentation	15
participation	25

The links above have guidelines for each assignment. The participation grade includes coming ready to talk intelligently about the readings, coming on time, completing any informal writing you're asked to do in class, and thoughtfully giving your attention to classmates' ideas. See also the section on attendance, below.

7. Grading and Revising

Work will be evaluated according to the university's grading scale. If you are concerned about a grade, contact me as soon as possible. Waiting until the end of the semester means there will be no way to improve the grade.

A = 100-90 (superior) B = 86-80 (very good) C = 76-70 (acceptable) F = 59-0 (inadequate)
 B+ = 89-87 (excellent) C+ = 79-77 (good) D = 69-60 (minimum)

If you want to improve a grade you got on a formal assignment, you can revise and resubmit it any time before the last meeting of this class, on Dec. 11. Before resubmitting, you need to meet at least once with someone at the Writing Center: bring them the assignment, your work, and my feedback, and ask them to tell me you went. After that meeting and after you've done all the revising you think the essay needs, email me the new essay, along with a short note describing what you changed and why, and I'll average out your original grade and revised grade.

If you want me to read an early draft of any assignment, we need to meet to discuss the work (in person, by Zoom, or by phone), at least two days before it's due. But if at the last minute you have specific questions (for instance about a particular sentence or paragraph), please do email me and I'll answer as quickly as possible.

8. Attendance Policy

If you have an absence that NJIT can "excuse" (illness, family emergency, jury duty, a university event, etc.), please [ask the Dean of Students to review the request](#). They keep your personal information confidential and can email all your professors at once.

As to other absences, you can miss three classes for any reason, without it affecting your participation grade; there is no need to tell me why you're skipping. After three missed classes,

additional unexcused absences will start to bring your participation grade down, little by little. In other words: fairly consistent attendance is necessary to do reasonably well in the class: I use class to assess performance, and classes give you the tools and discussion practice you need to do well in the essays. If you have a lot of unexcused absences, do your best to make up for it by being as engaged as possible when you do come. See me early in the semester if you have any concerns about attendance/participation.

According to university policy, students who expect to miss classes or exams because of religious observance must send their instructors, by the end of the second week of classes, a written list of dates that will be missed.

9. Submitting Work

For any out-of-class work, please make a .doc file; include your name and an interesting title. Use 1-inch margins and double-space. No need for hard copies; Canvas has submission links.

For in-class writing, I'll usually give you paper and just collect it at the end of class, but you might be asked to send me something in a Google Form from time to time.

10. Late Work

With the work for the essays, extensions are usually possible, but require at least 24 hours' notice. Without an extension or a note from the DOS, the grade of late work will go down by three points per day (e.g., from an 85 to an 82). I do accept late work until the last day of classes, and as long as the work is clear about what helped you, it is literally always better to turn in work late than not at all; however, I will not give late work the same amount of feedback given timely work.

With presentations, sign up for a slot that works for you, as soon as you can. Changing days without a note from the DOS will result in a slightly reduced grade for that assignment (otherwise the schedule gets crammed/lopsided). No-shows without a note from the DOS will get a zero, though depending on our schedule you can make it up and I will average out the two grades.

11. Academic Integrity

Here is NJIT's statement on academic integrity:

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

To give your work an accurate grade, I need to understand where it is coming from. When I encounter writing that for any reason seems (a) as if it may be using other people's work (including AI work) and (b) is not clear about that use, I send it to the DOS for them to look into what happened. To avoid this, make sure you understand the following:

- What counts as plagiarism varies between fields. The standards for biology or physics are different from those for an English literature class. For this class—where your work is graded not just on your ideas but on how you're conveying your ideas—you need to be explicit and detailed about places where another writer helped you in any way. You can use MLA or APA or whatever other citation style you prefer, but be consistent and clear.
- If anything you're writing uses an idea or language (even a few words!) of any other person, make that use clear to your reader. *In the essay itself, right at the moment you use an idea or quote, you need to signal the particular use. That is, there needs to be a signal right at the end of the sentence that used somebody else's fact or idea or wording. And if you borrow somebody's wording, put it in quotation marks.* Here is a very short overview of the main problem I see, [accidental plagiarism](#). When in doubt, be clearer than you think you need to be.
- Don't use AI. It almost always makes your writing it less clear, less accurate, more boring, and more pretentious. And while making your writing worse, the AI also [does a number on the environment](#). This class is meant to help you a stronger reader and writer; to do that you need to practice. Please write these very short essays on your own (but as per above, if you do use an AI in any way, spell out that use). If you're worried about some aspect of your writing, get in touch with me.

12. Accessibility/Accommodations

If you think you may have any difficulties related to the format or materials of this course, or if you would like to discuss any accommodations that might be helpful, please contact me at the start of the semester. If you have a documented disability, or if you think you might have a disability, you should also be in touch with [OARS](#) (Office of Accessibility Resources and Services) either to request an official accommodation or to discuss requesting one.

13. The Writing Center

The Writing Center (G17 Central King) is available for 45-minute remote or in-person appointments with writing tutors, who can help with planning, structuring, or refining essays. You can make an appointment [here](#). When you go, please bring any rubrics/handouts, so the consultant can see how you'll be graded. And please ask the writing tutor to fill out a Writing Center report and send it to me, so that I know you are going and give you credit for making that effort.

14. If You Have Problems

If you find that you are dealing with a serious, life- and coursework-affecting problem, please do not just go off the radar. Let both me and the DOS know, right away (you may have to provide paperwork to them, but their office really does want to help). Because of NJIT policies, having the DOS involved may give me more flexibility in helping you with deadlines, etc.

15. Draft Schedule (subject to change)

0. Introduction: What is Close Reading?

Wed., Sep. 4: Intro to the course and to Teju Cole's small fates. In-class writing: introduction and short ungraded 'diagnostic' essay.

Remember that you can sign up for a presentation any time now. See guidelines in 'Assignments' above.

Fri., Sep. 6: Teju Cole, small fates. Pick three "small fates" to focus on for discussion.

1. Perspective

Wed., Sep. 11. Handout on perspective. Flannery O'Connor, "A Late Encounter with the Enemy." John Berryman, "Dream Song 28."

Presentation options for week 1a: sentences from O'Connor or Berryman.

Fri., Sep. 13. Lydia Davis, "Wife One in Country." Jennifer Egan, "Black Box." Les Murray, "The Cows on Killing Day." Focus on just one of these for class and the response; read the prompt for Response 1 before you start.

Response 1 due at start of class.

2. Words

Wed., Sep. 18. Read the handout on diction. Emily Dickinson: "She sights a Bird – she Chuckles –" and "A Bird, came down the Walk."

Presentation options for 2a: one Dickinson poem.

Fri., Sep. 20. Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress." Harryette Mullen, from Trimmings and S*PeRM**K*T. Pick one to focus on--Marvell and Mullen are both difficult, but in different ways.

Optional, recommended (in thinking about your writing): George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language."

Presentation options 2b: words from Marvell or Mullen.

3. Sentences

Wed., Sep. 25. Saki, "The Lumber-Room." Read handout on grammar.

Presentation options 3a: a paragraph from Saki.

Fri., Sep. 27. Ernest Hemingway, "ig Two-Hearted River."

Presentation option 3b: a paragraph from Hemingway.

4. Patterns

Wed., Oct. 2. First half of Aleksandar Hemon, "Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls" (pages 137-175).

Presentation option 4: Hemon.

Fri., Oct. 4. Second half of Hemon, "Blind Jozef" (pages 176-211).

Response 2 due, on Hemon.

5. Sound and Meter

Wed., Oct. 9. Meter handout. No other reading: work on scansion/meter in class.

Fri., Oct. 11. Gwendolyn Brooks: from the early poems and "In the Mecca."

Presentation option 5: on Brooks and meter.

6. Realism and Speculation

Wed., Oct. 16. James Joyce, beginning of ch. 4 from *Ulysses*; Julie Otsuka, "Dien Perdidit."

Presentation option 6a: on Joyce or Otsuka.

Fri., Oct. 18. Ted Chiang, one short story TBD; Brenda Shaughnessy, from *The Octopus Museum*; Cathy Park Hong, from *Engine Empire*.

Presentation option 6b: on any one of these writers.

7. Elegy and Satire

Wed., Oct. 23. Anne Bradstreet, "On My Dear Grandchild Simon Bradstreet, Who Died on 16 November, 1669, Being But a Month, and One Day Old." W. B. Yeats, "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death." Thom Gunn, "The Gas-Poker." W. S. Merwin, "Elegy."

Presentation option 7a: on Bradstreet, Yeats, Gunn, or Merwin.

Fri., Oct. 25. Alexander Pope: "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot."

Presentation option 7b: on Alexander Pope.

8. Poetic Forms

Wed., Oct. 30. William Shakespeare, Sonnet 64. Michael Drayton, "Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part." Donne, "Death be Not Proud."

Presentation option 8: on Drayton or Donne.

Fri., Nov. 1. Amit Majmudar, "A Pedestrian." Anthony Vahni Capildeo, "they (may forget (their names (if let out)))." Both sonnets here; pick one to focus on.

Response 3 due: on Majmudar or Capildeo.

9. Based on Class Interests

Wed., Nov. 6. ... tbd

Presentation options 9a, tbd.

Fri., Nov. 8. ...

Presentation options 9b, tbd.

10. Fiction on Film

Wed., Nov. 13. Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men*, opening sections.

Fri., Nov. 15. Discuss Joel and Ethan Coen, *No Country for Old Men*.

Response 4 due: on one moment from *No Country for Old Men*.

11. Drama

Wed., Nov. 20. Barry Jenkins and Tarell Alvin McCraney, *Moonlight*

Fri., Nov. 22. Continued.

12. Break: Wed., Nov. 27 and Fri., Nov. 29 no class

13. Scripts

Wed., Dec. 4. Martin McDonagh, *The Banshees of Inisherin*.

Fri., Dec. 6. TBD.

Optional, extra credit: attend and write a review of *The Director's Project* at NJIT, Friday or Saturday night. Due Monday, Dec. 9.

14. Wrapping Up

Wed., Dec. 11. TBD.

Essay 5 due, on *Moonlight* or on *The Banshees of Inisherin*.

This class does not have a final exam.