English 301: Literary Interpretation and Research

English 301 is the fundamental course for English majors. This semester we will learn how to interpret literature, how to conduct literary research, and how to read literary criticism. We will focus our study on a specific novel, William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, but the skills we develop in this class will be transferable to any text.

Professor
David A. Davis
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Course Requirements & Grading Policies
English 301 is a criticism and research course. I have designed a grading scheme that encourages you to be actively involved in each facet of the class—so expect to be busy.

Because this is a workshop class, I expect you to attend and actively participate in every class meeting. Attendance constitutes 13% of your course grade. Attendance grades are computed according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absence</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>failure</td>
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Entering class after attendance has been taken will count as a tardy, and three tardies will count as an absence. Missing class for a verifiable family emergency, participation in a university-sanctioned athletic event, or religious holidays will not result in a deduction from your final grade, but it is your responsibility to inform me of your absence.

During the semester I will administer six unannounced quizzes that will cover the reading assigned for the day of the quiz. Quizzes constitute 18% of your course grade. You may replace up to two quizzes by writing replacement assignments. The replacement assignment requires that you write a seven hundred word synopsis of the reading assignment due the day of the missed quiz. Replacement assignments should be submitted on the day of the second class meeting after the missed quiz. Any missed quizzes beyond the two replacement assignments will factor into your quiz grade as a zero.

You will complete four graded assignments over the course of the semester, an essay critique (15%), an annotated bibliography (15%), a presentation (15%), and an interpretive essay (24%). You may exercise the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit the written assignments after they have been graded. Revised papers should be submitted at the beginning of the class meeting immediately after original papers have been returned. Revised papers should be accompanied by a self-critical analysis that explains how the
paper has been improved. In cases of revision, the revised grade will be added to the original grade and averaged into the overall paper grade. Keep in mind that revising means more than correcting minor errors. In fact, a cursory revision could result in a lower grade. Papers submitted after the deadline will automatically receive an F, but they may be revised to improve the final grade.

Papers will be submitted to my email, davis_da@mercer.edu, by 6:00 pm on the due date. I will grade the paper electronically in Microsoft Word and return it with embedded comments. Papers will be returned to the initiating address, so be sure to send the paper from your own email account.

The students of Mercer University have a long, proud tradition of honorable conduct, and I expect all students in this class to continue that tradition. Cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic misconduct will result in prosecution from the honor court, who may censure, suspend, or expel a guilty student. If you ever have any concerns about plagiarism, please consult me, and I will be happy to discuss your situation confidentially.

Students with a documented disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. If you are not registered with Disability Services, the instructor will refer you to the Student Support Services office for consultation regarding documentation of your disability and eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/504. In order to receive accommodations, eligible students must provide each instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form from Disability Services. Students must return the completed and signed form to the Disability Services office on the 3rd floor of the Connell Student Center. Students with a documented disability who do not wish to use accommodations are strongly encouraged to register with Disability Services and complete a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information please contact Disability Services at 301-2778 or visit the website at http://www.mercer.edu/stu_support/swd.htm.

In an ongoing effort to improve the quality of instruction, each student enrolled in this course is required to complete an end-of-semester course evaluation, to be administered on blackboard during the last week of class. Students failing to submit the evaluation by May 11 will be assigned the grade of “Incomplete,” which will automatically turn into an “F” if the evaluation is not submitted by the midterm of the very next semester.

As a final note, I realize that you are busy and that unexpected crises sometimes arise, but as a general rule I do not give extensions on any assignments. I also do not excuse absences. If you have a major emergency or extended illness, you should contact Associate Dean Ed Weintraut to intervene on your behalf. I do not ever give extra credit assignments.

**Reading Schedule**

January 12  Course Introduction
January 14  Charles Hannon, “Belaboring the Past in Absalom, Absalom!”
January 17  MLK Holiday
January 19  William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!, 3-45
January 21  Faulkner, 46-106
January 24  Faulkner, 107-140
January 26  Faulkner, 141-207
January 28  Faulkner, 208-253
January 31  Faulkner, 253-303
February 2  Donald Hall, “The New Historicism and Pluralistic Cultural Analysis,” 299-331
February 4  Charles Hannon, “Voice and Discourse in Faulkner”
February 7  Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*
February 9  Michel Foucault, “The Discourse on Language”
February 11 Richard Godden, “*Absalom, Absalom!* Haiti and Labor History”
February 14 Joseph Urgo, “*Absalom, Absalom!* The Movie”
February 16 Barbara Ladd, “The Direction of the Howling”
February 18  No class
February 21  Library Workshop
February 23  Writing Workshop  Essay Critique Due
February 25  Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 1-46
February 28  Eagleton, 47-109
March 2  Eagleton, 110-168
March 4  Eagleton, 169-208
March 7  Spring Break
March 9  Spring Break
March 11  Spring Break
March 14  Hall, “New Criticism and Formalism,” 13-42
March 16
March 18  Hall, “Reader-Response Analysis,” 43-71
March 21
March 23  Hall, “Marxist and Materialist Analysis,” 73-101
March 25
March 28  Hall, “Psychoanalytic Analysis,” 103-134
March 30
April 1  Hall, “Structuralism and Semiotic Analysis,” 135-159
April 4
April 6  Hall, “Deconstruction and Post-Structuralist Analysis,” 161-198
April 8
April 11  Hall, “Feminist Analysis,” 199-231
April 13
April 15  Hall, “Gay/Lesbian/ Queer Analysis,” 233-264
April 18
April 20  Hall, “Race, Ethnicity, and Post-Colonial Analysis,” 265-297
April 22  Good Friday
April 25
April 27  Writing Workshop
April 29  Writing Workshop
Assignments

Essay Critique (15%)
The editor of *Modern Fiction Studies* has asked you to review a new essay, “Belaboring the Past in *Absalom, Absalom!*,” for publication. A good review will synopsize the essay’s argument, explain what discourse it engages, critique its validity, and offer suggestions for improving it. Keep the review to one thousand words.

Bibliography (15%) and Presentation (15%)
Oxford University Press is compiling an anthology of criticism on *Absalom, Absalom!* Since you are an expert on the text, you have been asked to compile a selection of five examples of criticism within a specific discourse field about the book. You should offer the editors an annotated bibliography in MLA format with a two hundred word synopsis of each piece.

Seven days after you submit the bibliography, you will present one of the essays to the editorial board. All the members of the board will read the paper, and you will explain its argument and make a case for its inclusion in the collection. Not all essays will be included, so you must make a persuasive case.

Interpretive Essay (24%)
The Society for the Study of Southern Literature is hosting a panel on *Absalom, Absalom!* at their conference this spring. They are looking for new interpretations of the text. In order to be considered for the conference, you must submit a five hundred word abstract of your paper by April 25.

For the conference, you will submit a 3,500 word paper offering an interpretation of the novel based on substantial research.