

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

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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.

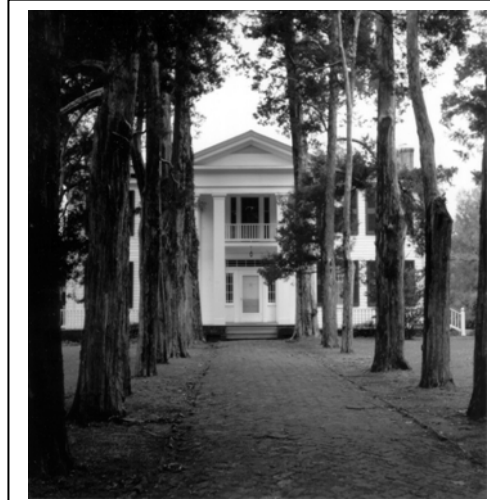
Because this is a workshop class, I expect you to attend and actively participate in every class meeting. Attendance constitutes 13% of your course grade. Attendance grades are computed according to the following scale:

Absence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Grade	100	97	93	85	70	55	40	20	0	failure

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



Rowan Oak, Faulkner's Home in Oxford, Mississippi

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 <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> "
January 17	MLK Holiday
January 19	William Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> , 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, <i>The Dialogic Imagination</i>	
February 9	Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language"	
February 11	Richard Godden, " <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> Haiti and Labor History"	
February 14	Joseph Urgo, " <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> 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, <i>Literary Theory</i> , 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 synopsise 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.