

**FREAKS, VILLAINS, AND MONSTERS**  
**English 4, Section 15: Critical Reading and Writing**  
**Spring 2006, TR 9—10:50am, Haines A20**

**Instructor:** Erica Powe  
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**Phone:** (310) 737-7155  
**Mailbox:** Rolfe 2225, above my name  
**Office Hours:** Royce B14, TR 11am—12noon and by appointment

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

(Available at the Ackerman bookstore)

“O”

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

William Shakespeare, *Othello*

Stephen Crane, “The Monster”

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wall-paper”

John R. Trimble, *Writing with Style*

Course Reader

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS:**

M.H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*

*MLA Guide for Writers of Research Papers* in its latest edition.

A thesaurus. Those built into computer software are not extensive enough for collegiate writing. Be sure to *cross-reference* words with your dictionary to avoid mistakes.

**HELPFUL WEBSITES:**

Covel Commons Tutoring: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/classes/econta/covel.pdf>

AAP Tutoring: <http://www.college.ucla.edu/up/aap/tutoring/index.html>

Center for Women & Men: <http://www.thecenter.ucla.edu>

Student Psychology Services: <http://www.saonet.ucla.edu/sps.htm>

Office for Students with Disabilities: <http://www.saonet.ucla.edu/osd/>

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

There are three objectives for this course. First and foremost, this class is designed to provide you with **an introduction to the principal literary genres**—poetry, drama, the short story, and the novel—and to help you develop the analytical skills you need to critique different forms of literature. Therefore, this class is also **an introduction to the English/American Literature major** (even if you are not in the major, you can still succeed in the course). Through course readings and in-class discussions, we will work throughout the quarter on improving your close reading and critical analysis skills.

Second, this class will provide an intellectual space in which you can **discuss formal, thematic, or cultural aspects of literary texts**. We will use our theme, “Freaks, Villains and Monsters” to problematize and analyze the different ways in which the

writers and filmmakers we're studying portray characters as monstrous, abnormal, and/or evil.

Third, this is a writing course, so you will learn to write a clear, **well-polished argumentative paper**. It is equally important to learn *how* to convey your sophisticated ideas to readers as it is to produce them.

#### **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

##### **Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown:**

Paper #1 (3-4 pgs)	10%
Paper #1 Revised	15%
Paper #2 (4-5 pgs)	20%
Paper #2 Revised	25%
Participation & Homework	20%
Scene Presentation	5%
Argumentative Debate	5%

##### **Papers:**

This is a Writing II course, so expect to do lots of writing, revising, peer-editing and self-critiquing. Each paper must be placed in my mailbox by noon on the day it is due, time-stamped. Papers not time-stamped will be treated as late. Make sure to use MLA style for the format and citation of your papers, 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, and double spaces. Your last name should appear in the right hand corner of each page, along with the page number. For *all* written assignments in this class, I expect you to revise your work meticulously. This means that you should go through multiple drafts, and you should revise not only in terms of spelling, grammar, and sentences, but also in terms of overall organization and argument. If you suspect you might be prone to committing mechanical errors, you should acquire a writer's handbook (see the syllabus for specific suggestions) and learn from it how to recognize and avoid them. *You may also avail yourself of the tutoring services available on campus and, last but definitely not least, speak to me in office hours or by appointment.*

To help you plan ahead, *I won't hold meetings or answer emails about assignments after 12pm on the day before they're due.* I can't look at full drafts outside office hours, though I am happy to talk through specific difficulties during office hours or by appointment.

##### **Scene Presentation:**

The scene presentation will be a 15-20 minute creative re-enactment of a scene from *Othello*. Your presentation will be evaluated by your classmates as well as your instructor. More detailed information will follow.

##### **Argumentative Debate:**

Pairs of students will each have five minutes to respond to an open-ended question about the assigned reading. A successful debate response will include a close reading of an appropriate quote. Your debate performance will be evaluated by your classmates and your instructor. You will be judged on how well you answer the question and the strength of your analysis.

**Attendance:**

Your *punctual* attendance *in every class* is both necessary and expected. Since class participation is crucial to achieving the course's goal and seeing as you cannot participate if you are not present, absences will negatively affect your participation grade. If you expect to be absent, please let me know right away. If you must miss class unexpectedly, you should (1) speak with one or more of your classmates to catch up and (2) let me know why you couldn't attend as soon as possible. Only absences accompanied by authoritative documentation (usually a doctor's note) will be excused.

**Participation:**

Active participation by all students is arguably the most important component of a successful English 4W class. A lack of participation during class, repeated tardiness or unexcused absences will undoubtedly hurt your participation grade. Come to class having read the material, ready to discuss it and ask questions about it. Remember: asking questions about the text is a sign of an intelligent, curious mind and is just as valuable if not more valuable than offering opinions or arguments. We will be working both as a class and in small groups—your participation in both is compulsory. When I assign informal writing assignments and homework (e.g. thesis statements, peer editing, working on scene presentations, grading peers on debates, etc.) those items also will count as part of your participation grade. This class is an electronic free zone. Please turn off all electronic gadgets and cell phones before class!

**Late/Missed Assignments:**

I will not accept any late assignments unless you have a doctor's note or a similar form of documentation that proves you were reasonably incapable of completing the assignment. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late, including weekends, beginning at 12:01pm on the due date.

**Discussion Expectations:**

This class does not seek to indoctrinate you into any particular belief system or perspective, but it *will* ask you to examine your ideas thoughtfully and consistently. While you're not expected to espouse any specific sorts of thoughts, you should be prepared to be *respectfully* challenged, just as you should feel free to *respectfully* challenge the ideas of others (including Yours Truly). Especially in discussion, we should not only anticipate, but even *strive for* intelligent differences of opinion: the only ground rule is that we must listen to each other with respect.

**Office Hours:**

You should take advantage of office hours throughout the quarter to speak with me about your writing and the direction of the course, as well as about any concerns you may have. Getting to know you, your concerns, and your needs will help me assist you in becoming a better writer. Please do your best to meet with me during scheduled office hours, but if that's impossible, we can make other arrangements.

**Directions to Royce B14:**

Facing Royce Hall with your back to College Library, there should be three doors grouped together. Take the door to the left of the three doors to the box office area. Follow the staircase downstairs to the basement (West side of the building). From that point, turn left and follow the signs on the wall to B 14. An alternate route is to take the outside stairs immediately to the left of Royce Hall continue to curve your way around until you see double wooden doors to your left. Enter the double doors and there is a sign at the end of the hallway directing you to B 14.

**Email:**

Occasionally, I send important information over email to the class. Make sure your email address is entered into your information on [www.ursa.ucla.edu](http://www.ursa.ucla.edu), so that you will receive these messages. While I regularly check my email, I may take as long as 48 hours to respond so please plan accordingly if you have pressing questions.

**A Note on Plagiarism:**

Don't do it! You should not have to use outside sources for any of the assignments in the class. If you do plan to use an outside source, please clear it with me first (*this includes articles, library books, and website information*). Finally, if you use anyone else's ideas or words (*this includes people in our class*) you must cite your source. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, it's always better to ask. The use of *Cliff's Notes* will also be treated as plagiarism. Consequences for committing plagiarism are failure of the assignment and/or the course, being reported to the Dean of Students, and dismissal from the university.

**A Word on Crisis:**

It is possible that you may face personal or health-related difficulties which could affect your class performance. If that happens, please feel free to speak to me about the situation when it arises, though you need not share more than is necessary or comfortable. Although course requirements and standards are non-negotiable and I can't make any guarantees about what I might be able to do for you, it is certainly true that communicating with your instructor about such crises *up front* is more helpful than explaining yourself in the aftermath.

**CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE:**

Subject to change at the instructor's discretion. All readings must be completed by the date they are listed. Read the texts (especially the assigned poetry) more than once.

Date	Toolbox/Theme	Reading/Assignments
<b>WEEK 1</b> Tuesday April 4	<i>Why analyze literature?</i> Language as a cultural tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Introduction to the course, expectations, and policies</li> <li>•Overview of early English and African-American literature</li> <li>•Introduction to critical analysis</li> </ul>
Thursday April 6	<i>Understanding our literary roots</i> Our cultural fascination with flawed	•Trimble, Ch. 9: "How to Write a Critical Analysis"

	<p>mythical figures</p> <p>Intro to critical analysis continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Excerpt from <i>Morte Darthur</i></li> <li>•Close Reading Made (somewhat) Easy</li> <li>•Guide to Explication</li> <li>•Explication Strategies</li> <li>•“The Vernacular Tradition”; “Secular Rhymes and Songs, Ballads, Work Songs, and Songs of Social Change”; “John Henry”; “Stackolee”</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 2</b> Tuesday April 11	<p>Flawed mythical figures continued</p> <p><b>Writing Workshop I: Building a Strong Thesis</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Vernacular Tradition”; “Secular Rhymes and Songs, Ballads, Work Songs, and Songs of Social Change”; “John Henry”; “Stackolee”</li> <li>• Trimble, Ch. 1: “Thinking Well” and Ch. 2: “Getting Launched”</li> <li>• Thesis statement handouts</li> </ul>
Thursday April 13	<p><b>CLASS IS CANCELED!</b></p>	<p><b>CLASS IS CANCELED!**</b></p>
<b>WEEK 3</b> Tuesday April 18	<p><i>Poetry is not scary...</i></p> <p>Introduction to sonnets, meter, and scansion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Shakespeare, Sonnets “130” &amp; “146”</li> <li>• Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress”</li> <li>• Poetry Definitions</li> <li>• Approaches to Reading Poetry</li> <li>• How to Read a Poem</li> <li>• Sonnets</li> <li>• <b>Thesis statement for paper 1 is due</b></li> </ul>
Thursday April 20	<p><i>Poetry continued</i></p> <p><b>Building a Thesis, Part II</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claude McKay, “America”</li> <li>• Paul Lawrence Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask”</li> <li>• William Carlos Williams, “The Widow’s Lament in Springtime”</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 4</b> Tuesday April 25	<p><i>Introduction to Drama</i></p> <p><b>Writing Workshop II: The Art of the Introduction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i></li> <li>• Trimble, Ch. 3: “Openers” and Ch. 6: “Diction”</li> <li>• Reading Drama</li> <li>• Explanation of scene presentations</li> </ul>
Thursday April 27	<p><b>Writing Workshop III: Developing Your Argument</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i></li> <li>• “How to write an effective argumentative paper”</li> <li>• Work on Scene Presentations</li> <li>• <b>Paper 1 is due at 9am</b></li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 5</b> Tuesday May 2	<p>Film Screening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “O”</li> </ul>
Thursday May 4	<p><i>“All the world’s a stage...”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scene Presentations</li> <li>• Peer editing of paper 1</li> <li>• Explanation of debates; sign-up sheet</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 6</b> Tuesday May 9	<p><i>Introduction to Short Fiction</i></p> <p><b>Writing Workshop IV: Crafting the Paragraph</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stephen Crane, “The Monster”</li> <li>• Trimble, Ch. 4: “Middles” and Ch. 7: “Readability”</li> <li>• Debate # 1</li> </ul>

Thursday May 11	<i>Narrative Structure</i> •Authorial intent and intended audience •The role of science in the creation of “others”	•Stephen Crane, “The Monster” •Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wall-paper” •Trimble, Ch. 13: “Quoting” •Debate # 2 • <b>Paper 1 revision is at 9am</b>
<b>WEEK 7</b> Tuesday May 16	<i>Characterization</i>  <b>Writing Workshop</b> <b>V: Conclusions</b>	•Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wall-paper” •Trimble, Ch. 5: “Closers” and Ch. 8: “Superstitions” •Debate # 3
Thursday May 18	<i>The death of the author investigated</i> Exploring the relationship between author and text	•Onoto Watanna, “A Half Caste” (both the essay and short story) •Trimble, Ch. 12: “Punctuation” •Debate # 4 • <b>Thesis statement for paper 2 is due</b>
<b>WEEK 8</b> Tuesday May 23	<i>The importance of cultural context</i> Understanding slavery and how it complicated Black motherhood	•Harriet Jacob’s excerpt •Trimble, Ch. 11: “Proofreading” •Debate # 5
Thursday May 25	<i>Intro to the Novel</i>	•Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> •Debate # 6
<b>WEEK 9</b> Tuesday May 30	<i>Representing the unspeakable</i>	•Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> •Debate # 7
Thursday June 1	<i>What is truth?</i>	•Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> •Peer editing paper 2 •Debate # 8 • <b>Paper 2 is due at 9m</b>
<b>WEEK 10</b> Tuesday June 6	<i>Where did the heroes go?</i>	•Ernest Hemingway, <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> •Debate # 9
Thursday June 8	<i>Comparing writing styles</i> Closing thoughts...	•Ernest Hemingway, <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> •Debate # 10
<b>Thursday</b> <b>June 15</b>	<b>Paper 2 Revision Due</b>	<b>12pm in my department mailbox, Rolfe 2225</b>

\*\*To make up for the missed class time, you will be required to watch the 1995 Columbia/Tristar version of *Othello* starring Laurence Fishburne and Kenneth Branagh on reserve in the Powell Media Library by **Tuesday May 2**. You can watch it alone or schedule a group viewing. The different film versions will give you ideas on how to stage your scene presentations, so take notes!

### **Concerning Grades**

High grades are achievable in my classes, but you should remember that grades are *earned*, not *given*. It isn't impossible to earn an A in my class, but please be aware that I must grade in accordance with the following departmental rubric and that an A indicates excellence (not just competence or even better-than-average performance). I also encourage you to keep a healthy sense of what grades actually mean.

### **Here's what grades assess:**

How well you performed in a particular class at a particular time while dealing with other courses and all the other slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

### **Here's what grades *don't* assess:**

- How good a person you are
- Your personal destiny
- Your ability to succeed in college or in life
- How much I like you
- Your intellectual or other personal abilities
- How much you're worth (financially, morally, or otherwise)

### **English Department Essay Grading Guidelines:**

A      Virtually flawless, without significant mechanical errors, and containing an interesting, sophisticated thesis well-supported by pertinent, fully analyzed examples and impeccable documentation.

B      Also usually has a sophisticated thesis, but evidentiary support is weaker than for "A" or intermittently so; expression and argument may show some flaws, but there are not serious mechanical errors.

C      Has a thesis, but it may be a relatively simple one that overlooks significant qualifications and fails to handle pertinent evidence; supporting examples are not well developed, and lists often replace argument: enough serious mechanical errors (diction, subject/verb agreement, dangling participles, etc.) exist to make comprehension difficult at times.

D      Writer has not grasped the topic or expressed a thesis; some thoughtful and/or well-expressed passages may exist, but they do not cohere; lists are common but inexplicable; serious mechanical errors are widespread and confound comprehension.

F      Meets in a satisfactory fashion none of the desired expectations mentioned above.

## General Course Grading Guidelines

*Please note that these are guidelines and not proscriptive rules. Most of the profiles below will apply to the students receiving the corresponding grades, but there are always special exceptions for cases deserving the administration of either mercy or justice.*

A These students have thoroughly mastered the course material, including not only the information found in the readings and contained in class discussions or lectures, but also argumentation and thesis formation, as well as such mechanical issues as grammar, punctuation, usage, and proper paper formatting. They also have been well prepared for class, maintained a good attendance record, participated actively, eagerly, and respectfully in classroom discussions, and often visited with the instructor during office hours. These individuals have been consistently and exceptionally dedicated and show marked progress.

B These students have engaged with and understood the majority of the course material as noted above, but less thoroughly than an A student. They have generally—but not always—been well prepared and participated actively and eagerly in classroom discussions. People receiving this grade will have attended office hours, but perhaps only a few times. These individuals have registered a solid performance throughout the course of the class and have made measurable progress.

C These students have engaged with and understood more than half of the course material as noted under the profile for an A student. They have been inconsistently prepared for class and have participated fitfully in classroom discussions. Usually, they seldom or never attended office hours or spoke to the instructor outside of the class. These people have performed well at some times, but not consistently. Their understanding of the information and their skill levels have improved, but less remarkably than that of either the A or the B students.

D These students have engaged with and understood less than half of the course material as outlined above. Their attendance record generally has not been good, and when they have attended class, they have usually been poorly prepared and have participated reluctantly, if at all, during class discussions. They often have spoken little, if at all, with the instructor. Their understanding of the information contained in the course and writing/argumentative proficiency has improved, but not much.

F These students fit the profile for a D student but also have not completed course assignments and/or have attended class less than 50% of the time.