

Spring 2-1-2019

LIT 110L.04: Intro to Literature

Ann E. Emmons

University of Montana, Missoula

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Recommended Citation

Emmons, Ann E., "LIT 110L.04: Intro to Literature" (2019). *Syllabi*. 9661.
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Ann Emmons and Jensen Lillquist

Ann's office hours: M-W 10:30-12:00 and by appointment, Corbin 353

Ann's phone (**text is best**): 529-4586 Ann's email: ann.emmons@umontana.edu

Jensen's office hours: T-R, 11-12:30, Corbin 257

Jensen's email:

jensen.lillquist@umontana.edu

Introduction to Literature, Spring 2019

9:30-10:50 T R, Education 312

"I try to laugh / At whatever life brings / Cause when I look down / I just miss all the good stuff / When I look up / I just trip over things." Ani DiFranco, "As Is"

"[Literature *does*] educate us about life. ... I'm thinking of the great question of nineteenth-century Russian literature: how should one live? A novel worth reading is an education of the heart. It enlarges your sense of human possibility, of what human nature is, of what happens in the world. It's a creator of inwardness. ... I can't care about a book that has nothing to contribute to the wisdom project." Susan Sontag, *The Paris Review* Interview

"wonder is defined as a constriction and suspension of the heart caused by amazement at the appearance of something so portentous, and unusual that the heart suffers a systole. Hence wonder is something like fear in its effect on the heart. This effect of wonder, then, this constriction and systole of the heart, springs from an unfulfilled but felt desire to know... Now the man who is puzzled and wonders apparently does not know. ... Hence wonder is the movement of the man who does not know on his way to finding out." Albertus Magnus, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*

Overview:

LIT 110 is an introduction to the discipline of literary studies. By the end of the semester you will be a more perceptive reader of literature in the genres of poetry and fiction and will have been introduced to the range of interpretive approaches that literary scholars typically employ. However, I am aware that most of you are not and do not intend to become English majors; much of our discussion will therefore focus on the translation of literary "close-reading" techniques and interpretive strategies to all efforts at careful reading and interpretation.

To that end, I have organized the course into 3 study units: The Shape of Story, The Art of Criticism, and Writing about Reading. In addition, you will join one of three work groups: Winter is Coming, Fiction in the Real World, or Sound Tracks. These work groups will meet once every 2 to 3 weeks, during class time, and will prepare a 40-minute presentation. We will talk about these groups in more detail Week 1 - and may add to the list of options or delete options depending on the interests and skill sets of the class.

The list of required texts for this course is long and your weekly reading assignments will average 75 pages. **This reading -- careful, engaged, on-time -- is your primary responsibility for this course.** Writing assignments include an in-class free write on each text, revision of each free write, and a 6-8 page essay that you will work on all semester. We will also talk about writing -- yours and others -- all semester and we will all be stronger, more-confident writers come spring. (That's one of the happier consequences of reading 1300 pages in 16 weeks ...)

Montana University System Learning Outcomes for courses that meet your Writing and Literary and Artistic Expression Gen Ed Requirement:

Writing Course Learning Outcomes / W

- Learn new concepts through the art of writing well
- Formulate and express ideas that are logical, organized, and developed
- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience and purpose
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English-language usage

Literary and Artistic Studies Course Learning Outcomes / L

- Learn to characterize, interpret, and critique the structure and significance of works of art
- Learn to compose coherent arguments about works of art from a range of perspectives
- Acquire knowledge about artistic and cultural traditions
-

Attendance:

You may miss three class sessions without penalty. I strongly urge you to hoard these absences; they're your savings account in the event you get sick, someone you love gets sick, or it snows hard on a Wednesday night. After the first 3, each absence will result in a ½ point grade reduction (from an A to an A-, for example).

Finally, I expect that laptops and smart phones are being used in the service of our class activities and that they will not distract you, me, or the other students in the class. Distractions include noise **and your wayward attention**. You may take notes on a laptop **only** if you sit within the first row of the classroom.

Requirements

Writing Portfolio (free writes; essay [2 drafts]).....	45%
Midterm exam.....	15%
Work Group Participation and Presentation.....	15%
Final exam (cumulative).....	25%

I will provide a menu of free-write prompts the class-session before each free write. You can choose one of these prompts, or write your own. If you miss a free write you must make it up, during office hours (mine or Jensen's), **within 1 week**. Your essay must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day it is due, typed and double-spaced, with 1" margins, using in-text citations (MLA format). Additional instructions will be provided over the course of the semester.

Special Needs

If you have a documented disability, or otherwise anticipate needing special accommodations for this course, please bring this to my attention as early in the semester as possible so that we have an understanding and can make arrangements.

Required Texts:

Eavan Boland and Mark Strand, *The Making of a Poem*
James Wood, *How Fiction Works*
Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*
Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*
Ovid and Charles Martin, *Metamorphoses: A New Translation*
James Welch, *Winter in the Blood*
Mildred Walker, *Winter Wheat*
Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through it*

Tentative Schedule

NB: this schedule is truly tentative and will be adjusted according to the needs of the class. Specific reading assignments will be determined at least one week in advance. All reading must be completed by class time on the date listed. **Please note that you are not prepared for class unless you have that reading in front of you as we discuss it.**

Week 1: January 7

R Introductions, Syllabus Review, and Work-Group Formation

Unit 1: The Shape of Story, Part I

Week 2: January 14

T *Touching the Void*, film version (Kevin MacDonal, director)
R *Touching the Void*; **Work Groups**
Reading assignment for week 3: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

Week 3: January 21

T Lecture: The Shape of Story;
Reading for Thursday: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*; *How Fiction Works*, selections tbd
R Discussion: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*; **Haroun Free Write**
Reading assignment for Week 4: *Benito Cereno*

Unit 2: The Art of Criticism

Week 4: January 28

T Lecture: Critical versus Non-Critical Reading
R Discussion: *Benito Cereno*

Reading for Week 5: finish Benito Cereno; *How Fiction Works*, selections tbd

Week 5: February 4

- T Discussion: *Benito Cereno*; **Benito Cereno Free Write**
R Lecture: Forms of Criticism; **Work Groups**
Reading assignment for Week 6: *The Making of a Poem*, selections tbd

Unit 3: The Shape of Story II

Week 6: February 11

- T Lecture: Form and Content; Discussion: *The Making of a Poem*
Reading assignment for Thursday: *The Making of a Poem*, selections tbd
R Discussion: *The Making of a Poem*; **Free Write**
Reading assignment for Week 7: *Metamorphoses*, selections tbd

Unit 4: The Shape of Story III (Global Literature: Threads and Currents, Borders and Walls)

Week 7: February 18

- T Lecture: Myth; Mythos of the Seasons; Pastiche and Parody
Reading assignment for Thursday: *Metamorphoses*, selections tbd
R Discussion: *Metamorphoses*; **Work Groups**
Reading assignment for Week 8: *Metamorphoses*, selections tbd

Week 8: February 25

- T Discussion: *Metamorphoses*; **Metamorphoses Free Write**
Reading assignment for Thursday: Toni Morrison, "Strangers"; Charles D'Ambrosio interview, "Instead of Sobbing, You Write Sentences" (both available on Moodle)
R Writing Workshop
Reading assignment for Week 9: *Winter in the Blood*

Unit 5: Writing About Reading

Week 9: March 4

- T Discussion: *Winter in the Blood*; **Work Groups**
R **Midterm Exam**
Reading assignment for Week 10: Finish *Winter in the Blood*

Week 10: March 11

- T Discussion: *Winter in the Blood*
Reading assignment for Thursday: begin *Winter Wheat*
R Discussion: *Winter Wheat*

Reading assignment for Week 11: *Winter Wheat*

Week 11: March 18

- T Discussion: Winter Wheat
- R Discussion: Winter Wheat; ***Winter Wheat and Winter in the Blood*** Free Write
Reading assignment for Week 13: *A River Runs Through It*

Week 12: Spring Break - no class

Reading assignment for Week 13: *A River Runs Through It*

Week 13: April 1

- T Discussion: *A River Runs Through It*
- R **Work Groups**

Week 14: April 8

- T **Work-Group Presentations**
- R **Work-Group Presentations**

Week 15: April 15

- T Writing Workshop and essay prompt development
- R Writing Workshop

Week 16: April 22

- T Writing Workshop
- R Course Review

Final Exam: 8:00 - 10:00, Tuesday April 30th in our classroom/ED 312