

**Teaching Literature  
English 464  
Fall 2016**

University of Massachusetts Boston  
MWF 10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.  
McCormack M01-0617

Instructor: Alex Mueller  
Office Hours: MWF noon-12:50 p.m., and by appointment  
Office: Wheatley 6-003  
Phone: 617-287-6723  
E-Mail: alex.mueller@umb.edu

**DESCRIPTION:**

Designed for students who are considering English teaching as a career, this seminar is an investigation of why and how we teach literature in the secondary school settings. We will read literary texts from a teacher's perspective, analyze educational research, develop lesson plans, and respond critically to each other's work. To clarify and reassess the goals of literature pedagogy, we will attempt to strike a balance between developing practical tools for potential classroom use and examining theories about teaching and learning. We will address teaching literary genres, teaching canonical and non-canonical texts (ranging from those of Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare to Marjane Satrapi and Zora Neale Hurston), teaching poetic and narrative form, and teaching with unexpected materials. In the spirit of collaboration, this course will draw on our collective interests and educational experiences to identify useful resources and strategies that will assist 21st century-students in their responses to print, visual, and digital texts.

**OBJECTIVES:**

***Knowledge:***

***Students will:***

- Grow to understand the field of English pedagogy, specifically as it relates to teaching literature.
- Develop strategies for teaching literature at the secondary school level.
- Gain knowledge of theories of learning.
- Gain insight into how digital tools can be used to enhance lessons in teaching literature.
- Learn effective uses of assessment and evaluation.
- Gain an understanding of secondary school learning environments.

***Skills:***

***Students will:***

- Practice close-readings of texts and place them in historical, literary, material, and cultural contexts.
- Hone verbal and written communication skills.
- Learn to pace lessons and develop effective instruction with time restrictions.
- Practice lesson planning.
- Engage in collaborative and individual mock-teaching activities.
- Engage in self-reflective practice through quickwriting, self-analysis, and self-critique.
- Practice using digital tools to plan lessons.
- Practice assessment and evaluation, working toward reliability and accuracy.

**Dispositions:****Students will:**

- Cultivate professional attitudes toward teaching and literature.
- Reflect on the importance of modeling positive and well-informed attitudes toward literature.
- Practice being active, engaged, respectful members of a collegial and professional learning environment by contributing constructively to class discussions, group work, and workshops.
- Practice academic integrity by documenting sources carefully and honestly.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:****Literary Readings:**

Anderson, M.T. *Feed* (Candlewick).  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Wife of Bath*. Ed. Peter G. Beidler (Bedford/St. Martin's).  
 Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper).  
 Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Pantheon).

**Pedagogy Readings:**

Blau, Sheridan. *The Literature Workshop: Teaching Texts and Their Readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.  
 Zunshine, Lisa. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.

*Online Readings:* Some assigned readings are found on Genius (<http://genius.com>) and on our course wiki site (<http://engl611-mueller.wikispaces.umb.edu/Teaching+Literature>). The Genius readings are accessible through the hyperlinked syllabus on the wiki. Wiki readings are marked by the "WIKI" label on the schedule below. If you won't be using a tablet or laptop in class (no cell phones please), please print the online readings and bring them to class.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

Reading: Since this is both a pedagogy and a literature course, I have attempted to find a balance between "teachable" texts and helpful theories/practices for teaching. **Be sure to bring the assigned texts to every class meeting.**

*Pedagogy readings:* You are responsible each week for developing a list of questions about the assigned pedagogy readings (at least one per reading). Come to class prepared to ask your questions and respond to your classmates' questions. Be sure to consider how your questions might be applicable to various levels of teaching. We will try to discuss these questions in class, but if we don't get to them you are still responsible for bringing them.

Annotation: **You will be expected to add at least one annotation to each literary reading available on [Genius](http://genius.com). You will need to set up an account and select a**

**username that is recognizable to all of us – choose some variation of your name, if possible.** You must add these annotations before the class when the reading will be discussed. While one comment/per literary reading is the minimum requirement, I would encourage you to add many more comments, especially if your comments are short. This extra effort will not go unnoticed! **NB: YOU MUST ACCESS ALL GENIUS READINGS THROUGH THE LINKS IN THIS SYLLABUS. IF YOU DON'T, YOU WILL BE ANNOTATING THE WRONG TEXT.**

You will notice that some classes include NO readings on Genius. Some of those classes are labeled “TWITTER” because you are expected to send out at least one tweet as an “annotation” to the literary reading due that day. This will require that you have a [Twitter](#) account. Details will be provided on the wiki and in class.

#### Major Assignments:

- 1) **Unit Plan:** You will develop a five-lesson unit plan (10-15 pages) that focuses on the teaching of literature in a middle or high school English classroom.
- 2) **“Poster Session” Lesson (for a small group; part of your unit plan)** As you develop the unit, you must select one lesson that you will share in detail with a small “poster session” group of your peers.
- 3) **Demonstration Lesson (for the entire class; based on a reading in the course schedule below)**
- 4) **Mini-Papers:** You will write three 2-3 page papers on topics described below.
- 5) **Annotations:** As explained above, you are required to compose at least one Genius or Twitter annotation on each literary reading for each class.

I will provide more details about each assignment as the semester progresses. You will occasionally produce drafts that will be subject to peer feedback.

Attendance and Participation: It is absolutely essential that you attend class on time and come prepared to participate, which means completing the reading and assignments, listening attentively to lectures and other students’ comments, asking questions, bringing the assigned text to every class, and actively discussing the readings. Discussion will not be as useful or engaging if not all students are in attendance or prepared for class. Absences will not only leave you behind and affect your grades, but also impede the effectiveness of this course for your classmates.

**More than one absence will result in a penalty in regards to your participation/attendance grade for the course: for every day missed after the first, your overall participation grade may be lowered by one letter grade.** You are responsible for keeping up with the syllabus and/or changes to the syllabus.

If you have to miss because of a verified illness, death in the family, jury duty, military service, religious holiday, or participation in a school event, notify me by e-mail before the class and the absence may be excused. Absences for any other reason will be considered unexcused.

Late or incomplete assignments: It is imperative that you meet all assignment deadlines since the format of this class relies upon student participation. You should resist the temptation to blow off

informal assignments – I will check and give significant credit for them. Late or incomplete work will receive a 10% grade deduction for every day (every day, not every class meeting!) it is late or unfinished.

Disability: You should inform me during the first two weeks of the term of any disability you have so that the appropriate accommodation may be made. Disabilities should be documented at the Ross Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Campus Center, Room 2100, phone (617) 287-7430.

Academic Honesty Policy: You are expected to abide by the University's Code of Student Conduct in all of their classes at UMASS Boston ([http://www.umb.edu/life\\_on\\_campus/policies/code/](http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/code/)).

Grades:

### COURSE EVALUATION RUBRIC

Mini-Papers: 30%	Each of the three essays are worth 10% of the overall grade.
Unit Plan: 25%	This should contain at least five lessons, a rationale, and five sample artifacts.
“Poster” and Demo Lessons: 20%	Each lesson is worth 10% of your overall grade.
Participation: 15%	This includes all informal and in-class writing assignments, attendance, and involvement in class discussions.
Annotation: 10%	This ongoing assignment requires that you add at least one Genius or Twitter annotation to each literary reading for each class.

COURSE SCHEDULE\* (readings due on the date listed):

### **Assignment**

Why should we teach literature?

September 7 <sup>th</sup> :	General introduction to the course.
9 <sup>th</sup> :	Developing principles for literature teaching: Blau, “Principles for Practice” (1-19).
12 <sup>th</sup> :	Principles for literature teachers: Zunshine, “Why Did Peter Walsh Tremble?” (3-6). Literary text: <a href="#">Kincaid, “Girl”</a> . Demonstration lesson:
13 <sup>th</sup> :	**Add/Drop Ends**

14<sup>th</sup>: Theory of mind: Zunshine, “What is Mind Reading?” (6-10). Literary text: [Atwood, “Happy Endings”](#). Demo lesson:

16<sup>th</sup>: Disability and literature: Zunshine, “Theory of Mind, Autism, and Fiction” (10-2). Literary text: Wordsworth, [“Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”](#). Demo lesson:

#### What should we teach?

19<sup>th</sup>: Theme: Blau, “Stories from the Classroom: Lessons on Learning Literature” (20-33). Literary text: Hughes, [“Harlem”](#). Demo lesson:

21<sup>st</sup>: Thematic juxtaposition: Zunshine, “Effortless’-Mind Reading” (13-6). Literary text: Dunbar, [“We Wear the Mask”](#). Demo lesson:

23<sup>rd</sup>: Formal juxtaposition: Zunshine, “Why Do We Read Fiction?” (16-22). Literary text: Lawrence, [“The Rocking-Horse Winner”](#). Demo lesson:

26<sup>th</sup>: Authorship and form: Blau, “From Telling to Teaching: The Literature Workshop in Action” (34-59). Literary text: Faulkner, [“A Rose for Emily”](#). Demo lesson:

28<sup>th</sup>: Formal and author-focused juxtaposition: Zunshine, “The Novel as a Cognitive Experiment” and “Can Cognitive Science Tell Us Why We Are Afraid of *Mrs. Dalloway*?” (22-36). Literary text: O’Connor, [“A Good Man Is Hard to Find”](#). Demo lesson:

30<sup>th</sup>: Short fiction: Zunshine, “The Relationship between a Cognitive Analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the Larger Field of Literary Studies” and “Woolf, Pinker, and the Project of Interdisciplinarity” (36-44). Literary text: Wharton, [“Roman Fever”](#). Demo lesson:

#### How should we read?

October 3<sup>rd</sup>: **Mini-Paper #1 Due: Select one “new” text to add to one story assigned in the previous weeks (i.e. Kincaid, Atwood, Lawrence, Faulkner, O’Connor, or Wharton). Compare and contrast (juxtapose!) these stories on the levels of theme, authorship, and/or form, describing the key ideas you would want your students to gain from this juxtaposition. You must include/cite at least one idea from Blau or Zunshine.**

5<sup>th</sup>: Reading processes [TWITTER]: Blau, “Which Interpretation Is the Right One?: A Workshop on Literary Meaning” (60-78). Literary text: Lee, “Persimmons” (WIKI). Demo lesson:

7<sup>th</sup>: Reading poetry [TWITTER]: Mueller, Nixon, and Srikanth, “Constructing the Innocence of the First Textual Encounter” (WIKI). Literary text: Shakespeare, “Sonnet 130” (WIKI). Demo lesson:

- 10<sup>th</sup>:                   \*\*Columbus Day\*\* NO CLASS
- 12<sup>th</sup>:                   Reading literature in context [TWITTER]: Blau, “The Problem of Background Knowledge: A Workshop on Intertextual Literacy” (79-96). Literary text: Bradstreet, “To My Dear and Loving Husband” (WIKI). Demo lesson:
- 14<sup>th</sup>:                   Teaching literature within linguistic, cultural, and literary contexts: Zunshine, “Whose Thought Is It, Anyway?” (47-54). Literary text: Eliot, [“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”](#). Demo lesson:
- 17<sup>th</sup>:                   Interpreting literature [TWITTER]: Blau, “Where Do Interpretations Come From?” (97-122); Literary text: Anderson, *Feed* (1-72). Demo lesson:
- 19<sup>th</sup>:                   Adolescent literature [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Metarepresentational Ability and Schizophrenia” (54-8). Literary text: Anderson, *Feed* (73-203). Demo lesson:
- 21<sup>st</sup>:                   Teaching dystopian literature [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Everyday Failures of Source-Monitoring” (58-60). Literary text: Anderson, *Feed* (205-300). Demo lesson:
- How should we respond to literature?
- 24<sup>th</sup>:                   **Mini-Paper #2 Due: Describe teaching a mini-unit on *Feed*, explaining at least one "inventive" teaching technique. Consider how you will ask students to interpret the language of the text and engage with its dystopian themes. Come prepared to use the paper as part of class discussion. You must include/cite at least one idea from Blau or Zunshine.**
- 26<sup>th</sup>:                   Discussing literature: Blau, “What’s Worth Saying about a Literary Text?” (123-50). Literary text: Jackson, [“The Lottery”](#). Demo lesson:
- 28<sup>th</sup>:                   Facilitating discussions: Zunshine, “Monitoring Fictional States of Mind” (60-5). Literary text: Gilman, [“The Yellow Wallpaper”](#). Demo lesson:
- 31<sup>st</sup>:                   Point of view [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “‘Fiction’ and ‘History’” (65-72). Literary text: Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue* (44-73). Demo lesson:
- November 2<sup>nd</sup>:       Teaching “old” literature [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Tracking Minds in Beowulf” (73-5). Literary text: Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath’s Tale* (73-85). Demo lesson:
- 4<sup>th</sup>:                   Literary criticism [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Don Quixote and His Progeny” (75-7). **Read your assigned critical essay (New**

**Historicism, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction, or Feminism).**

- 7<sup>th</sup>: **Mini-Paper #3 Due. Use your critical essay as a “lens” to discuss one passage from Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath’s Prologue or Tale*. Describe how you might use such literary criticism in your teaching of Chaucer. Come prepared to use the paper as part of class discussion. You must include/cite at least one idea from Blau or Zunshine.**
- 9<sup>th</sup>: Responding to drama [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Source-Monitoring, ToM, and the Figure of the Unreliable Narrator” (77-9). Literary text: Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act I (WIKI). Demo lesson:
- 11<sup>th</sup>: **\*\*Veterans Day\*\* NO CLASS**
- 14<sup>th</sup>: Performing drama [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Source-Monitoring and the Implied Author” (79-82). Literary text: *Othello*, Acts II-III (WIKI). Demo lesson:
- 16<sup>th</sup>: Teaching the material text [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Richardson’s *Clarissa*” (82-100). Literary text: *Othello*, Act IV (WIKI). Demo lesson:
- 18<sup>th</sup>: Teaching Shakespeare [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Nabokov’s *Lolita*” (100-118). Literary text: *Othello*, Act V (WIKI). Demo lesson:
- 21<sup>st</sup>: ***DUE ON THE COURSE WIKI: "POSTER SESSION" OF LESSON AND IDEAS IN PROGRESS FOR FINAL CURRICLUM UNIT***
- 23<sup>rd</sup>: **“POSTER SESSION” WORKSHOP**
- 25<sup>th</sup>: **\*\*Thanksgiving\*\* NO CLASS**
- How should we write about literature?
- 28<sup>th</sup>: Responding to fiction [TWITTER]: Writing Assignments: Blau, “Writing Assignments in Literature Classes: The Problem” (151-63). Literary text: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Chapters 1-8). Demo lesson:
- 30<sup>th</sup>: Writing processes: [TWITTER]: Blau, “Writing Assignments in Literature Classes: Models for Solutions-in-Progress” (164-86). Literary text: Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Chapters 9-14). Demo lesson:
- December 2<sup>nd</sup>: Teaching the novel [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “ToM and the Detective Novel” (121-3). Literary text: Hurston (Chapters 15-20). Demo lesson:

How should we teach graphic novels, new media, and nonfiction?

- 5<sup>th</sup>: Graphic novels [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Why is Reading a Detective Story a lot like Lifting Weights at the Gym?” (123-8). Literary text: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (3-53). Demo lesson:
- 7<sup>th</sup>: New media [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “Metarepresentationality and Some Recurrent Patterns of the Detective Story” (128-53). Literary text: Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (54-102). Demo lesson:
- 9<sup>th</sup>: Teaching using visual material/"new" forms of literature [TWITTER]: Zunshine, “A Cognitive Evolutionary Perspective” (153-5). Literary text: Satrapi, *Persepolis* (103-53). Demo lesson:
- 12<sup>th</sup>: Nonfiction or “Informational” Text [TWITTER]: Blau, “Honoring Readers and Respecting Texts: Value and Authority in Literary Interpretation” (187-202). Literary text: Martin Luther King, Jr., [“A Letter from Birmingham Jail”](#). Demo lesson:
- 14<sup>th</sup>: Why teach literature (revisited)?: Blau, "What Do Students Need to Learn?" (203-17) and Zunshine, “Conclusion” (159-64). **FINAL CURRICULUM UNIT DUE**

\*The course schedule is subject to change.