

**Teaching Literature  
English 611  
Summer 2018**

University of Massachusetts Boston  
MW 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Wheatley W06-047

Instructor: Alex Mueller  
Office Hours: MW 4:30-6:00 p.m., and by appointment  
Office: Wheatley 6-003  
Phone: 617-287-6723  
E-Mail: alex.mueller@umb.edu

**DESCRIPTION:**

Designed for prospective and practicing teachers, this seminar is an investigation of why and how we teach literature in the secondary school and college settings. We will read literary texts from a teacher's perspective, analyze educational research, create unit plans, demonstrate lessons, 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 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 the *Gawain*-poet and William Shakespeare to Marjane Satrapi and M.T. Anderson), teaching poetic and narrative form, and teaching with unexpected materials. In the spirit of collaboration, the seminar will draw on our collective interests, expertise, and experiences to identify useful resources and strategies that will assist our 21st century-students in their responses to print, visual, and digital texts.

**OBJECTIVES:**

***Knowledge:***

***Seminar participants 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 and college levels (i.e. literature circles, literature workshops, scaffolding, modeling, cooperative learning, etc.).
- Gain knowledge of theories of learning (student-centered, teacher-centered, a blend of both, etc.)
- Gain insight into how technology can be used to enhance lessons in teaching literature.
- Learn effective uses of assessment and evaluation.
- Gain an understanding of the secondary school and college learning environments

***Skills:***

***Seminar participants 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 technology to plan lessons.
- Practice assessment and evaluation, working toward reliability and accuracy.

**Dispositions:**

**Seminar participants 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).  
 Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper).  
 Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Pantheon).  
*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Norton Critical Edition).

**Pedagogy Readings:**

Blau, Sheridan. *The Literature Workshop: Teaching Texts and Their Readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.  
 Bruns, Cristina Vischer. *Why Literature?: The Value of Literary Reading and What It Means for Teaching*. New York: Continuum, 2011.  
 Smith, Michael W., Deborah Appleman, and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, *Uncommon Core: Where the Authors of the Standards Go Wrong About Instruction – and How You Can Get It Right*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Literacy, 2014.

*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 “WIKI” label on the schedule below. If you won’t be using a tablet or laptop in class, please print the online readings and bring them to class.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Beach, Richard, Deborah Appleman, Susan Hynds, and Jeffrey Wilhelm. *Teaching Literature to Adolescents*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.  
 Beers, Kylene, Robert E. Probst, and Linda Rief. *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2007.  
 Carter, James Bucky, ed. *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels: Page by Page, Panel by Panel*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2007.

- Christel, Mary T., and Scott Sullivan. *Lesson Plans for Media-Rich Classrooms*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2007.
- Elbow, Peter. *What is English?* New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990.
- Jago, Carol. *Classics in the Classroom: Designing Accessible Literature Lessons*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.
- Kirby, Dan, Dawn Latta Kirby, and Tom Liner. *Inside Out: Strategies for Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.
- Kist, William. *New Literacies in Action: Teaching and Learning in Multiple Media*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2005.
- Macrorie, Ken. *Telling Writing*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Co, 1970.
- Probst, Robert. *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Secondary School*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.
- Rosenblatt, Louise. *Literature as Exploration*. 5th Edition. New York: MLA, 1995.
- Scholes, Robert. *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Smith, Michael W. and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm. *Fresh Takes on Teaching Literary Elements: How to Teach What Really Matters About Character, Setting, Point of View, and Theme*. New York: Scholastic, 2010.
- Wilhelm, Jeffrey. *“You Gotta Be the Book”: Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2007.

#### 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 four annotations to the readings available on [Genius](#). 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.** During some weeks, multiple readings are on Genius – you only need to provide four annotations total, not four annotations per text. You must add these annotations before the class when the reading will be discussed. While four comments 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. Those classes are labeled “TWITTER” because you are expected to send out four tweets as “annotations” to the course

readings. 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 ten-lesson plan (15-20 pages) for a unit that focuses on the teaching of literature in a secondary school or college 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 3-4 page papers on topics described below.
- 5) **Annotations:** As explained above, you are required to compose at least four Genius or Twitter annotations on course readings each week.

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 expected that you attend class on time and come prepared to participate, which means completing the reading and assignments, listening attentively to demonstration lessons, 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 participants are in attendance or prepared for class. In addition, your contributions to this course will develop your professional identities as teachers and colleagues.

**More than one absence will result in a penalty in regards to your participation/attendance grade for the course.** You are responsible for keeping up with the syllabus and/or changes to the syllabus.

If you know you will be absent on a certain date, due to any sort of conflict, let me know as soon as possible. We can work together on a plan for make-up work **before** you are absent. If you have a last-minute absence, a courtesy phone message or email to me, alerting me to your absence, is appreciated.

Grading Policy, Withdrawals, Incompletes: All work assigned in the class must be submitted on time for satisfactory completion of the course. Due to our tight schedule, an assignment can be handed in late only by prior arrangement with me; such arrangements must be made a week in advance of the assignment’s due date. It is almost impossible to receive an incomplete; incompletes are strongly discouraged, require documented physical or psychological illness, and are given only at the discretion of the instructor.

Accommodations: If you have a disability and feel you will need accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services (M-1-401) at (617)287-7430.

Plagiarism: Using someone else’s work or work you have written for another class without clear documentation is forbidden. Plagiarism is the most serious of academic crimes. Plagiarism is taking what the academic community considers its most important resource: ideas. You cannot present someone else’s ideas as your own. You must document even the shortest of phrases and sentence fragments, the “borrowed” argument/theme/thesis, all quotations, and all notes, citations, and references used. You must document your use of another source, no matter what the source—including a web site. **If you plagiarize in my course, as a graduate student, at the very least you will fail the course.** I will also undertake a full judicial investigation, seeking further sanctions. For a list of possible sanctions, see the Student Handbook (2002-3), 157-158.

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 ten lessons, a rationale, and ten 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 four annotations to selected Genius or Twitter readings for each class

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

### Assignment

Why should we teach literature?

May 30<sup>th</sup>: General introduction to the course. Developing principles for literature teaching.

What should we teach?

June 4<sup>th</sup>: Theme: Blau, “Stories from the Classroom: Lessons on Learning Literature” (20-33); Bruns, “Introduction – the Question and Its Importance” and “Why Read Literature?” (1-36); Smith, “The Promise and the Peril of the Common Core State Standards” (1-15) and “Old Wine in Broken Bottles” (16-36).

Thematic juxtaposition: Read all six texts below, which will be broken into groups:

Group 1: Hughes, "[Harlem](#)"; Kincaid, "[Girl](#)"

Group 2: Atwood, "[Happy Endings](#)"; Dunbar, "[We Wear the Mask](#)"

Group 3: Lawrence, "[The Rocking-Horse Winner](#)"; Wordsworth, "[Composed Upon Westminster Bridge](#)".

Demonstration lesson(s):

June 6<sup>th</sup>:

Authorship and form: Blau, "From Telling to Teaching: The Literature Workshop in Action" (34-59); Bruns, "From Words on Paper to an Object in Transitional Space" (37-78); Smith, "Aiming for Complex Interpretation" (141-56).

Formal and author-focused juxtaposition: Read all three short stories below; one will be "assigned" to you for additional exploration:

Group 1: Faulkner, "[A Rose for Emily](#)"

Group 2: O'Connor, "[A Good Man Is Hard to Find](#)"

Group 3: Wharton, "[Roman Fever](#)"

**Mini-Paper #1 Due: Select one "new" text to add to one story I selected/assigned. 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, Smith, or Bruns.**

Demonstration lesson(s):

How should we read?

11<sup>th</sup>:

Reading processes: Blau, "Which Interpretation Is the Right One?: A Workshop on Literary Meaning" (60-78); Bruns, "Recent Conceptions of Literary Education and Their Potential Impact on Students' Formative Use of Literature [Part 1]" (79-86).

Reading poetry [TWITTER]: Read the poetry selections on the course wiki (WIKI).

Demonstration lesson(s):

13<sup>th</sup>:

Reading literature in context: Blau, "The Problem of Background Knowledge: A Workshop on Intertextual Literacy" (79-96); Smith, "Using the Most Powerful Resource We Have for Teaching Students Something New" (37-68).

Teaching literature within linguistic, cultural, and literary contexts  
[TWITTER]: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Class will be broken into groups of two or three; each group will be assigned one of the following contexts in the Norton Critical Edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to read, research, and teach to the class:

- Group 1: Linguistic – “*Sir Gawain* in Middle English” (67-8)
- Group 2: Literary – “Two Old French *Gauvain* Romances” (69-81)
- Group 3: Cultural – “Feast at Christmas” (81-3)

**Mini-Paper #2 Due: Read closely your group's selection. Select three passages from *Gawain* and one passage in your group selection to define or characterize the significance of your context (i.e. linguistic, cultural, or literary). Describe teaching a mini-unit on *Gawain* emphasizing this context, explaining at least one "inventive" teaching technique. Come prepared to use the paper as part of class discussion.**

Demonstration lesson(s):

18<sup>th</sup>:

Interpreting literature: Blau, “Where Do Interpretations Come From?” (97-122); Smith, “Teaching for Transfer” (69-106); Bruns, “Recent Conceptions of Literary Education and Their Potential Impact on Students’ Formative Use of Literature [Part 2]” (86-114)

Read all three texts below, which will be broken into groups:

- Group 1: Chopin, [“Story of an Hour”](#)
- Group 2: Gilman, [“The Yellow Wallpaper”](#)
- Group 3: Jackson, [“The Lottery”](#)

***DUE ON THE COURSE WIKI: "POSTER SESSION" OF LESSON AND IDEAS IN PROGRESS FOR FINAL CURRICULUM UNIT***

Demonstration lesson(s):

How should we respond to literature?

20<sup>th</sup>:

Discussing literature: Blau, “What’s Worth Saying about a Literary Text?” (123-50); Smith, “No Text is an Island” (107-40)

Point of view: Hemingway, [“A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”](#)

**“POSTER SESSION” WORKSHOP**

25<sup>th</sup>: Responding to drama: Bruns, “Toward a Literary Education Conducive to the Formative Use of Literature [Part 1]” (115-44)

Performance and the material text [TWITTER]: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*  
(Any unabridged, early modern English language edition is acceptable; or <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/html/Ham.html - line-1.1.0>)

**Mini-Paper #3 Due: Identify an early edition of *Hamlet* on *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, and explain what the idiosyncrasies of the edition suggest about the way the play may have been "read" by its early audiences. Describe teaching *Hamlet* in conjunction with this early edition. How would you have students engage with the play as a performance AND printed text? Come with a print-out of selected pages from EEBO and be prepared to discuss them in the context of your paper.**

Demonstration lesson(s):

How should we write about literature?

27<sup>th</sup>: Writing about fiction: Blau, “Writing Assignments in Literature Classes: The Problem” (151-63); Bruns, “Toward a Literary Education Conducive to the Formative Use of Literature [Part 2]” (144-51)

Teaching a novel [TWITTER]: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Class will be broken into the following groups and topics. Identify and read one scholarly article that addresses your group's topic in relation to Hurston’s novel. Print out and bring the article to class. Be prepared to discuss it with your group members and the rest of the class:

- Group 1: Language
- Group 2: Gender
- Group 3: Race
- Group 4: Class

Demonstration lesson(s):

July 2<sup>nd</sup>: Writing Assignments: Blau, “Writing Assignments in Literature Classes: Models for Solutions-in-Progress” (164-86).

Adolescent literature [TWITTER]: M.T. Anderson, *Feed*

Demonstration lesson(s):



How should we read new media and nonfiction?

9<sup>th</sup>: New Media: Blau, "Honoring Readers and Respecting Texts: Value and Authority in Literary Interpretation" (187-202); Smith, "Putting Our Money Where Our Mouths Are" (157-86)

Teaching using visual material/"new" forms of literature: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Mark up *Persepolis* with post it notes. Can you locate the literary elements of fiction, poetry, drama in this text? How would you teach a graphic novel, moving beyond theme?

Demonstration lesson(s):

11<sup>th</sup>: **FINAL CURRICULUM UNIT DUE**

\*The course schedule is subject to change.