

Literature: An Introduction

University of Northern Iowa — Spring 2020
English 1120 — Section 02

Time, Place: Tues/Thurs 11:00-12:15, Lang 208
Instructor: Kim Groninga
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Materials Needed:

- Texts:
 - *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, Sherman Alexie
 - *Almost, Maine*, John Cariani
 - *Honey & Blood, Blood & Honey*, Rachel Morgan
 - ONE of YOUR CHOICE of the following graphic novels:
 - Fun Home*, Alison Bechdel
 - Palestine*, Joe Sacco
 - MAUS*, Art Spiegelman
 - Persepolis*, Marjane Satrapi
 - The Pride of Baghdad*, Brian K. Vaughan
- Tickets to *You Can't Take it With You*, Theatre UNI (running March 11 - March 29)
- Internet Access (bookmark www.kimgroninga.com/students.htm)
(several readings for this class will be posted here)

Course Objectives: ENGLISH 1120: Literature develops students' ability to read perceptively and imaginatively. Content knowledge is acquired through exploring a variety of literary texts in English and/or English translation in multiple genres such as nonfiction, poetry, drama, fiction, and/or film. Critical thinking and communication skills are emphasized via attention to understanding and appreciating creative uses of verbal resources and artful representations of human experience.

Course Description: Without readers, literature is only words on a page (or screen, stage, recording). What makes literature matter is the lives and people interacting with it. This means that much of the journey of this course is yet to be determined... by YOU. Along this journey, we will read/view and discuss a variety of literature (graphic novel, film, theatre, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, maybe others) from a variety of authors/artists (men, women, young, old, contemporary and from centuries ago.) You have already been "introduced" to literature. Chances are you have been immersed in literature since you first laid eyes on a book of ABCs or *Hop on Pop*

(Seuss). This course will introduce you to *more*, maybe *different*, literature. This course will introduce you to others (people, ideas, cultures) *through* literature. This course will introduce you to new ways of interacting with literature.

Request: Studying literature is much more meaningful when we bring our fullest selves to the discussion. This can be risky. Please help to create a climate of trust and respect so every member of our class is empowered to add their truest voice to the conversation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION —

ATTENDANCE: You are required to attend each class meeting and be prepared to work. We will work in groups and do many in-class assignments. You will learn from other students, and they will learn from you. Do not underestimate the knowledge, experience, and skills you bring to the group. If you are not in class, we miss the benefit of your input and you miss the contributions of the rest of us. That said, attendance will be taken at every class period. Work done in class cannot be made up. Each student is allowed two absences. Beyond those two, each absence will result in a 5-point deduction from the student's final grade.

LATE PAPERS: For full credit, all papers and assignments must be turned in before or during class on the day they are due. Late papers and assignments will lose 10 points each class day they are late.

CELL PHONES: Cell phones are allowed but must be set to "silent." Please answer only emergency calls and step into the hallway to do so. No texting in class.

DISABILITY SERVICES: The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides protection from illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting instructional accommodation due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodations through the Office of Student Disability Services (ODS). The ODS is located at 103 Student Health Center. Phone: 273-2677.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: The assignments in this course ask for your original writing. When you use any ideas or wording borrowed from another writer or speaker, you must clearly identify the source of that material, using standard documentation. If you do not use documentation, it will appear that you are plagiarizing or presenting someone else's work as your own. Evidence of plagiarism will result in immediate loss of credit for that assignment and will be reported to academic affairs. Please see section 3.01 "Student Academic Ethics Policy" in the Student Handbook (available at: <https://policies.uni.edu/301>) for a detailed definition of plagiarism and a complete elaboration of the university policy on academic ethics.

SAVE ALL YOUR WORK from the course until the end of the semester.

HOW YOU WILL EARN YOUR GRADE:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Graphic Essay | 100 points |
| Poetry Reading | 100 points |
| <i>Almost, Maine</i> Reading | 100 points |
| Creative Nonfiction Short | 100 points |
| Reading Journal | 200 points |
| Quizzes & Other Assignments (TBA) | 10-20 points/each (Quizzes cannot be made up) |

FINAL GRADES will be based on percentage of points earned and will be assigned letter grades as follows:

| | |
|----|---------------|
| A | 94% and above |
| A- | 90-93% |
| B+ | 88-89% |
| B | 84-87% |
| B- | 80-83% |
| C+ | 78-79% |
| C | 74-77% |
| C- | 70-73% |
| D+ | 68-69% |
| D | 64-67% |
| D- | 60-63% |
| F | 59% and below |

Course Schedule (tentative)

Week One (January 14 & 16)

Tue: Go over syllabus

film

Thu: Introduction to film studies

Week Two (January 21 & 23)

Tue: view *Gatsby*

Thu: finish *Gatsby*, discussion

Week Three (January 28 & 30)

Tue: Film Angle Assignment (in-class)

Thu: Discussion: The Style of Tim Burton; view *Big Fish*

Week Four (February 4 & 6)

Tue: finish viewing *Big Fish*

Thu: *Big Fish* discussion

graphic novels

Week Five (February 11 & 13)

Tue: Introduction to Graphic Novels, Assign Graphic Essay

Thu: Read your chosen graphic novel

Week Six (February 18 & 20)

Tue: Group work based on chosen text

Thu:

fiction

Week Seven (February 25 & 27)

Tue: Read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie

Thu: **Graphic Essay Due** • View *30 Days: Life on an Indian Reservation* (in class)

Week Eight (March 3 & 5)

Tue: Guest Speaker

Thu: *North American Review*, Read *Mort a Las Vegas* by Steven Schwartz

****it is time to see *You Can't Take It With You*, Theatre UNI (running March 11-March 29)**

poetry

Week Nine (March 10 & 12)

Tue: Discuss Poems as Music, Assign Poetry Reading

Thu: Read *Honey & Blood, Blood & Honey*

Spring Break! March 16-20

Week Ten (March 24 & 26)

Tue: Guest Speaker: Rachel Morgan

Thu: **Poetry Reading **Class at the Hearst Center (304 West Seerley)****

HOMEWORK:

All readings and assignments in this schedule must be completed prior to the class period for which they are assigned. When you read pieces online, you must either print the document or take good notes for class discussion.

theatre/drama

Week Eleven (March 31 & April 2)

Tue: discuss *You Can't Take It With You*, Theatre UNI, Guest Speaker(s)

Thu: Discussion: Creating Deep and Believable Characters

Week Twelve (April 7 & 9)

Tue: Read *Almost, Maine*, discuss, assign parts

Thu: Rehearsal time with scene partners

Week Thirteen (April 14 & 16)

Tue: **Staged Reading** of *Almost, Maine*

Thu: (continued)

nonfiction

Week Fourteen (April 21 & 23)

Tue: ****Class at Seerley Park**** Read *Joyas Voladores* by Brian Doyle • Nature Writing Prompt

Thu: Read *Mint Snowball* by Naomi Shihab Nye • Food Writing Prompt • Assign Creative Nonfiction Short

Week Fifteen (April 28 & 30)

Tue: Read *Seben, Crudele* by Caitlin Horrocks

Thu: Read *Mastectomy* by Frances Burney • watch *The Letter*

Finals Week: May 4-8, 2020

Creative Nonfiction Short due at beginning of final exam time.

Journals due at beginning of final exam time.

Assignment Details:

Graphic Essay (100 points)

For this assignment, students should present—in graphic novel/comic format—a true story about something significant in their life. Students should pay close attention to figures and faces, captions and speech balloons, layout choices (panels, frames, gutters, background, shading) and story development. This assignment may be created by hand or computer, or a combination. Stick figures are acceptable. Successful essays will likely begin with early sketches and story boards. Please do not turn in your only copy. If you create this assignment by hand, please make photocopies before submitting.

Poetry Reading (100 points)

For this assignment, students must choose a poem from the Poetry Out Loud anthology (<http://www.poetryoutloud.org/poems-and-performance/find-poem>) and present it at our poetry reading. Students will be graded on physical presence, voice and articulation, evidence of understanding, and overall performance.

Almost, Maine Reading (100 points)

Students will be assigned a character in the script *Almost, Maine* which they will present as a reading with their scene partner(s) in class. Students should not create scenery or costumes but may wish to dress similarly to their character and/or employ small props which are not cumbersome. On the day of the readings, students will turn in a character worksheet which will contribute to their individual grades. Lines need not be memorized. Students should prepare by highlighting their parts, reading their parts aloud several times, making sure they understand what they are saying and why, and being committed to and confident with the words they are speaking. Students are encouraged to practice with their scene partners outside of class. (A guest will read stage directions.)

Creative Nonfiction Short (100 points)

During the nonfiction portion of our course, we will complete two writing prompts: nature writing and food writing. Students must choose one of their responses to these in-class writing prompts and take the writing the rest of the way through the writing process (revise, edit, proofread) to a finished nonfiction short (between 250 and 750 words). The most successful students will likely revise and edit multiple times. Recommendation: Read out loud.

Reading Journal (200 points)

Students are required to write/journal/doodle thoughtful responses over the assigned material. The purpose of this assignment is to give students an opportunity to discover, explore, and express—in their own way—their connections to and understanding of the narratives, themes, imagery, symbolism, and historical and social contexts present in the readings. Please be creative and follow your interests. Dig! Into words and concepts you don't know, history you think you remember, Journals are due at the beginning of the final exam period and should contain the following clearly marked entries:

Gatsby

Big Fish

Choice of Graphic Novel

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Mort a Las Vegas

Rachel Morgan's Poetry

Poem (your poem from the reading)

You Can't Take it With You

Almost, Maine

Joyas Voladoras

Mint Snowball

Mastectomy/The Letter

Seben, Crudele

One Literary Event (Qualifying events will be shared in class as often as possible)