

Literature: An Introduction

University of Northern Iowa — Fall 2017
English 1120 — Section 07

Time, Place: Tues/Thurs 11:00-12:15, Lang 21
Instructor: Kim Groninga
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Materials Needed:

- Texts: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, Sherman Alexie
Fun Home, Alison Bechdel
Palestine, Joe Sacco
Almost, Maine, John Cariani
- Internet Access (bookmark www.kimgroninga.com/students.htm)
(several readings for this class will be posted here)

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
Creative Nonfiction Short	100 points
<i>Almost, Maine</i> Reading	100 points
Reading Journal	400 points

Quizzes 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)

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.

film

Week Two (August 29 & 31)

Tue: Introduction to film studies
Thu: view *Gatsby*

Week Three (September 5 & 7)

Tue: finish *Gatsby*, discussion
Thu: view *Big Fish*

Week Four (September 12 & 14)

Tue: finish *Big Fish*, discussion
Thu:

graphic novels

Week Five (September 19 & 21)

Tue: Introduction to Graphic Novels • Read *Fun Home*
Thu: Assign Graphic Essay

Week Six (September 26 & 28)

Tue: Read *Palestine*
Thu:

nonfiction

Week Seven (October 3 & 5)

Tue: ****Class at Seerley Park**** Read *Joyas Voladores* by Brian Doyle • Nature Writing Prompt
Thu: **Graphic Essay Due** • Read *Mint Snowball* by Naomi Shihab Nye • Food Writing Prompt • Assign Creative Nonfiction Short

Week Eight (October 10 & 12)

Tue: Read *Mastectomy* by Frances Burney • watch *The Letter*
Thu: Read *Seben, Crudele* by Caitlin Horrocks

poetry

Week Nine (October 17 & 19)

Tue: Poetry Things TBD
Thu:

Week Ten (October 24 & 26)

Tue:
Thu: **Poetry Reading**

theatre

****see *The Aliens*, Theatre UNI (running October 19-22, 26-29)**

Week Eleven (October 31 & November 2)

Tue: **Creative Nonfiction Short Due** • discuss *The Aliens*
Thu: Read *Almost, Maine*— discuss, assign parts

Week Twelve (November 7 & 9)

Tue: Guest Speaker
Thu: Rehearsal time with scene partners

Week Thirteen (November 14 & 16)

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

Thu: (continued)

Thanksgiving Break: November 20-24

fiction

Week Fourteen (November 28 & 30)

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

Thu: **View *30 Days: Life on an Indian Reservation* (in class)**

Week Fifteen (December 5 & 7)

Tue: *North American Review*

Thu: **Read *Mort a Las Vegas* by Steven Schwartz**

Finals Week: December 11-15

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.

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.

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. (Kim will read stage directions.)

Reading Journal (400 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. Journals are due at the beginning of the final exam period and should contain the following clearly marked entries:

Gatsby
Big Fish
Fun Home
Palestine
Joyas Voladoras
Mint Snowball
Mastectomy/The Letter

Seben, Crudele
Poem (your poem from the reading)
The Aliens
Almost, Maine
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
Mort a Las Vegas
One Literary Event (Qualifying events will be shared in class as often as possible)