



# MARYMOUNT

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## UNIVERSITY

School of Arts and Sciences

**Dr. Howe**  
**EN290: Literary Theory and Practice**  
***Focus: Elizabeth Bishop***  
**Spring 2011**

Meeting Day: MTh  
Meeting Time: 2:00-3:15pm  
Room Number: Gailhac G103  
Course Website: <http://thowe.pbworks.com>  
Final Exam: April 26, 3:00-5:30pm

My Office: Gailhac 2011  
Office Hours: TBA \*\*  
Office Phone: 703.284.5762  
Cell Phone: 443.768.1571 (please use responsibly)  
Email: [thowe@marymount.edu](mailto:thowe@marymount.edu)  
\*\* *please see my online office schedule for details*

### UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

#### *Academic Integrity*

By accepting this syllabus, you pledge to uphold the principles of Academic Integrity expressed by the Marymount University Community. You agree to observe these principles yourself and to defend them against abuse by others.

#### *Special Needs and Accommodations*

Please advise the instructor of any special problems or needs at the beginning of the semester. If you seek accommodation based on disabilities, you should provide a Faculty Contact Sheet obtained through Disability Support Services located in Gerard Hall, (703) 284-1615.

#### *Access to Student Work*

Copies of your work in this course including copies of any submitted papers and your portfolios may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. All work used for these purposes will be submitted anonymously.

#### *University Policy on Snow Closings*

Snow closings are generally announced on area radio stations. For bulletins concerning Marymount snow or weather closings, call (703) 526-6888. Unless otherwise advised by radio announcement or by official bulletins on the number listed above, students are expected to report for class as near normal time as possible on days when weather conditions are adverse. Decisions as to snow closing or delayed opening are not generally made before 5:00 AM of the working day. Students are expected to attend class if the University is not officially closed.

Turnitin.com

It is possible that student work will be submitted to TurnItIn.com for review.

#### *Student Copyright Authorization*

For the benefit of current and future students, work in this course may be used for educational critique, demonstrations, samples, presentations, and verification. Outside of these uses, work shall not be sold, copied, broadcast, or distributed for profit without student consent.

### **1. BROAD PURPOSE OF COURSE**

This course provides an introduction to the foundations of literary theory and to the process of applying these critical approaches in literary research. Students will explore the principles of New Criticism, Reader-Response Criticism, Gender Studies, New Historicism and Cultural Criticism, and Psychoanalytic Criticism. Open to English majors and minors only. English majors must earn a grade of C or better. Prerequisite: EN 200.

### **2. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be expected to

- demonstrate skill in close critical reading and literary analysis.
- explain the perspective of selected critical approaches to literature.
- apply literary theory in their own textual analysis
- write thoughtfully and specifically about the literature studied, using both textual and critical support.

**3. TEACHING METHOD** Seminar, workshop, lecture, small group discussion, student presentations, and interdisciplinary team projects

### **4. GRADE BREAKDOWN (See full grading standards and assignments online.)**

Three 2-3-page analysis essays (30%)

Researched analysis essay (25%) \*

Midterm and Final Exams (25%)

Class activities and participation (20%) \*\*

*\* Note that this grade includes the proposal, annotated bibliography, and drafts. If these portions are not completed, the final essay will not pass.*

*\*\* Note that this is a substantial portion of your grade—it's worth more than any individual 2-3 page essay or exam!*

**On the typical 100-point scale, the letter breakdown is as follows:**

100-90: A

89-80: B

79-70: C

69-60: D

59-below: F

Not turned in receives a zero

**For smaller assignments and activities, I use a 10-point check-check plus-check minus scale, in which:**

Check Plus: 10

Check: 8

Check Minus: 6

Not turned in receives a zero

**Please be advised that I use the full range of grades. The following rubric can be applied to all of our formal work for this class.**

*The 'F' Paper*

- reads as if it were written the night before.
- is overwhelmed with mechanical, syntactical, and grammatical errors.
- replaces an argument with clichés, unexamined assumptions, and unsupported assertions.
- makes no effort to think analytically.
- often contains neither a thesis nor “a point,” and haphazardly presents the rare idea.
- may not adhere to the assignment, or it may be plagiarized.

*The 'D' Paper*

- attempts to fulfill the terms of the assignment, but has many weaknesses. Such a paper is generally comprehensible.
- exhibits some effort at argument but shows no evidence of real engagement.
- may posit a thesis that is unclear, illogical given the evidence, or commonplace.
- contains numerous mechanical, syntactical, expressive, and organizational problems, which mar the development of effective argument or analysis.
- makes use of ill-chosen, contradictory pieces of evidence.
- relies somewhat on clichés, unexamined assumptions, and unsupported assertions.

*The 'C' Paper*

- takes many shapes. Generally, it fulfills the assignment in a routine way and makes only a meager attempt at argument, criticism, or analysis.
- avoids effective analysis by remaining stuck in a black/white, yes/no, either/or framework.
- does not clarify the relevance of its argument.
- asserts a weak thesis, a thesis contradicted by the evidence examined, or a thesis that mutates throughout the essay.
- is usually stylistically adequate and generally (but not completely) avoids glaring platitudes and distracting word choice.
- might also describe essays that either have many fresh, complex ideas that are unfortunately buried beneath the mechanical and stylistic problems or essays that express common and relatively uninspired ideas with perfect diction and style.

#### *The 'B' Paper*

- is strong. It does more than merely fulfill the assignment.
- shows evidence of thought and planning. The "B" essay is generally well-organized.
- thoroughly develops its analysis into a clear, interesting point.
- incorporates a variety of specific supporting evidence and fluid transitions between ideas.
- may exhibit logical flaws or faulty, obscure analysis.
- displays the author's awareness of his/her audience.
- appears stylistically adept, without too many—or too serious—mechanical errors.
- needs to push its thought and analysis further, beyond common knowledge or well-worn definitions.

#### *The 'A' Paper*

- is outstanding. It goes beyond adequacy and addresses the topic perceptively and thoughtfully.
- reflects original thought that surpasses ideas developed in class discussion.
- has a clearly visible, strong, and debatable thesis statement that supports the entire essay.
- exhibits a finely-tuned and well-organized argument.
- provides its readers with provocative examinations of specific, highly relevant evidence.
- possesses few—if any—mechanical or grammatical errors, and it makes use of the most appropriate and effective language.
- displays a compelling, vigorous authorial voice that considers its audience thoroughly.

### 5. IMPORTANT DETAILS & POLICIES, SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

All of my policies on attendance, late work, extensions, study habits, and so on, including information on the Learning Resource Center and supplementary materials available in the Library, are available on our course website <<http://thowe.pbworks.com>>. My policies are also noted below.

Please read these materials carefully! A syllabus is a **contract** between me and you; my responsibilities include providing the tools and support you need to excel, and your responsibilities include being present (physically, but especially mentally) in class, participating fully in the requirements of the course, respecting the classroom environment as a space of learning, and seeking out additional help where you need it. I am always available for you, but I cannot guarantee As or Bs. Effort is wonderful and expected; however, it cannot determine your grade! **The standard in-class/out-of-class formula for college-level work is 1:2, meaning that for every hour of in-class time, you should be spending about 2 hours on your homework and writing assignments out-of-class.**

I view the classroom as a microcosm of the kinds of personal, ethical, and civic responsibilities everyone has in the so-called "real world"—though we all know that the college classroom is an instance of some make-believe fantasy space which in absolutely no way resembles what will happen to you once you graduate. (I hope everyone got the irony there!) Each professor has different expectations in the classroom, and different classroom policies to reflect them. Mine are as follows:

- **Study Habits:** You will be doing quite a bit of reading, and that reading will likely feel relatively unfamiliar to you, whether for cultural or linguistic reasons. It is your responsibility to engage the course

material in an honest and responsible manner, with special attention to your needs as a reader, a writer, and a scholar. If you are unsure about your reading habits or your study habits, please come and see me immediately! You may also contact the [Learning Resource Center](#) in the [Library](#) for help with your essays or study habits more broadly. If this is your first college experience, [you might find this handy reference page helpful!](#)

- **Reading in this class means more than letting your eyes linger over the words on the page.** You should look up words you don't know, take notes, underline things, ask questions, and engage your reading assignments actively, critically, and closely. Your participation in the class is largely contingent upon your ability to discuss the readings effectively. I may ask to look at your notes from time to time as part of the class participation grade.
- **Using Wikipedia and the Web:** If you don't feel you have a basic grasp of readings, their fundamental sense, I encourage you to browse the web (or skim the resources in the Literature Resource Center, an online collection of full-text general library sources). However, anything that you find on the web in this way will constitute "general knowledge" for our purposes; it is a starting point, rather than an end point. Further, if you found it on the web, I'll be able to find it on the web, so keep that in mind if you have a hankering to plagiarize or use the web as an absolute authority! It's good to use the web to get your bearings, but remember that we're in a college-level course and I'm expecting you to move beyond the trite and the commonplace. Though that's not to say everything on the web is trite and commonplace--just that you need to learn how to recognize what is and what isn't!
- **Technology:** We may be using technologies with which you are initially unfamiliar, so you should be prepared to spend time outside of class working with these tools. Your participation grade in part captures your ability to make progress with these unfamiliar technologies--what we're learning here, in other words, is proactive learning and adaptability, which you'll need, again, in the so-called "real world." Staff in the E-Learning Services Center (basement of the Library) are available to help you, as is IT (x6990), myself, and the wide world of the web. You've no idea how many video tutorials people have created to help you with facebook, wikis, MLA formatting, Microsoft Word, writing annotated bibliographies, conducting research.... You can [start with my information on technology](#).
- **Do not text in this classroom. I encourage you to bring your laptop for notetaking, but do not use it for other purposes.**
- All assignments--including reading--must be completed by the dates indicated. If you know you will not be able, for some significant reason, to complete the work by those dates, you must see me immediately. All **late work** will be penalized one letter grade per business day late, but it is better to turn something in than nothing--and after three days, I will not accept your work. **A 55 always averages better than a 0!** Finally, note that the late work policy only applies to formal essay assignments; in-class activities and participation assignments cannot be turned in late.
- **All formal writing for this class** (anything that you do at home) should be formatted in [MLA style](#) from the first letter to the last. This is not because I'm obsessed with arbitrary details, but rather because I want to encourage you to turn in work that conforms to a set of arbitrary parameters. In the so-called "real world," your future employer will expect something of the sort, and I do, too. **I will deduct a letter grade for any assignment not turned in in an appropriate format, from top to toe (plagiarism is a different story).** If you have questions, look the answers up in a reliable source.

- **Revision:** You may **substantially** revise any major assignment, excluding the final paper and exams, for reconsideration of your grade; however, these revisions must be substantial--meaning they must go beyond editing for grammar or word choice and completely re-see your work. Any revisions turned in must be submitted in the week following my return of the original essay. I will average the two grades. I reserve the right to not raise your grade if the revisions are not meaningful.
- **Paper, or electronic copy?** Unless otherwise noted, all formal work for this class must be turned in as hard copies, in MLA format. If you do need to turn something in late, you should give it to me personally or have the good folks in Arts & Sciences place it in my mailbox. **Please don't send your essays to me willy-nilly, and don't slip things under my door!** I cannot keep track of everything, and I'm asking you to turn your work in to me on paper.
- **Grading Standards:** I use the full range of grades in this class, including grading participation. **A major part of my responsibility to you is providing an honest evaluation of your work (note: your work, not you!)** For a sense of how I grade your formal essays for this class, check out [my page on grading standards](#). Hint: Reading through all of the grade descriptions can help you as you draft and revise!
- **The 24-Hour Rule** states that you cannot ask me about your grade on a returned assignment until 24 hours have passed. You must read my comments, make an appointment to meet with me, and come prepared with thoughtful responses to my comments.
- I expect everyone to **participate** to some extent. Not participating will damage your final grade, and participating effectively can definitely raise your final grade. Remember that I use the full range of grades. **Participation is defined as a sincere effort to be involved in class discussion/activities and to progress toward accomplishment of the course objectives.** Polite, respectful classroom behavior is expected, and disruptive students will be asked to leave the classroom. Please note the class start time. As a matter of courtesy to both the instructor and to fellow students you are asked to arrive promptly, and not to make a habit of entering the classroom after class is under way.
- Regular **attendance** is strongly suggested! However, I will not count attendance against you. Do note, however, that I give the full range of participation grades, as well as my policy on late work. If you are not here, then you cannot participate. More than four absences will seriously damage your grade. Skip at your own risk!
- **In the event of an absence, it is your responsibility to speak with a peer** to get notes, homework assignments, and so on. Part of what we're doing here is modeling personal responsibility. Because our schedule sometimes changes, I cannot give you daily assignments weeks in advance.

## Goofus and Gallant®



Goofus copies a poem  
but says it's his own work.



Gallant takes credit  
only for work he creates.

“Goofus and Gallant,” by Meyers and Matsick (*Highlights Magazine*, 1979)

- **Intellectual honesty** is the bedrock of communal learning; plagiarism will not be tolerated. “Plagiarism” derives from the Latin “plagiarius,” meaning “kidnapper.” To plagiarize, as to kidnap, is a kind of stealing, and it is both a fundamental transgression of the Honor System and an offense to our intellectual community. We will be doing research in this class, and students are responsible for understanding the rules of appropriate citation and turning in their own intellectual work. If you have any questions about this matter, including uncertainties about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult a writing handbook or ask me.
- *I believe very strongly that Marymount's commitment to ethical awareness should extend into the classroom—this includes your relationships with each other, with me, mine with you, and your relationship to your work. Part of the point distribution for each written assignment **includes 5 points for writing and signing an honor pledge on your work: "I pledge I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this project. All work is my own."** If I suspect plagiarism, intentional or otherwise, I will call you in for a chat and refer misuse of sources to the Academic Integrity panel. To put this in perspective, two findings of intellectual dishonesty result in automatic dismissal or suspension from the University. What we're doing here is modeling ethical responsibility.*
- **Email Communication:** Please be sure, on all your electronic correspondence with me, to write with care and thought—after all, this is a form of writing, and this is an English class! Also, if you do not include your name and indicate which course you are taking, I will not know who is writing me. What we're modeling here is not only courtesy and civic behavior, but also personal responsibility.
- **If you have any questions or concerns at all**, it is imperative that you come and see me about them! Otherwise, I will not know, and will therefore have no opportunity to address them.

### 6. CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to change. On the date listed, the assignment is due and will be discussed.)

1/10	Introduction to the course, policies. Diagnostic analysis.
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1/13	Formalisms
1/17	Martin Luther King Jr. Day – no class
1/20	Formalisms
1/24	Formalisms
1/27	Structuralism
1/31	Structuralism; <b>Essay 1 Due</b>
2/3	Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Postmodernism
2/7	Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Postmodernism
2/10	Psychoanalysis
2/14	Psychoanalysis
2/17	Marxism and Cultural Materialism; <b>Essay 2 Due</b>
2/21	Marxism and Cultural Materialism
2/24	Marxism and Cultural Materialism
2/28	Final Essay Overview; Midterm Review
3/3	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
3/7	Spring Break – no class
3/10	Spring Break – no class
3/14	Feminism and Gender Studies
3/17	Feminism and Gender Studies
3/21	History; <b>Essay 3 Due</b>
3/24	History
3/28	Ethnic Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, Global Studies
3/31	Library Visit (or in-class with laptops)
4/4	<b>Proposal Draft Due with Tentative Bibliography</b> ; Ethnic Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, Global Studies
4/7	<b>Conferences</b>
4/11	<b>Annotated Bibliography Due</b> ; Source Presentation
4/14	<b>Research Essay Draft Due</b> (Two Copies, 6-8 pages)
4/18	<b>Revised Research Essay Draft Due</b> (Two Copies, 6-8 pages)
4/21	<b>Final Essay Due</b> , Presentations
4/25	Easter Observance – no class
4/26	<b>Final Exam 3-5:30 pm</b>

## 7. REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction* by Ryan
- *Complete Poems*, by Bishop
- *MLA Handbook*, by Gibaldi
- Notebook, pens/pencils, regular email and web access

Please bring these materials to class every day. If you have a laptop and would like to use it, feel free to do so, but remember to bring hard copies of whatever is due. Finally, if you use a laptop, please respect the classroom, me, and your peers when using it.