

EN200: Foundations of Literary Studies

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Colby College

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1. Description

This course focuses on “English” or literary studies as a discipline, some different ways to study literature, and why to do it in the first place. We’ll cover aspects of genre, canonicity, and other heuristic categories of analysis. We’ll read novels, poems, and articles about the study of literature. We’ll also examine and practice different methods for studying literature, including interpretation, historical analysis, and computational and quantitative analysis.

2. Objectives

By the time we’re done with this course, I want you to understand how the discipline of English came into being, how its history shapes its present, and how we can change it for the demands of the future. I also want you to appreciate different ways of conceptualizing and applying literature to knowledge problems, different ways of studying it, and how the study of literature fits into the wider web of knowledge.

3. Communicating

a. Course Website All of the digital resources you’ll need for this course, including this syllabus, readings, slides, and other documents, are or will become available (when needed) on the course Google Site.

b. Office Hours You can schedule a meeting with me during my Office Hours on *****. We’ll use Google Calendar to schedule meetings. Standard meeting times will be in 15-minute blocks, but you can schedule multiple blocks if you need more time. Office hours are in person in my office; I will only meet virtually under extenuating circumstances, e.g. if one of us is ill. If I don’t have any meetings scheduled on Google Calendar, I may not be in my office during Office Hours, so be sure to schedule a meeting if you want one. If my Office Hours are fully booked or you can’t meet during the designated time, email me to schedule.

By the way, you don’t need any particular reason to schedule a meeting with me. If you just want to hang out for a bit during my Office Hours, that’s perfectly fine. I think I probably teach better—and you probably learn better—when we know each other and have developed a degree of mutual trust.

c. Email and Google Chat You can email me at ***** and I will usually respond within a day (I get a lot of email). Email is best if you have a lot to say and / or it’s not particularly urgent. If it’s quick or time-sensitive, you can message me via Google Chat. I can’t guarantee I’ll respond right away, but I’ll get a notification on my phone and will respond when I can. Before you contact

me, ask yourself if you’ve examined all the resources I’ve provided to answer your questions and if you’ve made a serious effort to work out the answer for yourself, especially if it’s a procedural or clerical question. Your education is primarily your responsibility (as it should be, since the stakes of it are primarily yours).

4. Readings

a. Books to Purchase We have three required books that you have to purchase, i.e. that will not be available in PDF on the course Google Site. You should make an effort to procure the specific editions recommended below so it’s easier to follow along:

- Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, The Rover, and Other Works* (Penguin Classics)
- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford World’s Classics)
- J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (Penguin)

b. PDF Readings All additional required readings for this course are available in PDF on the course Google Site under the “Readings” tab. See section **7. Schedule** below for details about what we’re reading and when.

c. Bringing Readings to Class Make sure to bring the reading with you to class—whether in print or on screen, whichever you prefer—on the day we’re scheduled to discuss it.

5. Assignments

Points	Type
15	Problem Sets
20	All-Class Oral Midterm Exam
50	Paper & Viva
15	Maintenance
100	TOTAL

a. Problem Sets Throughout the semester I’ll assign a total of 3 problem sets (worth 5 points each). Each problem set will contain 2-3 questions for you to answer about recent material in the course, requiring you to work your way through a problem in the study of literature. These are designed to help you practice and review what we learn in the course as we go along. They shouldn’t require much time, as long as you’ve been attending class, taking notes, and studying the readings.

b. All-Class Oral Midterm Exam I’ll spend one of our classes asking exam questions and follow-ups, you’ll work together to answer the questions. Everyone will get the same grade.

c. Paper & Viva Throughout the semester you’ll work through a series of steps toward a 1500-word research paper that rigorously answers a research question you develop about a text or texts

we've studied in the course. A "viva" is an oral exam (short for the Latin phrase *viva voce*, which means "with living voice"). Your viva will be an oral examination on the research paper you've written. You must schedule your viva with me for anytime during my office hours between when you finish the paper and the last day of class. The components of the paper & viva include:

- **Background (5 points)** A 300-word statement about how you've been taught to study literature to this point in your life.
- **Approaches (5 points)** A 300-word statement about which of the ways to study literature (that we've covered in the course) interest you most.
- **Proposal & Bibliography (10 points)** A proposed topic and research question (300 words) and a working bibliography of at least 5 peer-reviewed sources related to your proposal. Each component is worth 5 points.
- **Paper (15 points)** A 1500-word answer to your research question.
- **Viva (15 points)** An oral exam lasting 15-20 minutes on the research you undertook for your paper and on what you've written in the paper itself. You must schedule your viva with me for any time during my office hours between when you finish the Paper and the last day of class.

d. Maintenance I call "maintenance" the day-to-day things you should be doing in the course to demonstrate your preparedness for class. These include showing up on time with the day's reading (print or screen, either is fine) and having studied and taken notes on the reading; regular, active, and informed participation in class discussion (studying the reading in preparation for the day); in-class group work and presentations; and in-class exercises.

e. Turning In Assignments To turn in an assignment, **share it with me as a Google Doc**, making sure to **give me full Editor access** so I can see version history and **making sure I get a share notification..** The **format for the title** of your shared document should be Last-Name.FirstName.AssignmentName, e.g. "Hanlon.Aaron.ProblemSet1" or "Hanlon.Aaron.Paper." For your paper, you should use the **Paper Template** I've provided, which contains detailed prompts for each component of the paper assignment (Background, Approaches, Proposal & Bibliography, and the paper itself). Simply cut and paste the **Paper Template** into your own Google Doc, give the new Google Doc a title according to the format above, and share it with me (giving me full Editor access and a notification). This will become the document you use to turn in each component of the paper assignment, from the start of the course to the finished paper in the end. You will turn in each of your problem sets as separate Google Docs. Assignments must be also be (1) **double-spaced**; (2) **with numbered pages**; and (3) if using citations, **formatted according to the Notes and Bibliography (footnotes) method as described in the Chicago Manual of Style** (guides at <http://libguides.colby.edu/citationhelp>). I reserve the right to **ignore anything you submit in the wrong format or without the above specifications**; I will not respond or remind you and it will be as if you never submitted anything at all, with attendant penalties.

f. Extensions Sometimes you might run into time-management conflicts or emergencies. I'm a kind and reasonable person who will work with you, so I invite you to communicate with me if and when you have good reason for an extension. Extensions are not just for "school"; they're common

in the proverbial “real world” too, but communication is the key. In most cases, I’d rather talk with you and come up with a new deadline than receive rushed or subpar work from you because your circumstances are particularly dire. Just keep in mind that I can’t grant an extension after the deadline has passed! Please also don’t try to take advantage of my kindness. As a D1 track athlete in college, I summoned every sports-related excuse imaginable in attempts to manipulate my professors. Don’t try it.

6. Assessment

Points-to-Letter-Grade Conversion Scales

A 100-94	A- 93-90	B+ 89-88	B 87-83	B- 80-81	C+ 79-78
C 77-72	C- 71-70	D+ 69-68	D 67-62	D- 60-61	F 50-0

a. Overview All assignments (including Maintenance) add up to 100 total points for the course. At the end of the course I convert your point total into a letter grade (the format Colby requires at the point of grade entry) according to the conversion scales in the above chart. **For details on how I assess each assignment (including Maintenance),** see the **Assessment Guide** provided on the course Google Site.

b. Late work Anything turned in late will result in a two-point deduction for each day the assignment is late, up to two days beyond the deadline. Thereafter no credit is possible for a late assignment. **All deadlines are by start of class** (unless I’ve given an extension) and in Eastern Standard Time (EST) so long as Colby College remains in the Eastern time zone.

c. Attendance Attending class is important for your Maintenance grade, but I can be lenient based on my understanding that life doesn’t always go smoothly or according to plan. You can miss up to three classes—for any reason, and without having to explain yourself to me—without those absences impacting your Maintenance grade. Beyond those three absences, you should approach me if you have reason to miss more, but it should be a good reason. If you miss more than three classes without further clearance from me, you automatically lose 5 points from your Maintenance grade.

d. Assessment Leniency I have a policy to help motivate students who get off to a rough start and to reward improvement over the course of the semester. I view assessment (grading) as a tool that helps measure and reinforce the learning aims of the course. This means my purpose in grading is less to sort you into a hierarchy of accomplishment than to provide extrinsic motivation for you to do your best work and to learn the course material. If you get off to a rough start, for whatever reasons, you should consult with me about how to improve your academic performance. For cases of exceptional improvement by the end of the course, I may assign you, at my discretion, a higher final (letter) grade than your numerical grade in the course reflects. This policy can only work in your favor; I’ll never assign a lower letter grade than what your numerical grade reflects. Nevertheless, you shouldn’t assume leniency, because I don’t guarantee it. The best way to assure a good grade—and, more importantly, that you are learning—is to avoid falling behind.

7. Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
R Sep 10	literature	—	—
T Sep 15	counting	Wheatley Peters, “On Being Brought from Africa to America”	Background
R Sep 17	measurement	Moretti, “Operationalizing”	—
T Sep 22	computation	Underwood, “Do We Understand the Outlines of Literary History?”	—
R Sep 24	history	Wheatley Peters, selections, Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral	Problem Set 1
T Sep 29	formalism	Moi, “Real Characters”	—
R Oct 1	interpretation	Wheatley Peters, “On Being Brought from Africa to America”	—
T Oct 6	explanation	—	—
R Oct 8	Oral Midterm Exam	—	Oral Midterm Exam
T Oct 13	FALL	RECESS	—
R Oct 15	genre	Behn, Oroonoko	Approaches
T Oct 20	memoir	de Bres, “What Is Memoir?”	—
R Oct 22	fictionality	Kim, “A New Class of Fictional Truths”	Problem Set 2
T Oct 27	novel	Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, pp. 1-80	—
R Oct 29	novel	Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, pp. 81-180	—
T Nov 3	novel	Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, pp. 181-end	—
R Nov 5	intertextuality	Coetzee, <i>Foe</i>	—
T Nov 10	canonicity	—	Proposal & Bibliography
R Nov 12	poetry	Behn, “The Disappointment”	—
T Nov 17	poetry	Barbauld, “To A Lady”; Wollstonecraft, excerpt, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>	—
R Nov 19	vivas	—	Paper
T Nov 24	THANKSGIVING	RECESS	—
R Nov 26	THANKSGIVING	RECESS	—
T Dec 1	futures	Underwood, “Theorizing Research Practices We Forgot to Theorize Twenty Years Ago”	—
R Dec 3	futures	Noble, “Searching for Black Girls”	Problem Set 3
T Dec 8	futures	Hanlon, “The Ends of Literary Studies”	—
R Dec 10	conclusion	—	—

8. Policies

a. Electronics in Class When you enter the classroom, please turn off the sound on all electronics you bring with you. Use of laptops, tablets, etc. in class is permitted, but must be for class purposes only. If I (or your classmates) observe use of laptops, etc. for non-class purposes, I’ll ask you to put your device away. If at any point it becomes clear to me that people are regularly using laptops, etc. for non-class purposes or in distracting ways, I’ll reverse this policy and prohibit them from the classroom thereafter. In any case, I highly recommend you take notes by hand rather than typing, as research shows this is better for understanding and retention.

b. Academic Integrity The work you submit should be your work, meaning you should neither copy someone’s work to pass off for your own, nor lend your work to another to pass off as their

own. This principle includes use of generative AI applications without attribution. Should I find the work you turn in to be copied, plagiarized, or dishonestly cited, either by you or from you with your knowledge, I'm obliged to bring all offending parties before an academic review board to face sanctions. Rigor, honesty, and integrity are the foundations of our trust in all knowledge, from historical explanations to effective vaccines and bridges. Please familiarize yourself with Colby's policies and resources regarding academic integrity and with my **Generative AI Policy** in item (h) below.

c. Observance of Religious Holidays Colby College supports the religious practices of students, faculty, and staff. If you need to miss class to fulfill the obligations of your religious tradition, please notify me in person or by email at least two weeks in advance of the date in question.

d. Learning Differences If you have a diagnosed learning difference for which accommodations may be necessary, you should approach me within the first week of the course (or, in other circumstances, as soon as possible after accommodation becomes necessary) so I can arrange for your needs to be met in this regard. You should also discuss your needs with the Office of Student Access and Disability Services. I make an effort to design my courses by default to accommodate learning differences, but if anything isn't working for you, please come see me and I will do what I can to address it.

e. Financial and Academic Support Financial assistance is available for those undergoing financial hardship for purchasing books, computers, and other necessities. Visit the Student Success Fund site to learn more about what financial support is available. The College also has a number of resources available for academic support. For help with writing, for example, you can make an appointment at the Farnham Writers' Center. The Writing Department has Multilingual Writing specialists. The Center for Teaching and Learning can help with things from time management to study skills. Consultations with Learning Consultants and librarians are also available through the Academic Success Program.

f. Etiquette In your interactions with me and with classmates, I expect you to proceed with generosity and respect. If someone isn't making sense to you, be patient and ask for clarification. If you disagree with or are offended by what someone has said, grapple with the idea and the language used and avoid jumping to conclusions about the character or intentions of the person. Likewise, whether in discussion or by email, we should call others by the name and pronouns they go by in their daily lives, as a gesture of respect for their dignity and autonomy. The same fundamental value of respect applies to titles: you can call me Professor Hanlon or Dr. Hanlon, but not "Mr. Hanlon," as that is the wrong title for someone with a doctorate. And please be sure to apply the same standards of professional respect to your other professors, regardless of their gender, age, race, creed, sexual orientation, etc. Observing this kind of thing is important, not because your professors are insecure or stuck up and just insist on being called "doctor," and not because of "woke," but because whether you observe seemingly little conventions such as titles, pronouns, and workplace norms has a major impact out in the world on how people view you.

g. Sexual Misconduct Colby College prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct or gender-based discrimination of any kind. Colby is legally obligated to investigate sexual misconduct (including, but not limited to sexual assault and sexual harassment). You should be aware that faculty members are considered responsible employees; as such, if you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a faculty member, we have an obligation to report it to Colby's Title IX Coordinator.

“Disclosure” may include communication in-person, via email, phone, or text, or through class assignments. You can learn more about sexual misconduct or report an incident through the Title IX Office.

h. Generative AI People often engage in accepted forms of cognitive offloading at different stages of life and learning. For example, whereas calculators are typically banned in primary school classrooms in which students are learning basic arithmetic, calculators are typically allowed in more advanced math courses for which understanding how to perform calculations by hand is not a significant learning objective. Generative AI applications are no different in that they can benefit learning in some contexts and stifle it in others. I don’t ban gen. AI from my courses, but I strongly advise against using it for things like writing and research, both because it is not always reliable for informational queries and because you are at a stage in your learning and intellectual development in which it’s still beneficial to practice the cognitive operations involved in analytical reading, writing, and research without relying on gen. AI. You don’t want to be at the mercy of Google or Anthropic to supply you with a hit of intelligence when you need it. It’s better and smarter to develop your own intellectual capabilities. If you choose to use gen. AI for any aspect of this course, you are required to submit a **Generative AI Usage Supplement** with any assignment for which you use it. You can find more detail about this in the **Assessment Guide**. Using gen. AI without providing a Generative AI Usage Supplement is a violation of academic integrity and may result in failure of the assignment and the course as well as formal academic integrity proceedings.