Literature of Illness and Trauma

Required Texts and Materials

Theory and Practice by L.M. Bernhardt, 2014

On Being Ill by Virginia Woolf, 2012

Mom's Cancer by Brian Fies, 2006

Little, Brown Handbook, 12th edition (resource only)
*Additional texts and resources will be available via Blackboard and/or distributed in class.

Note-taking supplies
Loose-leaf paper

Dear Students,

I am happy you have chosen this course, and I am excited to have you here! I sincerely look forward to getting to know you and to experiencing the literature with you—for your perspectives and insights will enhance my engagement with and understanding of the essays, stories, and poems we will read. Indeed, each new class brings with it new ideas and interpretations that continue to enrich my experience with this course and enhance my teaching .

Literature of Illness and Trauma is a class inspired by my interest in the Medical Humanities, a discipline that puts art and literature into the service of medical education to enhance one's skills of observation and listening, and cultivate empathy.

In this course, we will explore experiences of illness and trauma through the lens of ethics and to discover their capacity to bring growth, renewal and strength to their victims, as well as to function as imperatives for us, their reader-witnesses.

In a time when the usefulness and real-world value of studying literature is being called into question, a class such as this is not only timely but also necessary. My hope is that our interaction with the literature leaves you more observant, compassionate, and empathic citizens and professionals. Indeed, my primary goal for teaching has always been to guide students to recognize the value and relevance of literature and writing to their personal and educational growth. With this course, I seek to enhance this goal to include professional growth and your future professional relationships.

Course Purpose and Value

Why read and study literature? Because literature explores and comments on the human condition and society. Thus, the more we engage with literature, the better we understand others, ourselves and the world around us. The better we understand others, ourselves, and society, the better able we are to cultivate effective personal and professional relational skills, and the better able we are to add value to our lives and relationships, as well as to our communities and the larger society.

Why read literature of illness and trauma? Because such literature affords us the opportunity to explore the very human qualities of compassion and empathy and to discover the strength buried in and forged from pain and suffering.

Exploring and engaging in such nuanced reading and interpretation further contours our capacity for compassionate and empathic observation and response to individual and social conditions.

Since essentially all academic and professional endeavors involve some aspect of humanity and/or society, the skills you will develop in this course will prove relevant and useful outside the walls of our classroom and beyond the context of this course.

My hope is that you will recognize the larger value of the course and that you will engage in the readings, discussions, and activities with the goal of personal, academic, and professional growth.

http://www.mnispi.org/cartoon/2001/index.htm.
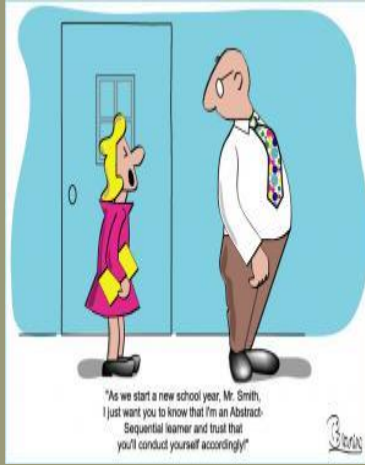
The various activities you will encounter in this course are designed and will be implemented with diverse learning preferences in mind.

http://psyc208.wordpress.com/learning-styles/

*I look forward to learning from and with you this semester!*

Teaching Philosophy

I would like to share my teaching philosophy with you so that you understand the motivation behind my teaching strategies and methods, which are grounded in the research and pedagogy of active and collaborative learning.

I came to university teaching after a few years in the public school system. It didn't take long for me to trade my student-centered and active learning techniques for the traditional instructor-centered (lecture-based) and passive learning techniques so pervasive in higher education. Fortunately, it also didn't take long for me to become absolutely bored with this method of teaching and to recognize its limitations, especially for such skill- and discussion-centered courses as literature and composition.

My philosophy of teaching privileges a student-centered classroom, and, as such, is grounded in student ownership of learning. *I believe that students should own and thus act upon their education,* rather than allowing their education to act upon them. I believe that students should know what they want from their education and should understand how their education can enhance their goals, desires, and values. I believe that teaching is a responsibility, not just a profession, and thus believe that I have a moral obligation to provide for my students the opportunity to discover their intellectual voices and refine their abilities of expression, and to provide a safe and respectful environment in which to achieve this. To that end, I will seek your feedback via a mid-semester evaluation. As long as it is sincerely given and is in the interest of our learning goals, I will act upon your feedback to ensure that our time together in this course remains meaningful and productive.

In the same way that teaching is a responsibility, learning is a social act, in that it involves a responsibility to oneself and to one's peers. As such, learning requires dialogue and collaboration. This philosophy is firmly grounded in research, which is synthesized in the following chart:
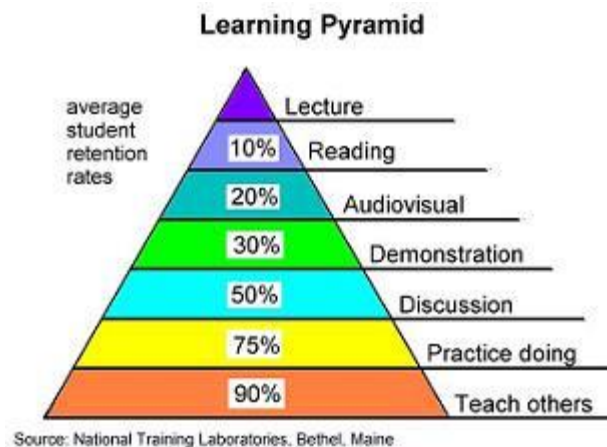
It is through active and collaborative activities that I will guide you to be more precise, critical, creative, and compassionate thinkers, more mature and articulate writers, and, overall, more observant and thoughtful learners and citizens.

Finally, I believe teaching is a mode of learning. Therefore, your perspectives and interpretations will be central to our discussions. As I consider myself holding a dual role, that of teacher and student, I find great pleasure in learning and improving as a result of my interaction with students.

Student Learning Outcomes

Through thoughtful engagement with the literature and successful completion of assignments, you should achieve the following outcomes:

Communication*

1. Critical Thinking: Literary analysis *is* critical thinking. Therefore, you will employ and display critical thinking through detailed and nuanced discussion of literature (oral and in writing).

2. Writing: You will apply the writing skills gained in English 1301 and 1302 to writing about literature. Using your reading and/or research, you will compose critical/analytical essays with (1) a clear thesis and introduction, (2) organized supporting paragraphs, (3) standard conventions of English grammar and punctuation, (4) clear and efficient sentences, and (5) a style and persona appropriate for a particular purpose and audience

3. Oral or visual communication: You will have the opportunity to present your learning through clear, salient, and supported oral/visual speeches/demonstrations and/or through discussion of group or class topics.

Social and Personal Responsibility*
Since most of what we teach in our literature courses reflects the interplay of the individual within his/her society, "the one and the many," and since we do not have field tests or laboratories in our disciplines, we see social and personal responsibility as a dynamic rather than two distinct activities.)

Outcome (SR): In written responses, presentations, and/or discussions, you will illustrate an understanding of social, cultural, historical, scientific or technological forces that stimulated literature in one or more literary movements or periods.

Outcome (PR):), In written responses, presentations, and/or discussions, and potentially in the same response used to measure "social responsibility," you will illustrate an understanding of the complexities of personal choice or the role of the individual within his or her social and cultural environment—as evidenced in at least one literary work.

*These are departmental outcomes set by the new state core curriculum.

How We Will Accomplish These Outcomes

The analysis of literature requires active practice, for we are using literary analysis to develop specific cognitive skills that can be used in a variety of academic and real-world settings. Moreover, research has proven that students achieve deep learning *only* through **active engagement** with course content and assignments and through **meaningful interaction** with their peers.

To that end, I will provide you with a variety of active and collaborative learning experiences. Regarding professional relevance of my teaching methods, a 2012 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers reports that employers desire employees with strong critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills. To be sure, the active and collaborative activities in this course will equip you with these professionally necessary and desired skills.

To accomplish the above learning outcomes, you will interact with the literature for this course in various ways, such as keeping a reading journal, collaborating with your classmates on analysis and interpretation assignments, and actively participating in class discussions. Indeed, the more diverse opportunities you have to engage with the literature and to display your understanding and ideas, the more authentic and the deeper your learning will be. With the Personal Development Plan (PDP), you will take an active role in assessing your progress and reflecting on ways you and I can improve your learning and skills during the course of the semester.

Please know that I am invested in your success, so you should not hesitate to seek my help at any point during the semester. Also know that I expect you to help me help you by **approaching the work of this course in a** *wise, responsible,* **and** *proactive* **manner**.

www.soic.indiana.edu

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Illness essays
short stories **trauma**
poetry ART
observation active learning
narrative WITNESS
empathy collaboration
respect interpret attend
analysis healing **value**

"The stories that ill people tell come out of their bodies. The body sets in motion the need for new stories when its disease disrupts the old stories." *The Wounded Storyteller* ~ Arthur Frank

Themes, Issues, Concepts

sick role, vulnerability, fragility, resiliency
social & historical contexts
embodiment
narrative imperative
illness as author
ethics, voice
reader as witness
narrative surrender
narrative collapse

You should consider these themes, issues, and concepts as you read and write about the literature.

Assessment of Learning

I believe that methods of assessment should **contribute to learning**—not just measure it. To that end and to ensure that you have multiple opportunities to showcase your learning, you will complete a variety of assignments:

➢ **Reading Response Assignments**
You will have the opportunity to practice ethical reading habits by completing Ethical Reading Assignments (ERAs), questions and/or statements to be responded to as you complete your reading. The ERAs will form the basis of the in-class response assignments and be used to prompt class discussion and other analysis activities. *Meaningful completion and timely submission of the ERAs is a prerequisite to your receiving credit for any resulting work turned in for a grade.*

25%

➢ **Critical/Creative Thinking Papers**
These short papers ($1^{1/2}$ – 2 pages) will be informed by your reading responses and by class and small-group discussions and activities. You will work toward improving your analysis and writing skills by completing 2 literary analyses during the course of the semester. You will receive the grading criteria for each essay with the assignment requirements. You will have the opportunity to rewrite **1** essay scoring a 70 or below. You may request this opportunity for a grade above 70. Specific criteria and requirements for each paper will be detailed on the assignment handout.

50%

➢ **Course Project**
My wish for you with this project is that you engage in research and creation that furthers your educational and professional interests and perspective. Therefore, you may complete a project based on your field of study, if you so choose. We will brainstorm ideas in class. Until then, here's a list of possibilities. Requirements will be determined based on your individual or group project idea.

25%

➢ **Course Engagement**
I find the grading of class participation to be inherently flawed and potentially arbitrary. However, your meaningful engagement with this course, to be evident via *thoughtful* and *quality* participation in class and group discussions and activities, is necessary to make the most of your time in this course. To be sure, it is required to remain in good standing regarding course behavior policies.

Consistent quality class participation will be considered when figuring borderline semester grades.

Responsibilities and Policies
for the creation of a fair and productive learning environment

In my effort to create a student-centered class, I have worked to create a *learning-centered*, rather than a policy-centered, syllabus. However, to ensure a productive and organized learning environment, responsibilities must be articulated and policies must be put in place and enforced.

Failure to fulfill the requirements listed below will result in a status of negative standing in the course, which may carry grade and/or administrative consequences, depending upon the nature and severity of the infraction. Consequences include but may not be limited to grade penalty, failure of the assignment or course, and/or being dropped from the course.

My Responsibilities are to. . .

- facilitate learning via instruction, materials, and assignments conducive to the goals of the course and in the best interest of your learning experience
- provide a safe zone for intellectual exploration and experimentation and opportunities to learn from failures
- remain attentive to your individual needs as learners
- offer clear and helpful feedback on written assignments
- maintain a respectful, organized, and supportive classroom environment.
- be consistent and fair yet flexible when necessary without undermining the efforts and responsible behaviors of other students.

Your Responsibilities are to. . .

- attend class regularly, promptly, and fully
- maintain your attention on the work of the course *at all times* (no phone use, doing other course work, etc.)
- complete and submit *on time* all assignments according to given requirements
- uphold academic honesty and integrity in all work completed and submitted
- make meaningful contributions to class discussions display common courtesy and respect to your peers and to me

Attendance

The degree and quality of your and your classmates' learning depends upon your *punctual, complete,* and *regular* attendance. Indeed, arriving late and leaving early are behaviors distracting to the teaching and learning environment. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class meeting. You will be **marked absent** if you arrive late or disengage from the class by occupying yourself with anything unrelated to this course. If you arrive late, *you must inform me after class* so that I can change your absence status to tardy. If you need to leave class early, please practice common courtesy and inform me at the beginning of class and leave quietly. An early departure of 10 minutes or more will be documented. *After 3 late arrivals, early departures, or a combination, the subsequent instances of either **will be documented as absences***.

For **university-sanctioned events**, *relevant documentation must be submitted **prior to** the scheduled absence(s).* Failure to do so will result in these absences counting against your absence allowance and no permission for make-up and/or late work submissions. Depending upon the situation, you may be required to submit assignments *before your scheduled absence.*

More than 6 absences, *no matter the reason,* will result in automatic **failure** of the course, for it is unfair to grant a student who has not participated fully in the activities of the class meetings the same level of credit as those who have. Indeed, the value of the course and the learning process are not gained and wholly benefited from through just the graded assignments.

Late and Make-Up Work

To ensure your preparedness for class following an absence, all items distributed in class and assignments made will be posted to Blackboard.

*Lost document and other technology-related excuses will **not** be accepted*. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to subscribe to a **free cloud service** (google drive, MS onedrive, etc.) so that your work is always available to you anywhere and on any computer.

ERAs and Response Assignments require **official documentation of your absence** to be made up or submitted late. If allowed to be made up, the **in-class response assignments** *must be completed in my office*, as these are timed assignments.

Critical/creative-Thinking Papers come with **one** *penalty-free late submission*. Under this policy, a paper can be turned in up to **3 calendar** *days (not class days)* late. This policy is motivated by the sometimes unpredictable nature of the writing process and of life in general. **Past the 3-day grace period**, the essay **will not be accepted**. However, if a situation arises that you think may prevent you from meeting this deadline, *please come talk to me ASAP*.

The **research project** **will not be accepted late**, as the due date is late in the semester (just several days before I must submit semester grades) and class time will be given toward its progress.

*In the event of a university-sanctioned absence, the above policies will be adjusted within reason *only if an official list of dates and other related documentation are submitted prior to the scheduled absence.*

Academic Calendar

Aug. 26: Last day to register (late fee)

Sept. 09: Last day for full refund on dropped (*not withdrawn*) classes

Sept. 21: Final non-payment purge after 5 pm

Sept. 28: Last day to drop or withdraw *without* academic penalty

Nov. 09: Last day to drop or withdraw *with* academic penalty

Nov. 26/27: Thanksgiving holiday

Dec. 02: Last MWF class day

Dec. 04: Final Exam day Projects due

Do you have ideas for the course and/or the [course website](#)? Let me know via email or Twitter @melissahudler #Engl2300.

I'm keen to hear your ideas, so don't be shy!

Policies (cont.)

Academic Integrity
You are required to uphold academic integrity in all work completed for this course. To that end, I aim to provide a learning experience that does not tempt academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism is the offense of passing off another's work and/or ideas as one's own—an offense that puts a student at risk of failing the course. *You should always consult me if you are unsure if or how content in your papers should be documented.* **Consequences** of plagiarism: (1) failure of the assignment or the course, depending upon the nature and/or extent of the plagiarism, (2) report filed with the Department of English and Modern Languages, and (3) notification sent to the chair of your major department and to the Provost of Academic Affairs, Dr. Kevin Smith. **Repeated reports** of academic dishonesty during the course of your enrollment at the university may result in *expulsion from the university*. The University's policy on academic dishonesty is detailed in the *[Student Handbook](#)*. You are responsible for reading this information and for seeking clarification of any unclear content from me or from your advisor.

University Procedures

Dropping the Course
It is *your responsibility* to complete the required procedures for dropping or withdrawing from the course (see "Class Schedule and Registration Procedures" on Lamar's website). *I will not drop a student who stops attending class.* In the event of an **extended absence** due to illness or personal hardship, your duty is to complete the drop or withdraw by contacting your major department or the Records Office to request that the drop be completed on your behalf. Drop dates are listed in the sidebar. Be aware of the drop dates and, if the need arises, begin the drop process in a timely manner.

Requesting an Incomplete
The Incomplete is reserved for a student who has completed all course work up to the event (illness, family emergency, or debilitating accident) that prevents him/her from completing the course. The missed course work must be submitted by the deadline indicated on the Incomplete Request form; otherwise, the *I* will be changed to an *F*.

Students with Disabilities
In coordination with the [Disabilities Resource Center](#), every effort will be made for this course to be a meaningful component of a student's individualized educational plan. Any student registered with this office has the responsibility of keeping me informed of needs via **official documentation** from the Office. Such documentation must be presented *at the beginning* of the semester and *before* affected assignments are assigned.
Contact: 880-8347, 880-2225, http://www.lamar.edu/disability-resource-center/

Emergency Situations
Many types of emergencies can occur on campus. Instructions for specific emergencies such as severe weather, active shooter, or fire can be found at http://www.lamar.edu/about-lu/administration/risk-management/index.html.

Severe Weather:
- Follow the directions of the instructor or emergency personnel
- Seek shelter in an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor, putting as many walls as possible between you and the outside
- If you are in a multi-story building, and you cannot get to the lowest floor, pick a hallway in the center of the building
- Stay in the center of the room, away from exterior walls, windows, and doors

*In the event of an announced campus closure in excess of four days due to a hurricane or other disaster, students are expected to login to Lamar University's website's homepage (www.lamar.edu) for instructions about continuing courses remotely.

Violence / Active Shooter (CADD):
- CALL- 9-1-1
- AVOID- If possible, self-evacuate to a safe area outside the building. Follow directions of police officers.
- DENY- Barricade the door with desk, chairs, bookcases or any items. Move to a place inside the room where you are not visible. Turn off the lights and remain quiet. Remain there until told by police it is safe.
- DEFEND- Use chairs, desks, cell phones or whatever is immediately available to distract and/or defend yourself and others from attack.