Syllabus
ENG 2012 – The Art of Close Reading
(Fall 2010)

“Many a book is like a key to unknown chambers within the castle of one’s own self.” (Franz Kafka)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
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OFFICE HOURS AND LOCATION
F 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (drop-in); Or by appointment at other times
Building 8, Room 2543

Feel free to email me with any questions that require brief responses. To discuss coursework in more detail, visit me during office hours or schedule a conference with me.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
More than simply reading for surface “meanings,” close reading describes an investigative, analytical mode of reading. A close reader reads actively, studying features, asking questions, and exploring non-obvious as well as obvious elements of a text. [“Texts” in this regard, may include any “constructed works,” including literature (stories, novels, poetry, drama, and film), non-fictional works, visual works, architecture, and even public events.]

Why is close reading an art? One definition of art provided by the Oxford English Dictionary is “skill in an activity regarded as governed by aesthetic as well as organizational principles.” Close reading, therefore, defines particular skills in reading texts. It requires that readers not only bring to the text their understandings of linguistic and organizational practices, but also that they process the work through their own aesthetic sensibilities.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES
During the course of this term, students should progress toward an ability to answer the following questions:

1. What are a text’s structural features?
2. What rhetorical devices and literary tropes appear, and what repetitions and patterns does the text exhibit?
3. How can you develop a thesis-driven argument that both explains the significance, complications, and/or implications of a text (and/or textual elements) and that also supports its thesis with evidence from the text itself? How do you determine the degree to which you have developed such an argument?
4. What are the key concepts presented in this course? To what extent can you articulate your understanding of these concepts? How can you apply your understanding of these concepts to texts and experiences, including those outside the realm of the course?
5. To what extent do you exhibit the following skills of critical reading? How do you determine if you have successfully mastered these skills?
   a. To summarize a text clearly, accurately, and concisely
   b. To distinguish among (1) a subject, (2) an overarching, positioned idea about the subject (that is, a thesis, central idea, or conclusion), and (3) a statement that summarizes the itinerary or organization of the paper (its succession of topics)
6. To what extent are you able to translate your critical reading of a text into effective written analysis? To what extent do you display, through your work, the following writing abilities?
   1. To develop a strong thesis statement
   2. To develop strong topic sentences
   3. To achieve sentence clarity
   4. To write coherent paragraphs
   5. To produce writing substantially free of surface errors – mechanical, syntactical, and/or grammatical.
7. What is meant by reflective judgment and how can you use this practice to analyze the differences between and among the following:
   a. The world,
   b. Mental perceptions of and ideas about the world,
   c. Spoken representations of, and/or
   d. Written representations of the world?
TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Required Texts to Purchase

- Regular Internet Access: You’ll need regular internet access for the mandatory Blackboard component of this course. If you don’t have such access at home, you may use a computer in the library or computer lab.

Once online, use your UNF n-number to access Blackboard from the UNF “myWings” website. The first time you access Blackboard this term, go to “personal information” and update your email address to one that you check regularly.

Recommended Optional Materials

- A writing handbook for reference (I suggest Faigley’s or Hacker’s, but any good writing handbook will do)
- Full-function word-processing software, such as that available in Microsoft Office or WordPerfect Office. (If you need such software, you may download a free but otherwise comparable office suite at OpenOffice.org.)
- A binder or folder to organize class readings, assignments, and notes

Additional: A Variety of Online Reading Selections (provided by the instructor via Blackboard)

Since we’ll analyze source texts extensively, we’ll rely upon varied, typically short, readings. You’ll access most of these through our Blackboard site.

Note: Since this course requires only one, inexpensive text to purchase, save your funds to make printed versions of these online texts.

A Note regarding Controversial or “Offensive” Texts:

The texts we read in this class may disturb some readers. I don’t ask that you like or agree with assigned texts, but I do require that you read them closely and demonstrate your understanding of them.

Thus, you may NOT substitute an alternative text for a required one that you find “offensive.” Please don’t ask to do so. If you don’t want to read, view, or discuss texts or ideas that may run counter to your beliefs, you should withdraw from this class immediately.

Students who read the preceding paragraph often ask me, “What is an offensive text?” I can’t answer that question, any more than I can answer “What is a beautiful work of art?” Offense, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Consider this fact, though: A work that offends or disturbs us opens to us whole realms of intriguing questions, beginning with the obvious one, “Why do I find this work so offensive?” Franz Kafka once argued that “we ought to read only those books that bite and sting us.” Suffice it to say that I agree, in large measure, with Kafka’s advice.

SCHEDULE

The schedule for the course may change throughout the term to accommodate class needs. Thus, for homework, reading, and assignment schedules, you should always check the most current version of the course schedule, maintained on our course site on Blackboard. Remember, you’re responsible for all assignments on the class schedule even if I fail to remind you of them in class!

ASSIGNMENTS

The list below includes anticipated assignments and their likely point-values, although both assignments and point-values may deviate from this list. Find required preparation, assignment details, and due dates on the Bb course site:

1. Miscellaneous (Quizzes, In-Class Writing, Exercises) – 150 points (combined)
2. Reading Responses, Informal Writing, Group Work – 150 points (combined)
3. Presentation – 100 points
4. Midterm Essay (3-4 pages) – 200 points
5. Exam(s) – 50-100 points
6. Final Essay (6-8 pages) – 300 points

(For each absence over two, subtract 50 points from your overall score.)

As the list above indicates, you’ll have an opportunity to earn approximately 1,000 points overall.
GRADING SCALE

Making consistent effort should help you do well on assignments, but only the strength of your work (not your level of effort) determines your grade. To earn the highest grades, your work must demonstrate superior quality of analytical thought as well as superior writing craft.

You earn your course grade through the percentage score of all graded work, as described above. Final grades adhere to the following scale. (Note: If you “must” obtain a particular grade, do so by improving your work during the term. I don’t give “extra credit” or add “extra” points or fractions of points to “bump up” your score at the end of the term — In other words, a 79.4 is still a C+ even though it’s “sooooo close” to a B.)

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92.5 or better</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>89.5%-92.4</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>86.5-89.4</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>82.5-86.4</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>76.5-79.4</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>59.5-69.4</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59.4% or lower</td>
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CLASSROOM GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Attendance

Each member of a discussion class such as this one contributes a unique perspective. We lose your perspective if you fail to prepare or to attend. Class discussions cover some material not available in our texts. In addition, class provides opportunities to participate in on-going class discussions about assigned readings and writing projects; to consult with the instructor; to work with peers in discussion/writing/revision workshops; and to practice key analytical, grammatical, mechanical, and stylistic skills.

So... My absence policy is simple: Come to class. Please don’t provide me with excuses, doctor’s notes, documentation of religious observances, notes from mom, etc. THEY DON’T MATTER! Put bluntly, you get TWO absences to use whenever you need them PERIOD... but that’s all the “excused” absences you get. (Keep in mind, however, that I don’t provide make-ups for quizzes or other in-class activities that you miss if you’re absent.)

Please note the following points:

- For each absence over two (i.e., in excess of a week of absences), you’ll lose 50 points from your course grade (an equivalent of ½ a letter grade from your overall course grade).
- Absence does NOT excuse you from assignment deadlines—you must submit all work by its deadline.
- You must attend class in order to receive full credit on quizzes, exercises, exams, or in-class writing.
- Attendance requires not only your physical presence, but also your full engagement with and attention to this class. If you spend your class time preparing for other classes, text-messaging, listening to music, sleeping, etc., you’re not truly “present” and so, you should expect to lose “miscellaneous” points.
- If you must miss class due to a university-approved reason (i.e. varsity athletics, religious observation, etc.), inform me in advance. In any case, your first two absences count as your “allowed” absences.
- If you miss more than five classes during the term, you fail the entire course—regardless of your course average on completed work.

Arriving Late or Leaving Early

Of course, come to class on time. If you do arrive late, please come in as quietly as possible and begin work quickly. (After class, YOU must make sure that I change my attendance record to reflect that you attended after all.)

If you’re significantly late (10 minutes or more) for any class meeting, you earn an absence. In such a case, however, you may enter the class and receive credit for any in-class work that you complete during the remaining class time. If you repeatedly come to class late—even if you arrive only a couple of minutes late each time—your habitual tardiness may count as one or more “extra” absences.

Similarly, if you must leave class early, obtain my permission IN ADVANCE or risk earning an absence for the day.

Assigned Work Deadlines

Late work earns you an F on the assignment! Thus, make sure you submit assigned work on the specified due date even if you’re absent and even if you’re taking one of your allowed absences. At the instructor’s discretion, you may receive up to half credit on late work submitted within one week after the original due date. On the other hand, if you completely fail to submit an assignment, you earn a zero averaged into your overall grade. Put simply, unsubmitted work earns you an F Zero (0% of points) on the assignment, while a late submission earns you an F (up to 50% of points). Thus, it’s to your advantage to turn in all work, even if you must submit it late or incomplete.

Special Dispensations

Students with disabilities who seek reasonable accommodations in the classroom or with other aspects of performing their coursework must first register with the UNF Disability Resource Center (DRC) located in Building 10, Room 1201. DRC staff members work with students to obtain required documentation of disability and to identify appropriate accommodations as required by applicable disability laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). After receiving all necessary documentation, the DRC staff determines whether a student qualifies for services with the DRC and if so, the accommodations the student will be provided. DRC staff then prepares a letter for the student to provide faculty advising them of approved accommodations. For further information, contact the DRC by phone (904) 620-2769, email (kwebb@unf.edu), or visit the DRC website (http://www.unf.edu/dept/disabled-services).
Controversial texts provide an important foundation for our class—our coursework requires that we study how to use language to argue persuasively and logically, and that we investigate texts that provoke us. When we combine diversified student backgrounds with provocative texts and persuasive argument, we cannot expect consistent innocuousness. We are aiming always, however, toward CIVIL discourse. That is, the classroom provides a venue in which students (and instructors) may discuss volatile issues openly, while demonstrating respect for ideas that differ from their own.

In general, my expectations for classroom courtesy follow informal social and professional standards. Thus, as you would in any professional environment, please address others respectfully.

Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers, and other electronic devices (INCLUDING LAPTOPS) prior to the start of class. Additionally, since we'll spend some of our classroom time on in-class writing or other work, your conduct must never interfere with your classmates' ability to work productively. During workshop time, however, you may leave your seat, ask questions, or converse quietly with others regarding coursework.

After many years of teaching I've never yet imposed this penalty, but I do reserve the right to penalize (by a grade reduction of ½ of a letter grade) repeated or flagrant tardiness, instances of "significant classroom disruption," or other substantive classroom discourtesy. (Note that my judgment determines these offenses.)

UNIVERSITY POLICIES ON PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

As a University of North Florida student, you commit to UNF’s standards of student conduct, including the Academic Integrity Code, available in its full form at http://www.unf.edu/registrar/forms/misconduct_policy.pdf. The Honor Code requires UNF students to neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in completing all assignments. Violations include cheating, fabrication and falsification, multiple submissions, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty.

The University of North Florida considers any form of “academic dishonesty” a serious violation of University standards. You should know that violations could result in your expulsion from the University. FOR YOUR PROTECTION, review the UNF Academic Integrity Code, and make sure you understand University standards. (Access the Code at http://www.unf.edu/registrar/forms/misconduct_policy.pdf).

Examples of activities that UNF considers academically dishonest include the following:

- Submitting all or part of someone else’s work as if it is your own.
- “Borrowing,” without crediting the source, any of the following:
  - Any part of song lyrics, poetry, or movie scripts
  - Any part of another person’s essay, speech, or ideas
  - Any part of an article in a magazine, journal, newspaper
  - Any part of a book, encyclopedia, CD-ROM, online WWW page, etc.
  - Any IDEA from another person or writer, even if you express that idea in your own words.
- “Borrowing” verbatim text without enclosing in quotation marks and citing the source.
- Making "duplicate submissions" of assignments - that is, submitting work in one class that you also submit (or have previously submitted) in another class.
- "Collaborating" or receiving substantive help in writing your assignment unless such collaboration is part of the given assignment. (You may receive general advice from tutors or writing lab instructors.)
- Failing to cite sources, or citing them improperly, [or making up sources].

Plagiarism substantially violates the student academic integrity code. You commit plagiarism when you present IDEAS, WORDS, or INFORMATION from someone (or someplace) else without giving credit to the source.

Protect yourself! Make sure the assignments you submit for grading reflect your own work, and properly cite any sources from which you obtained ideas, direct quotations, or information.
USEFUL STUDENT RESOURCES

Many students experience stress while making the adjustment to college. Although I certainly sympathize if you are experiencing non-course-related problems, you’ll find better and more helpful resources elsewhere on campus.

The services below are available free to students, so if you feel you need help, please don’t wait. Contact the appropriate office below—each of their staffs include trained, caring professionals who have experience helping students deal with specific academic, security, psychological, and emotional issues.

ACE (Academic Center for Excellence) – Academic Advising and Tutoring
Founder’s Hall, 2/1200, (904) 620-1012, www.unf.edu/es/ace

Ace provides academic advising and tutoring. You’ll find its tutors especially helpful if you’re having trouble with surface errors (grammar, punctuation, etc.) in your writing.

The UNF Counseling Center
Founder’s Hall, 2/2300, (904) 620-2602, www.unf.edu/dept/counseling_center

“The UNF Counseling Center offers you a safe atmosphere, where personal concerns can be openly explored and discussed with a professionally trained counselor.”

UNF Campus Police
Building 41, on UNF Drive, across the street from the Information Booth, http://www.unf.edu/dept/upd/index.htm
Emergency Number: (904) 620-2801

Note: Police officers are available 24 hours a day to provide safety escorts to any member of the University Community. To request an escort you may contact the UPD at 620-2800.

UNF Career Services
Founder’s Hall, 2/1100, (904) 620-2955, http://www.unf.edu/dept/cdc/

“The University of North Florida Career Services provides a variety of career services, programs, and resources designed to help you develop a successful career.”

The Women’s Center (and Victim Advocacy Program)
Founder’s Hall, 2/2100, (904) 620-2528, Email: womenctr@unf.edu
24-hour Crisis Helpline: (904) 620-1010

“Campus victims of actual and/or threatened violence [harassment, rape, relationship violence, stalking, hate crimes or other crimes] can find help 24-hours-a-day through the Women’s Center’s Victim Advocacy Program.”