

LIT 2350 Close Reading

M and W, 2:30 to 3:45, Spring 2022

Dr. Sean Cotter

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Office: JO 5.414

Office Hours: online, by appointment

Close Reading

The practice of reading slowly, with attention to detail and time to think, is central to the enjoyment of literature and to success as a critical reader. This required class for Literature students develops the skills associated with reading texts closely, working across a variety of genres and original languages. We will pay attention to the ways text mean, through their use of images, tones, characters, and verse forms. By the end of the class, we will be able to compare the changes made by two translators of a work, connecting individual words with broader themes.

Policies

Participation

Classes begin and end at the same time for all involved. You should arrive before class-time and stay for the entire session. Attendance is required. I understand that occasionally circumstances arise (e. g. car trouble, childcare complications, illness) which cause you to miss class. For this reason, you are allowed to miss three meetings over the course of the term. You do not need to explain these absences. Absences beyond this limit will result in a significant reduction of your final grade, up to three letter grades.

It is your responsibility to make your presence and interest in the class known to your instructor. Ways to demonstrate engagement include: participation in classroom discussion, visits to office hours, use of the writing lab, or discussions over email.

The best way to contact me is through email. If I do not respond within 48 hours, something has gone wrong. Please email me again. I am very flexible with my office hours, and I always meet online. Please email me to set up a Teams appointment.

Assignments

You will be responsible for mastering all the material on the syllabus, participating in class discussions, and completing all assignments. I may adjust your mathematical average grade up or down to reflect your participation. Your average will have four parts, weighted roughly as follows: reading journals (the best ten) 20%, essay 30%, midterm 20%, final exam 30%.

Most Fridays (a total of 12), you will turn in a reading journal. These 250-word entries reflect on that week's reading and class. Your grade for this section will be the average of your ten best

submissions. You should start the entry by stating that week's focus. The focus should not be the name of the author or the title of a work. Rather, it will be the week's topic, as we applied it to the works that we examined. For example, you could begin your entry, "This week we focused on irony in Musil," or, "This week we examined how sonnets turn." The rest of the entry should be a grammatically correct, but informal reflection on the readings for that week, in light of the week's focus. Focus on texts (or parts of longer texts) that we did not discuss in class.

Your essay is due April 22. I will provide a prompt. It is possible, though not advisable, to extend the deadline, provided there is good reason. To ask for an extension, write me an email before 5 pm Wednesday, April 20, giving a reason for the extension and the date you will turn the assignment in. The maximum extension is one week past the original date. Extensions cannot be extended. Your papers will be graded and returned roughly in the order they arrive. An essay not turned in either on time or by the extended deadline is late; late assignments receive zero credit. It is better to turn something in than to turn nothing in.

The midterm and final exams will ask for a combination of interpretative knowledge of individual works, and demonstration of the basic skills acquired over the course of the semester. The final is comprehensive.

Paper-Writing Guidelines, in Brief

A five-page paper ends on the sixth page. Use one to one and one-quarter inch margins (no more, no less). Print your paper on one side of the page, double-spaced, in a twelve-point font. Use black ink on white paper. Use a font similar to that used for this page; no sans-serif fonts. Do not use a cover sheet, binder, or slipcover. In the upper left corner of the first page, type your name, the course title and section number, the date the paper is turned in, and my name. The paper's title (a helpful title, not "The Different Translations of Kafka") follows, centered, on the next line. The title should not be in underlined or bolded. Starting with page two, each page has your last name and the page number in the upper right corner. Do not "justify" your paragraphs. Indent paragraphs one-half inch, block quotes one inch. Block quotes are double-spaced and not centered. Please note that underlining and italics are used for exactly the same purposes. I prefer that you use italics. Do not use footnotes.

Cite all quotations, direct and indirect, using Modern Language Association format. Any paper suspected of plagiarism will be sent to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct. The MLA format uses parenthetical citations at the end of the sentence:

...as he later writes, "time and again the only meaning of 'correct' is 'traditional'" (Kenner 216).

The author's name and the page number (or line number) of the quote are included just before the final punctuation for in-sentence quotes, just after the punctuation for block quotes. The author's name refers to a "Works Cited" listing, which you should include as an appendix to your paper. This list includes the author's name, the book's title, its translator, the city of publication, the publishing house, and the year published:

St. Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. London: Penguin, 1961.
Kenner, Hugh. *The Pound Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

If you are comparing two translations, and it would be confusing to refer to them both by the original author, use the translator's name in the citation...

Ciardi's version of the same passage is deceptively simple, "Midway in our life's journey, I went astray" (Ciardi 28).

...and on the Works Cited page:

Ciardi, John, trans. *The Inferno*. By Dante. NY: Mentor, 1982.

Your paper will be graded in part by the above guidelines, but primarily I will be looking for a paper that is strongly and simply written. The argument should show serious and creative engagement with the text. The introduction should have a clear thesis and forecast the organization of your paper. The body paragraphs should be focused and build from one to the next. You should explain your position using examples from the text, but only quote as much as you use. Transitions should be smooth. The conclusion should gather together the pieces of the argument to show what the reader has gained by reading the essay. Neither the introduction nor the conclusion should contain general statements about "history," "time," "humankind," "poetry," or "literature." Proofread carefully. Trade papers with a classmate; you learn a great deal by proofreading and commenting on another essay. Lastly, your paper will be much improved if you write a complete draft, let it sit two days or so, and then re-write it.

Schedule

All readings will be available on eLearning.

Wednesday January 19	Introductions
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TOPIC: IMAGE

Monday January 24	Akhmatova
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Wednesday January 26	Ono no Komachi
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: CURIOSITY

Monday January 31	Saunders
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Wednesday February 2	Chekhov
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: IRONY

Monday February 7	Musil
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Wednesday February 9	Lispector
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: WONDER

Monday February 14	Wonder packet
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Wednesday February 16	Wonder packet
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: AMBIGUITY

Monday February 21	Davis
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Wednesday February 23	Morrison
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: ALLUSION

Monday February 28	Clifton
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Wednesday March 2	Eliot
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

Monday March 7	Mid-term exam
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TOPIC: TRANSLATION

Wednesday March 9	Kafka (Muir trans.)
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Monday March 14	Spring Break
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Wednesday March 16	Spring Break
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Monday March 21	Kafka (Muir trans.)
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Wednesday March 23	Kafka (Lloyd trans.)
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: OTHER LANGUAGES

Monday March 28	Castro, Vallejo
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Wednesday March 30	Mallarmé
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: POETIC FORM

Monday April 4	Meter packet
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Wednesday April 6	Stanza packet
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: VILLANELLE

Monday April 11	Villanelle packet
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Wednesday April 13	Villanelle packet
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: SONNET

Monday April 18	Sonnet packet
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Wednesday April 20	Sonnet packet
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ESSAY due, Friday, April 22, 11:59pm

TOPIC: DRAMA

Monday April 25	Soyinka
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Wednesday April 27	Soyinka
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

TOPIC: CLOSE READING

Monday May 2	Trethewey
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Reading journal due, Friday, 11:59pm

Wednesday May 4	Conclusions
TBA	Final exam Held online

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

Please see UT Dallas policies, including Covid-19 procedures, at this site: <https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>