

Proseminar in Literary Studies
LIT6300.001
Fall 2025
JO 4.112
Wednesday 4:00-7:00

Professor Contact Information

Instructor: Davis Smith-Brecheisen
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Office Hours: Tuesday noon-2:30 or by appointment

Course Description and Student Learning Objectives

The Proseminar in literature provides a practical introduction to the key concepts, issues, and debates in literary studies by focusing on the building blocks of the discipline: close reading and literary theory. Rather than survey a wide range of texts, this course examines a relatively narrow band of literature and literary theory to explore the aims and stakes of literary interpretation. Along the way, we will explore what it means to undertake the study of literature at an advanced level and explore strategies for being successful in graduate school and beyond. By the end of the course students will:

- Develop the skills to write arguments for upper-division seminars in literature.
- Develop a critical language to conduct advanced research in literary studies.
- Gain a broader understanding of how to conduct research in a chosen field.
- Understand the demands of being successful in graduate school.

Classroom Citizenship

The classroom exists to support student learning and writing and as such it should cultivate the habits of mind necessary for full commitment to a functioning democracy: a respect for evidence, the ability to understand and craft reasoned and complex arguments, and the pursuit of honest, compassionate inquiry. Because the classroom is a space of open and honest inquiry, it will not allow rhetoric that denigrates others based on any identity category, such as race, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, national origin, language, ethnicity, sex, ability status, class status, age, or body type.

Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing. I'll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

Required Materials

James Baldwin, *Another Country* (ISBN: 978-0679744719)
Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (978-0140077025)

John Guillory, *Close Reading* (978-0226837437)
Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (978-0060913076)
Lisa Siraganian, *Modernism's Other Work* (978-0190255268)
Paul Stasi, *The Persistence of Realism in Modernist Fiction* (978-1009223140)
William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All* (978-0811218917)
Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (9780156907392)

Additional readings will be provided in a course packet. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Grading Policy

Close Reading Paper	10%
Position Paper	20%
Final Paper	50%
Attendance and Participation	20%

Late Work

No late work will be accepted without explicit prior permission. There are exceptions for catastrophic events that will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Policy on Generative AI

This course has a strict policy on generative AI: it's use is prohibited in any form. Part of the aim of this course is to build the skills necessary to succeed in graduate school rather than short circuit them. This includes all versions of ChatGPT, Co-Pilot, and Grammarly. This policy specifically refers to any tools that produce text, revision suggestions, summaries, bibliographies, and/or research for you. As such, in this course the use of generative AI in any form will constitute a violation of UT Dallas's student code of conduct.

Class Attendance

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. That said, life happens and students can miss one class without penalty. Missing 2 classes will adversely affect your participation and attendance grade, lowering it to a maximum of a B. Missing more than two classes will put in jeopardy your ability to pass the course.

Class Participation

Regular class participation is expected. 20 percent of the grade for this course is directly tied to your attendance and participation in this class. Participation means not only attending class, but attending class with the material read and participating regularly in discussion. It also includes engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in class. **This semester, with rare exception, we will not be using technology in the classroom. Your class participation grade depends on adherence to this policy.**

I recognize that for some students, participation in class is not an ideal form of engaging the material. If you are a student who prefers not to speak in class, for whatever reason, you may gain full participation credit by meeting with me during office hours. Class participation is documented by faculty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Week 1: August 27

Welcome and “AI is a Gimmick” by Jon Malesic

Week 2: September 3

John Guillory, *Close Reading* and John Crow Ransom “Criticism Inc.”

Week 3: September 10

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Close Reading Paper Due: Saturday, September 13

Week 4: September 17

WK Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” and Paul de Man, “Form and Intent in the American New Criticism.”

Week 5: September 24

Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author” and “From Work to Text” and Steven Knapp
Walter Benn Michaels and “Against Theory.”

Week 6: October 1

Lisa Siraganian, *Modernism's Other Work* “Introduction” and “Theorizing Art and Punctuation: Gertrude Stein's Breathless Poetry” and Gertrude Stein, “Pictures” and “What is a Master-piece and Why Are There So Few of Them?”

Position Paper Due: Saturday, October 4

Week 7: October 8

William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All* and Siraganian, “Satirizing Frameless Art: Wyndham Lewis’s Defense of Representation” and “Breaking Glass to Save the Frame: William Carlos Williams and Company.”

Week 8: October 15

Elizabeth Bishop “Large Bad Picture,” and “The Monument,” Siraganian, “Challenging Kitsch Equality: William Gaddis’s and Elizabeth Bishop’s “Neo” Rear-Garde Art,” Clement Greenberg, “Avant Garde and Kitsch,” and Nicholas Brown, “Autonomy.”

Week 9: October 22

Paul Stasi, *The Persistence of Realism* “Introduction” and “Fables of Autonomy in Late James” and Roberto Schwarz, “Objective Form.”

Week 10: October 29

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* and Stasi “Historical Time and Social Reproduction” and Erin Greer, “Conversation and Common Sense.”

Week 11: November 5

James Baldwin, *Another Country* and “Everybody’s Protest Novel” and Stasi, “Ellison’s Naturalist Modernism.”

Week 12: November 12

No Class

Week 13: November 19

Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, Schwarz “Worries of a Family Man,” Brown, “Conclusion,” Siraganian, “Coda,” and Stasi, “Conclusion.”

Week 14: November 26

Fall Break

Week 15: December 3

Individual meetings

Seminar Paper Due: Saturday, December 13

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:
“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Please review the section within the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures webpage.

Academic Support Resources

Please visit the Academic Support Resources page to view the University's academic support resources for all students.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

Please visit the Syllabus Policies page to view the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please review the catalog sections regarding the credit/no credit or pass/fail grading option and withdrawal from class.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.