

## MODEL SYLLABUS

### Interpreting Literature UCLI 1XX

**Instructor:**

**Office:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**

**Office Hours:**

Course Description: The foundational course in literary studies will require students to read closely and analyze carefully a representative variety of fiction, poetry, and drama, master key literary and critical terms, and explore a variety of core critical approaches to the analysis and interpretation of literature. This course will also explore important conceptual questions about literature and its study. What is literature? Why does it matter? How has it been conceived in different times and places? How do we envision the relationship between author, text, and reader? What is the difference between reading a literary work in its historical context and in the light of our own contemporary time? Where does meaning come from in literature? What is literary interpretation and what role does it have in the production of literary meaning? How are literary works related to culture and society and how do they reflect – and reflect on – questions of value and the diversity of human experience? Exploring these questions will help students develop the skills of analysis and interpretation needed to approach literature in a sophisticated manner.

This course satisfies the first tier of Loyola University's **core Knowledge Area** requirement in "**Literary Knowledge.**"

#### **Learning Objectives**

Each student should come away from this course with the ability to think critically about literature and to write intelligently about issues such as the following:

A) Literature as art: Works of literature communicate through their artistic form. Students will be expected to learn some of the fundamental characteristics of literary form. The particular artistic elements to be studied will depend on the works selected by the instructor, but all students will be expected to both recognize and analyze the function of key forms and structures used in fiction, poetry, and drama.

B) Literature and culture: Every work of literature is the product of a culture with a specific history. How is that important to our understanding of a work? How do the cultural assumptions and expectations of the author shape the work that we read? How do the cultural assumptions and expectations of the reader shape his or her interpretation of that work? Also, is it possible for literary works to transcend culture and speak to universal human concerns?

All sections of the course, regardless of the literature department in which the faculty member teaches, must introduce students to essential forms of literature and tools for understanding and interpreting it; therefore, the course will have several uniform requirements. In order to achieve some degree of historical depth in each student's introductory experience, each syllabus must include works drawn from at least two periods, and must reflect cultural diversity. Students in each section will also be expected to learn the conventions of the three major forms of literature—poetry, drama, and prose—and will be required to write on works in at least two of those three forms.

**Skills:**

Because the course is designed to focus on helping students to develop skills necessary for success in college and afterwards—close reading, critical thinking, and effective writing—students in all sections will learn to use core literary and critical terms, and will turn in two-three papers for a total of approximately 2500 words of required writing, beyond any in-class or ungraded writing assignments.

**Texts:**

*Handbook of Literary and Critical Terms* (common text to be designated)  
Other texts: Selections vary with instructor; model syllabus assumes instructor is in English. Instructors in other departments will select texts of broad cultural significance from at least two distinct periods.

**How Your Assignments Address the Knowledge and Skills Objectives Listed Above (example - may be small variations):**

**Example Grading Scale (may vary)**

**Grading:** Grades will be based on a midterm exam (15% of final grade), final exam (20% of final grade), 2-3 essays (60%), participation (5%).

**Make-up Exams (Example - may vary):** Students who have valid reasons for missing an examination may take an all-essay make-up exam. These exams must be completed within one week of the scheduled exam. Valid reasons for missing an examination include serious personal illness or family emergency

**Academic Dishonesty:** Familiarize yourself with the department's definitions of plagiarism and its penalties. Plagiarizing a paper will result in a grade of "zero" for that exam/paper. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, come see me and I can give you some resources to help you cite appropriately and put things into your own words.

**Sample Schedule:** While a schedule is provided below, it is subject to change based on the availability of materials and other issues that may arise during the course of the semester. Students will be notified of any necessary changes with as much advanced notice as possible.

- Week 1 Introduction to literature as representation
- Week 2 **Poetry Unit:** (by way of example: elegies by Jonson, Milton, Gray, Whitman, and Yeats; dramatic monologues by Browning, Tennyson, Eliot, and Plath; poems in open form by Whitman, Dickinson, and Hughes): terminology, forms, techniques  
Elegies by Jonson and Milton
- Week 3 Elegies by Gray, Whitman, and Yeats; examples discussed in relation to questions of course
- Week 4 Begin dramatic monologues: Browning and Tennyson; examples discussed in relation to questions of course
- Week 5 **Essay:** analyzing a poem  
Dramatic monologues by Eliot and Plath; Poetry in open form: Whitman, Dickinson, and Hughes; examples discussed in relation to questions of course
- Week 6 **Drama Unit:** (by way of example, William Shakespeare's tragedy Othello and Oscar Wilde's comedy The Importance of Being Earnest): terminology, forms, techniques  
Tragedy: Othello
- Week 7 Othello, continued: discussed in relation to questions of course
- Week 8 **Mid-Term Exam**  
Comedy: The Importance of Being Earnest discussed in relation to questions of course
- Week 9 Comedy, continued: The Importance of Being Earnest  
**Essay** using close reading to analyze relationship of a passage to other parts of the text
- Week 10 **Prose Unit:** (by way of example, short stories by Hawthorne, Hemingway, Joyce, Hurston, and O'Connor, and Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights): terminology, forms, techniques  
Short stories by Hawthorne and Hemingway discussed in relation to questions of course

- Week 11 Short stories by Joyce and Hurston discussed in relation to questions of course
- Week 12 Short story by O'Connor; Begin Wuthering Heights; examples discussed in relation to questions of course
- Week 13 Continue with Wuthering Heights  
**Essay** discussing relationship of a text to its historical context
- Week 14 Complete Wuthering Heights  
Summary of responses to questions of course
- Week 15 Final Exam