

**Sample Syllabus**  
***Making Literature Matter: An Anthology for Readers and Writers***  
**(Isaacs and Keeran)**

**ENWR College Writing II: Writing and Literary Study**  
Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name Office Room/Phone/Office Hours  
Instructor Email  
English Department Web Site: <http://www.montclair.english.edu>

**Required Texts:**

*Schilb, John and John Clifford. Making Literature Matter: An Anthology for Readers and Writers, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2009.*  
a handbook (Your handbook from College Writing I is fine. If you don't have one, purchase Diana Hacker's A Writer's Reference, available at the bookstore.)

**Course Aims:**

This course has two principal purposes. As a writing course, this course aims to help you improve your abilities to write well: to develop focused, thoughtful and analytic essays. As a literature course, this course aims to develop your abilities to respond to, interpret, and analyze complex literary works and to appreciate literature as both art and representation. More specifically, as a writing course you will continue with many of the methods that you became familiar with in College Writing I. You will write multiple drafts, give and receive peer critique, and carefully edit your formal work. You will further develop your abilities to cite and incorporate others' work and you will learn some of the methods that college students use to write about literature. As a literature course, we will not only develop our abilities to interpret--to making meaning of--literary texts, but we will also think and write about the context in which literary texts are written and read. In particular, we will consider the social, cultural, historical and political contexts that bear upon the production--the writing, publishing and disseminating--and reception of literary texts. Finally we will ask basic questions about the role of literature: How does it function in individuals' lives? How does it function in school? And perhaps most importantly, how does it function in the culture at large?

**The Specifics: What We Will Do**

Over the semester we will read a range of different genres (types of literature, e.g., poem, short story, play) written by a fairly diverse group of writers. We will approach these texts thematically in five relatively brief units of two to three weeks. Each unit will begin with reading of literary texts and end with a sequence of essay drafts, culminating in a final essay, due at the end of the unit. During the reading portion of each unit you will have homework and in-class activities aimed at developing your abilities of interpretation. You will receive feedback on your writing from peers and from your instructor, and you will be offered opportunities to revise your work based on this feedback. The sixth unit will be the portfolio.

**Course Requirements:**

*Class Participation, In-Class Writing, Homework and Activities: (20%)*  
You are expected to attend class regularly; more than three absences will lower your final grade.

See me if you are faced with an extraordinary circumstance so that we can negotiate, if necessary. You are expected to come to class prepared: willing to be an active discussant and listener, and willing to read from your own writing occasionally. During class you will be asked to write, respond to peers' writing, and participate in small and full class discussion.

### *Reading*

Your reading load will vary a little depending on what we're reading, but expect to read between 50 and 75 pages a week during the reading portion of our units. If students are not keeping up with the reading--as will be evident from class discussion and in-class writing--quick reading check quizzes may be introduced.

### *Papers (60%)*

Five papers are required. In these papers you are expected to draw out some aspect of the literature that interests you and then develop a relatively short, cogent response. For some essays you will have specific writing assignments; for others you will be expected to develop your own questions and arguments. You may not submit book reports or plot summaries. Focus on interpretation and analysis of the literary text(s). While you will be expected to write frequently, you will find that writing regularly will make the writing come easier. Paper four will be a documented essay, requiring some research and appropriate integration of secondary texts within your own work interpreting a literary text. More on this later.

### *Portfolio (20%)*

The portfolio assignment is intended as an opportunity for you to re-revise three of your papers. In addition, you will be required to write a two to three page reflective essay. The portfolio will be due on the date of the final exam, and will serve in lieu of an in-class exam.

## **Essay Criteria**

**Focus (having a main point):** A successful paper argues a point from beginning to end, carrying the thread throughout the paper. The argument of the paper should be clear throughout, though it can be handled deftly, and needn't be hammered home repeatedly and through duplication of phrases or sentences. At all points, however, readers will be able to understand how each section of the paper fits in with the main argument. In this class papers will typically aim to answer a question about literary study itself, or will advance a particular interpretation of a literary work.

**Development of a line of thought or point:** A developed paper is one in which the main point is substantiated by textual evidence and thoughtful analysis. There are no precise rules on how to organize and develop a strong line of development. However, effective arguments generally include in-depth discussion of significant points and reasonable--persuasive--treatment of the texts and ideas under discussion. Importantly, plot summary--re-telling what happened in a given scene or in the novel as a whole--is not development and should be kept to a minimum.

**Analysis:** Papers should engage in significant analysis of text(s) and the ideas that are under discussion. Analysis is, most crudely, the work of explaining what statements or ideas mean -- it is the work of interpretation, of making meaning out of statements, evidence, and ideas. It may be helpful for writers to imagine readers' questions, in particular the questions, "Why do you say that? Why do you think that?" These questions can be asked of many statements that essay writers make.

**Clarity:** Papers need to have reasonable connections between ideas, paragraphs, and even sentences. Correct and appropriate use of language, grammar, and mechanics all contribute to the clarity and therefore the success of essays.

*Format of Written Work:* All work, including homework, must be typed and appropriately and clearly identified (essay number or homework number).

### **The Writing Center:**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the services offered by the University Writing Center, located in Dickson 285 (655-7442). At the Writing Center trained graduate assistants offer students free tutoring on all aspects of the writing process. Students are most benefited if they make regular appointments, but drop-in hours are also available. Please note: the Writing Center is not a place to drop off your paper to get it fixed!

### **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism: Definition of Plagiarism (from Student Handbook)**

"Plagiarism means the use of another's words as if they were your own, and the unacknowledged incorporation of those words in one's own work offered for credit. The following guidelines for written work will assist the student in avoiding plagiarism:

- a) General indebtedness for background information and data is acknowledged by inclusion of a bibliography of all works consulted.
- b) Specific indebtedness for a particular idea, or for a quotation of four or more words from another text, is acknowledged by footnote reference to the actual source. Quotations of 4 -5 words or more from a text are indicated by the use of quotation marks."

Honesty is expected of you. It is expected that the work you hand in will always be your own, and that you will never copy sentences, phrases, paragraphs or whole essays from any other person's work, for that is plagiarism. Plagiarism is dishonest, and against both University policy and my own. If you are ever unclear about how to cite another person or author's ideas, come see me or consult the staff in the Writing Center. We can help you do this correctly. It's important to understand that plagiarism is a big deal in this university and in my class. Don't make this mistake. Students who are caught plagiarizing will fail the course and be referred to the Dean of Student's office for disciplinary sanctions.

### **Sample Guiding Questions for Your Reading:**

How do the writers' portrayals of common phenomena match up with your own sense of such phenomena?

What aesthetic qualities does the work have? What identifiable techniques has the writer employed? In what ways are these techniques similar to those used by other writers?

What role does the writer's identity (e.g., race, class, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.) and the writer's location (e.g., in history, within literary periods, geographically) play in determining topic, style, and perspective? More generally, does the writer's identity and location matter?

What is the point of reading literature? What is gained from the study of literary texts? What is the role of literature and interpretation in our society? What ought it to be?

## Semester Schedule Overview

- Thematic Unit 1: Why Literature (two weeks – 4 page paper)  
Thematic Unit 2: Literature on Families or How We Read Literature about Families (two and a half weeks – 4 page paper)  
Thematic Unit 3: Little Red Riding Hood and Interpreting from multiple perspectives (two and a half weeks – 4 page paper)  
Thematic Unit 4: Justice (two and a half weeks – 4 page paper)  
Thematic Unit 5: *A Raisin in The Sun*: Documented Essay (two and a half weeks – 6 page paper)  
Unit 6: Portfolio Review (one week – 2 page reflective final paper)

## Semester Schedule -- Details

### Unit 1: Why Literature?

[This unit is designed to engage students in questions about the role of literature: in their own lives, in "society" broadly, and in schools. After considering these often disparate intentions, students will write an essay on their view of the appropriate--perhaps even ideal--role for literature.]

#### Week One, Class One

##### Why do we read literature?

In-Class: Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl" (39) and William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming" (handout)

Homework: Read "What is Literature? How and Why Does It Matter?" by the editors (3-13). After reading this section, including the poem and short story contained within, write a 1-2 pg. personal response to this question: How is or is not literature meaningful or important to you? How does literature function in your life? (Homework Writing 1)

#### Week One, Class Two

##### Why are we supposed to read literature?

In-Class: Sharing and discussion of homework.

Homework: Choose any single poem, short story, play or novel that you have read and find a web site, Master Plots summary, Cliff Notes or any similar text that purports to tell you what the literature is SUPPOSED to mean. Write a 1-2 pg discussion of how the "supposed to" meaning differs or is similar to your own meaning. Also, how are you affected by reading the "supposed to" interpretation? Be sure to bring in a copy or excerpt of the source you have found. (Homework Writing 2)

#### Week Two, Class One: Why do schools have us read?

In-Class: Read short selections from three schools' positions on the teaching of literature (hand-outs). [These hand-outs will include a statement from MSU, a statement from a high school, a statement from NCTE, and a statement from my own syllabus.] Discussion and preparation for first essay. In-class writing on topic: What is the role of literature in \_\_\_\_? Students will fill in the blank – for a civil society, for schools, for students, etc. For this paper you will need to write a cogent, clear and focused response to this question. Include at least one reference to a literary work--one we read or one you read for your assignment--and at least one reference to one of the commentaries on literature (from the book, from your reading for Monday, from today's hand-outs).

Homework: 2-3 page draft, typed.

### **Week Two, Class Two. Discussion of papers**

In-Class: Group peer review and peer review

Homework: Rewrite essay from peer comments and your own re-thinking. On Wednesday be sure to submit your paper along with your peers' comments, your first draft, and any notes you have taken. Papers that do not include all drafts and notes will not be accepted.

## **Unit 2: January 29 - February 14: Literature on Families or How We Read Literature about Families**

[In this unit I aim to focus on how individual readers' interpretations and reactions to literature is personally invested, while also working to develop students' abilities to specifically identify those moments in a literary text that provide meaning/interpretation, i.e., the skills of close reading. My point will not be to authorize or de-authorize students' personal investment in reading, but rather to help students become aware of and make explicit their own processes of reading and show how these processes are influenced by their own experiences and belief systems. This unit, about families, touches us so deeply (I hope) that our personal readings will be highlighted.]

### **Week Three, Class One: Introduction to Unit 2**

In-Class: (Collect papers.). Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz" (256). In-class writing. Half the students will receive one set of questions and half the students will receive another. [This writing will consist of two main questions designed to lead students to two very different readings--simplistically, abusive vs. loving father. The point of the exercise is 1) to show students how questions lead interpretations, 2) how the knowledge we bring into the poem affects interpretation, and 3) to get students to begin to identify particular lines or words to support their interpretations. After working alone to answer the worksheet, students will get in small groups and then ultimately return as a class to compare their different readings of the poem.]

Homework: Read Tobias Wolff's "The Rich Brother" (305) and Kitty Tsui's "A Chinese Banquet" (554). Choose one of the following: In a one page response explain which brother you sympathize with--Donald or Pete. Give reasons for your response, including, perhaps, reasons why you might be personally inclined to take one brother's side over the other. Or, In a one page response explain who you sympathize with: the narrator or her mother? Give reasons for your response from the text, and also from your own personal thinking. (Homework Writing 3) [In both these texts I think students beliefs and values are implicated very obviously, and therefore will help me lead a class discussion aimed at revealing how are own personal values and beliefs are implicated in our responses to reading.]

### **Week Three, Class Two: Why Do Our Interpretations Differ?**

In-Class: Discussion of student responses to Wolff and Tsui. Reading and discussion of Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" (262). [With this poem we will further the discussion of how individual readers' interpretations and reactions to literature is personally invested. I will bring in a few samples of commentaries written by young women, on web sites, who have chosen to type up and post this poem as one of their favorites poems. It's a real favorite poem for young women, it seems, and so I'd like to have the class see how others' are personally invested in their readings of literature.]

Homework: Read Amy Tan's "Two Kinds" (288) and Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" (297). In a two page response, address question 1 one page 296 [Does the cultural differences between the immigrant mother and the Americanized daughter intensify their struggle?] and also this question: Most readers are sympathetic to Maggie and not Dee. Why is that? Write a sympathetic response to Dee. (Homework Writing 4) [The point of this assignment is to further demonstrate the personal investment we have in our readings by asking students to read texts that I suspect, at some risk, that many of them will not have close cultural connection to (though some will). In class I will work to point out how the Americanized, mainstream reader may be inclined to be unsympathetic to the particular dilemmas that the children of disenfranchised parents might experience. I hope to point out that while we should acknowledge our personal positions when we read, we can also work to see beyond our personal position, allowing literature to expand rather than just affirm our views and beliefs.]

#### **Week Four, Class One: Limitations of the Personal Point of View**

In-Class: Discussion of the two stories and the limitations of reading only from a personal point of view.

Homework: Write a first draft of Essay Two (2-3 pages). Choose one literary text that we have read to explore your initial, personal interpretation of the piece and then contrast this interpretation with an alternative interpretation that you developed after further thought, discussion with peers, and class discussion. Present both interpretations by drawing on the text as well as the experiences or beliefs that support them. In the end be sure to reflect on the strengths and limitations of personal interpretation.

#### **Week Four, Class Two: Peer Review**

In-Class: Large and small group peer review. Submit paper, with your email address on the paper itself. I will respond by the end of the weekend.

Homework: Re-write essay for Wednesday, 2/12/03

#### **Week Five, Class One: Writing Workshop: Conventions, Citation and Plagiarism**

In-Class: Review of and practice in writing conventions for writing literary interpretation papers, appropriate citation, and plagiarism. Discussion of papers and work needed for the final draft.

Homework: Write final draft. On Friday be sure to submit your paper along with your peers' comments, my comments, your first draft, your mid-process draft, and any notes you have taken. Papers that do not include all drafts and notes will not be accepted.

### **Unit 3: February 14 - March 7: Little Red Riding Hood and Multiple Perspectives**

[This is largely from Alice Daken who has developed this unit as part of her graduate coursework.]

#### **Week Five, Class Two: Introduction to Unit 3**

In-Class: Introduction to the Unit

Homework: Read Charles Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood," (1573), Jakob and Wilhem Grimm's "Little Red Cap" (1576), and Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves" (1580). [May ask students to read two additional Little Red stories (most likely from either Barchers's Wise Women: Folk and Fairy Tales from Around the World, Del Rey and Kessler's Once Upon A Time: A Treasury of Modern Fairy Tales, or Donoghue's Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins)]. Write a one to two page response to the readings,

noting the similarities and differences amongst them. (Homework Writing 5)

### **Week Six, Class One: Cautionary Tales and Reading/Writing from Multiple Perspectives (Theories)**

In Class: [Discussion and Groups.] 1. What is the main story (the common story that runs through all)? Who are the characters? Are there any big differences in the texts? 2. Children's Cautionary Tales. How does this (Perrault's) story act as a caution? Why is literature a cautionary device? 3. Why so many different versions - entering theory? 4. Freewrite.

Homework: Ritual Theorist Reading and Feminist Theorist reading (For feminist reading, one suggestion is

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/4573/Lectures/feminism.html>, a short article written by *Prof. Dr. Visam Mansur*; "Ritual Theory and Practice, by Colin Low, <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/rtt.htm>).

In two pages write about one of these theories and one of the versions of Little Red Riding Hood.. How does the theory open up/explain the story? What do you notice in the story that speaks to the theory? What did you not notice until reading the theory/What did reading the theory make you notice even more? (Homework Writing 6) [You might also use the textbooks' critical theoretical articles.)

### **Week Six, Class Two: Theory**

In Class: [Discussion. Group Activity]. 1. Talking about theory. 2. In groups, make a chart that divides and explains the different versions and the theories. For example, how would the different theorists read Perrault's version? Are any of the versions specifically one thing or another? 3. Discussion of charts. What did different readings do to text?

Homework: Bring in one of your favorite children's tales (this could be a book/movie/oral-story/song/other). If you do not have the text itself to bring into class (for example, if it is a story that you had been told or a tv show you always watched), that is okay. Write a summary of your chosen tale. Then, write a list of what you think are important things in the tale (events, characters, dialogue, etc.). (Homework Writing 7)

### **Week Seven, Class One: Analyzing Your Children's Text**

In Class: [Large group, then in pairs/singularly]. 1. Short writing about text. Repeat what we did with Little Red Riding Hood to your chosen text. First, why is this text a children's text? Is it another educational or social issue? 2. Then, what does the application of different theorists do to the text? Are there any connections between your text and Little Red Riding Hood? Are there any connections in the ways that the theorists could be applied to them?

Homework: Rough Draft. Pick one theory and apply it to children's texts (one or more of the Little Red's, your in-class text). What does this theory do to the text? How does it open it up? How does it critique it? 2-3 page draft.

### **Week Seven, Class Two: Writing Workshop**

In Class: Discussion and activity for working with the rough drafts.

Homework: Mid-Process Draft. Please email it to (email address) by Monday. It should be at least 50% different than your rough draft. It must include quotes from the literary texts and theory.

### **Week Eight, Class One: Peer Review**

In Class: Group review of one author and peer review.

Homework: Final Copy (with rough draft, mid-process, and peer review).

### **Week Eight, Class Two: Paper Presentation**

In-Class: Collect papers and read several out loud.

## **SPRING BREAK**

### **Unit 4: March 19 - April 4: Justice**

[This unit addresses the place (or lack thereof) of morality in literature. It also raises the question of whether literature is reflective of a cultural attitudes or whether it has an active role in creating cultural attitudes. This unit also introduces the idea of putting literature in context; in this case Perkins "The Yellow Wallpaper" is read in the context of American late 19th century attitudes toward women and the pathologizing of women. Students will read selections that raise questions about gender justice and racial justice and will then write an essay on either an issue of gender or race.]

### **Week Nine, Class One: What is the role of morality in writing and reading?**

In-Class: Read Niemoller, "First They Came for the Jews" (1011), Cullen, "Incident" (1343), Tretheway, "Incident" (1344). Discussion: what is the role of morality for writers and for readers? What is the role of literature in engaging society in issues of justice?

Homework: Read Bambara, "The Lesson" (1148). Write a two page response about how the speakers' tone in the poems we read in class and the narrator's tone in Bambara's story affects your reading of the events these texts describe. Do Cullen's sing-songy rhythm and Bambara's use of humor lead you to take these accounts of injustice less seriously than those in Tretheway or Niemoller? Why, or why not? (Homework Writing 8)

### **Week Nine, Class Two: Gender and Justice**

In-Class: Discussion of homework and introduction of texts on gender and justice.

Homework: Read Maxine Hong Kingston, "No Name Woman" (1126) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (924). [By choosing these two different stories, both written by women and both addressing particular inequities that women experience, I hope to ignite a discussion about how literature is perhaps both/or reflective of cultural concerns and also active in instigating such concern. It's not accidental that I have chosen one text written in 1892 and another written in 1976.] Write a two page response on to what extent each of these readings is about injustice. Define what you mean by the term. (Homework Writing 9)

### **Week Ten, Class One: "The Yellow Wall Paper."**

In-Class: Read Perkins, "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper" (938), S. Weir Mitchell, From "The Evolution of the Rest Treatment," (939), and John Harvey Kellogg, From The Ladies Guide in Health and Disease (944). Discuss how these readings deepen or complicate your original response to "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Homework: Write a rough draft of Essay four for homework.

### **Week Ten, Class Two: Workshop**

In Class: Discussion and activity for working with the rough drafts. Homework: Mid-Process Draft. Please email it to (email address) by Monday. It should be at least 50% different than your rough draft. It must include quotes from the literary texts and theory.

**Week Eleven, Class One: Workshop**

In Class: Group review of one author and peer review.

Homework: Final Copy (with rough draft, mid-process, and peer review).

**Unit 5: April 4 - April 23: *A Raisin in the Sun* and the Documented Essay****Week Eleven, Class Two: Introduction**

In class: Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again" (1062), "Theme for English B" (1069), "Harlem" (1070): Small group work comparing three poems.

Homework: Begin reading Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (661-473), Write a 1-2 pg response to questions TBA on the first half of the play. (Homework Writing 10)

**Week Twelve, Class One: *Raisin***

In-Class: Discussion of homework and play

Homework: Finish reading *A Raisin in the Sun* (473-502) Write a 2 page response to the play, beginning with question 2 on pg. 503 and using evidence from the play to illustrate your point (Homework Writing 11)

**Week Twelve, Class Two: Universality?**

In-class: Discussion of homework and end of play.

Homework: Write a 3-4 page rough draft of an essay on *A Raisin in the Sun*. Essay topic (from question 5 on pg. 503): Do you think this play is universal in its truths and concerns, or are you more inclined to see it as specifically about African Americans? Explain. In what ways is this 1959 play relevant to life in the United States today?

**Week Thirteen, Class One: *A Raisin in the Sun* in context**

In-class: As a class explore "A Web Assignment" (521), as well as scholarly articles about the play. [The point of these readings--offered to provide cultural context for the play--is to have students get other perspectives on the historical and cultural relevance of this play, as well as nonhistorical and universal interpretations of it. After having already committed and really thought through their own perspectives in a first rough draft, reading these texts will, ideally, allow students to think further on their topics without simply falling into line with what a more experienced professional writer argues.]

Homework: Write a mid-process draft of your essay in light of what you have just read in class. Incorporate at least three sources into your new draft. Submit a copy of your paper to me by Friday's class. You will receive feedback by Monday.

**Week Thirteen, Class Two: Documenting Your Essay**

In-Class: Peer Review and discussion of appropriate documentation

Homework: Complete final draft of essay

**Unit 6: Portfolio Review**

A portfolio is a collection of a writer's work from a given period of time. This collection will consist of three of the essays you have written this semester and a short final essay, "Me as a Reader." This portfolio will reflect your very best work, and to achieve that aim, you will need to revise your essays from the comments I have made and from your own careful re-reading of your essays. Finally, you need to grammatically correct and proofread your essays.

### *1. The Essays*

Review and revise all of your essays, using the comments that your peers and I have written, and also your own insights as you re-read your essays. These revised essays are the most important part of your portfolio. With perhaps one or two exceptions, you ought to add substantially to each of your three essays. I am imagining that successful essays will include several new paragraphs as well as some significant cutting of old materials. When I evaluate your work I am looking to see that you have conquered the big challenges of college writing: focus, development, analysis, organization and editing. With each essay you must include a paragraph "preface" explaining the changes you've made to your essay. Describe what you've done to improve your essay, using the criteria I've established (focus, development, etc.). Make sure you include two versions: the old one and the new one. It might also be useful to put new sections in "bold." That way we can really see where you have revised.

### *2. Final Essay, "Me as a Reader."*

This essay is a short, 2-3 page essay describing and explaining your preferred process as a reader and interpreter of literature. What is the function of literature for you? How do you interpret it?

### **Week Fourteen, Class one: Portfolio Review**

### **Week Fourteen, Class Two: Portfolio Review**

Portfolio is due on exam day.