Introduction to Writing About Literature

Hunter College – Spring 2026

English 220-01

Imagining Lost Worlds: Literature and the Tyranny of the Present

220-02: Class meets Mondays and Wednesdays at 10:00AM – 11:15AM, East 109

220-04: Class meets Mondays and Wednesdays at 8:30AM – 9:45AM, East 109

Instructor: Jon Rachmani

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Zoom link: https://marymount.zoom.us/j/6384340349

Office : 1238 HW

Office hours : Wednesdays, 11:20AM-12:20PM, (please simply approach me after class if you would like to meet during this period, otherwise we can meet over Zoom at another time that's mutually convenient.)

Welcome!

With an emphasis on close reading, English 220 is intended to develop in students the analytical and interpretive skills necessary for both written and verbal critical response to literature that is firmly grounded in the text. It also establishes a common knowledge base in literature in English, and it equips students with the vocabulary and techniques for describing and analyzing literary works, with an emphasis on developing critical writing skills specific to literary analysis. In addition, the course develops in students an appreciation and understanding of the aesthetic qualities of literature, as well as an awareness that literature is part of a larger ongoing cultural, social, and historical dialogue that informs, influences, and inspires our experience.

Learning Outcomes

1. Write a thesis-driven analytical essay of 4-5 pages that incorporates evidence from the literary text and demonstrates close reading skills.
2. Write a 6-8 page analytical research paper of at least 2,000 words that demonstrates close reading skills and the appropriate use of evidence from literary texts; the ability to create a clear

thesis statement; and the ability to engage various source types, including scholarly critical sources as part of a well-organized, thesis-driven argument.
3. Discuss fiction, poetry, and Shakespearean drama verbally through the use of close reading skills and, where appropriate, basic literary terminology.
4. Demonstrate some familiarity with literary criticism in class discussion or writing, or both.
5. Demonstrate the ability to compare and/or contrast two literary works.

Required Texts

We are using physical copies (paper books) of the text below.

- ISBN: *Macbeth*. William Shakespeare. (You must have a **paper copy** of the play (any edition is okay other than the "No Fear Shakespeare" edition, which you should **not** use) available at the Hunter College Bookstore or on Amazon or other booksellers, used or new.)

In this course, we are using MLA style. Here are two MLA guides:

- MLA Style |How To Format In MLA | Excelsior OWL
- MLA Formatting and Style Guide (Purdue OWL)

Here is an MLA-style essay template: MLA Essay Template | Excelsior Online Writing Lab

Literary Terms Guide: The Oregon State Guide to English Literary Terms (You are only responsible for the terms we are using in our class.)

Please note: Any other required texts (as noted on the syllabus) are posted on Brightspace or are available online (and linked on this syllabus) and/or handed out.

In addition:

- Make sure you have access to your **Hunter email** (and you check it regularly). If you need help with Brightspace and/or your Hunter email, you should contact Hunter's helpdesk: Get Help — Hunter College.

Grading Breakdown and Major Assignments

Your grade will be determined in approximately the following way:

- Essay 1: 25%
- Research Essay 30%
- Presentation: 10%
- Attendance: 15%
- In-class Participation*: 20%

*This considers both the quantity and quality of participation in daily class discussions and does not including your in-class presentations. **Please always come to class ready to discuss the reading for the day.**

General Requirements for Assignments

→ Students must complete all the major writing assignments in order to be eligible to earn a passing grade in the course.
→ Students are required to complete the ungraded scaffolded writing assignments (including any rough draft/s) that lead up to the final drafts in order to receive full credit for the assignment.
→ Essays must meet the minimum word count/page length requirement in order to receive credit. So, for example, if the assignment asks for 4-5 pages, this means that your writing should go on to the fifth page (since you will have a heading on your first page). Extra spacing or larger font does not count. Essays that do not meet the minimum length requirement will fail.
→ All assignments, including informal homework assignments, should be typed according to MLA academic paper format (name, date, standard one-inch margins, 12 point font, a Works Cited page formatted in MLA style).
→ Students must submit all written work through Brightspace in order to receive credit for the work. (Please do not email assignments to me.)
→ I do not accept late work unless we've made prior arrangements for that.

Important Class Policies

I want to do a great job for you and I want us to have a great class. In order for that to happen, you need to do your job too. Please take careful note of these important class policies.

Class Policies

Classroom Conduct:

- ***All cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices must be turned off and put away before class.*** **Text messaging or use of any electronic devices is forbidden during class. Using your phone surreptitiously under your desk is still disruptive – please do not do it! I will stop class to ask you to put away any device you may be using.**
- **Note taking on computers of any sort is not permitted.** The same applies to the use of recording devices.
- Drinks are permitted, but food is not. Eating during class is disruptive. If you need a snack, plan to eat before you get to class.
- **Please use the bathroom *before* class**. If you have an emergency and need to leave for the bathroom during class, please do so silently, without letting the door slam, and return as soon as you are able. Leaving to get a snack or use your phone or go for a walk to contemplate existence is not acceptable. Getting up and leaving constitutes a disruption and should not be done unless strictly necessary. If you regularly leave class I will begin to mark you as late or absent.
- **Participation is *required*.** You cannot achieve higher than 85% credit for the class without speaking regularly in class. You must bring your text and your reading notes to class, ready to join the discussion. Please volunteer your ideas. I will, however, sometimes call on people to share their interpretations and ideas.

Absences/Lateness:

- **Please arrive on time for class. Lateness will be marked and will affect your grade. We all have to take the trains and sometimes they are late, so please factor this into your daily travel plans.**

- **If you arrive late to class please come in *as quietly as possible* so as to minimize the disturbance to the class.**
- **Three instances of lateness are equivalent to one absence.** Late means arriving after the first 5 minutes of class. If you have missed roll call, you will be counted as "absent" until you see me after class.
- If you are feeling significantly sick, please do not come to class. Your health and that of our class and community is a priority and you will not be penalized for missing class due to serious illness. **You should never come to class if you are feeling sick with COVID symptoms or have a fever from flu or other respiratory infection.** Class work missed for illness-related reasons can be made up remotely or once you are feeling well.
- **If you miss a class it is your responsibility to contact a classmate for the missed assignments. Please do not ask me for missed assignments via email. If you need clarification of the missed assignment, please see me after class or during office hours.**

Some General College Classroom Norms

- Students attend each class session and arrive on time.
- Students are prepared and organized with appropriate materials, and ready to learn.
- Students maturely and thoughtfully engage in class discussions and activities.
- Students take notes during class and review them during the semester. You need a dedicated notebook and folder for our class. You need to come to class with these things as well as a pen and/or pencil.
- Students ask questions when they do not understand something.
- Students do not walk out of class while it is in session and do not leave early. (If you must use the facilities, please do so quickly and quietly.)
- Students treat the professor and each other in a respectful and polite manner.

Participation/Discussion/Collaboration

This is a class in which your presence and your voice matter! Our class encourages student-centered learning, which means that students are active participants in the class.

In English 220, in-class participation includes:

- contributing to class discussion by responding to instructors' and classmates' questions, posing questions, and commenting on relevant aspects of the subject
- attentive listening to classmates and instructor
- contributing to group activities, presentations, and peer review sessions
- bringing to class discussion questions and reading those questions aloud as part of full class and smaller group activities
- undertaking in-class writing assignments and quizzes
- meeting in conference with the instructor on those occasions when the instructor has set aside class time for individual conferences
- bringing to class assigned formal response papers and reading from them when called upon to do so either as part of class discussion or a group activity
- posting to class discussion boards and/or blogs if assigned to do so.

Attendance

→ Attendance is one of the most important ingredients for your success (in this class, in college in general, in your career, and in life.) Moreover, because of the highly collaborative nature of this class, your attendance is vital to our community. Therefore, **you are expected to attend each and every class.**
→ You are allowed three absences without penalty. For each absence after three, your overall grade will go down to the next lowest grade. (For example, after the fourth absence, an A becomes an A-.)
→If there are extenuating circumstances affecting your ability to attend class (for example, if you were to contract a serious illness), please contact me.
→ If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain necessary information about the missed class from another student so please make sure to get the phone numbers and/or email addresses of a couple of classmates.
→ Missing most of the class, being excessively underprepared, leaving class for extended periods of time, and/or sleeping in class count as being absent.
→ **Please note:** Students must attend class regularly and fully complete the major writing assignments (with passing grades) in order to earn a passing grade in the course.

Plagiarism

Your own work consists of two things: your ideas + your own words. Using ideas that are not your own and using language that is not your own (without acknowledgement) are forms of cheating called plagiarism. Please know that I really want to hear and help you develop **your ideas** and **your voice**.

Plagiarism definition

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It consists of various things that alter either your ideas and/or your writing. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Word-for-word copying without acknowledging the other writer/s
- Paraphrasing someone else's ideas without acknowledgement
- Having another person write or dictate to you all or part of your essay or homework
- Using AI software to write all or part of your essay or homework for you
- Using AI software to alter your own language (even just to make things "sound better" to you)
- Using AI software to translate your work into English
- Using AI software to "read" the work of literature and/or criticism for you
- Using AI to generate the ideas and/or argument for your essay

→ If you use someone else's ideas (even if you are paraphrasing), you must cite those ideas when you are using them with a parenthetical citation.
→ If you use words from someone else, you must put those words in quotation marks or set them aside as a blocked quotation and include a parenthetical citation. (This applies to even the briefest phrases if they are distinctive.)
→ There is no need for you to use an AI program in this class to generate ideas, or to "brainstorm." "Brainstorming" with AI does not lead to original work—it makes everyone say the same things.
→ There is no need for you to use an AI program in this class to paraphrase your language. While this kind of "paraphrasing" may "sound good" to you, it doesn't sound good to me!
→ There is no need for you to use an AI program in this class to research. AI is often factually incorrect and often makes up research.
→ So, for the purposes of English 220, **using an AI program for any part of your work is not permitted and will count as plagiarism**.

Plagiarism consequences

Plagiarism is serious.
→ Plagiarized work receives **no credit** (0%)
→ Students who plagiarize are referred to the Dean's office. Most likely, **all forms of plagiarism will result in an automatic failure for the course**, and may even result in a notation on your transcript and/or academic probation or suspension.
→ Plagiarizing **cheats you** out of the learning experience you deserve.

Learning how to read difficult texts, think through complex ideas, and communicate your ideas in writing is not always an easy process, and sometimes it can be hard. It also takes time. If you are under stress and/or insecure about your own voice, please resist any temptations to plagiarize because plagiarizing will end up weakening your confidence and intellectual development. Instead, please talk to me and we'll work together to figure out better strategies.

Hunter College Academic Integrity Policy

You can find more about Hunter's plagiarism policy here Academic Integrity | Hunter College, which states:

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Electronics Policy

We are using paper copies of readings, and you should be annotating and engaging closely with those readings. (You will be able to bring them to the exam.) At times, we may look at images or use Google docs in class, which you can access through your laptops. However, studies consistently show that we learn better by taking notes by hand, so you should have a dedicated notebook (or section of a notebook) for this class as well. Phones should always be put away.

Electronic Communication (Emails)

In our class, I'd like to employ some practices that will be helpful for you not only in college, but in your job searches and in your careers. To that end, please treat emails in a professional manner. Here are some basic guidelines:

- All emails in this class should be written in Standard Written English--no abbreviations or textisms. Please capitalize properly.
- Please put ENGL 220, Section # in the subject line of all emails and allow 48 hours for a response. I do not respond to email outside of normal business hours, including over weekends or holidays.
- Begin with a greeting and end with your name. (Please address me as _____.)
- Any communication not following these guidelines may go unanswered.

You can read more about professional email etiquette here: 28 Email Etiquette Rules for the Workplace | Indeed.com

In addition

→ You should talk to me outside of class if you encounter any problems with the course so that we can resolve such issues early on. If you have extenuating circumstances that require a modification of certain policies, please let me know and we will work it out.

Resources

Office Hours

→ What are office hours?

Office hours are dedicated hours set aside for students to talk with their professors individually. A conversation between us will typically take 15-20 minutes. You may stop by my scheduled office hours at any point—no appointment needed—and I hope you do!

→ Why go to office hours? During office hours, we can:

- Go over your work.
- Discuss a grade more fully.
- Chat more about something we are learning in class.
- Discuss problems or issues you may be having in class.

They are also a great time just to connect and say hi!

A few important things to note:

- I am happy to look at—and discuss—work in progress with you. However, if you'd like a tutoring session, you can sign up for that at the Writing Center (see the information below).
- I may ask you to make an appointment with me if there is something we need to discuss.
- My office hours and location are listed on the first page of the syllabus.
- "By appointment" means that you may schedule a specific time to talk. Sometimes my office hours get very busy. If this is the case, I will ask that you let me know when you'd like to see me, so we schedule some uninterrupted time to talk.

Writing Help

In addition to my office hours or an appointment with me, **I strongly encourage you to take advantage of Hunter's wonderful Rockowitz Reading and Writing Center**. The writing tutors are trained readers and provide an invaluable audience during the writing and revision process. They are available for **live video sessions**, **e-tutoring**, and **ongoing weekly sessions**. Here is the link to the RWC's website and the scheduling website. Here is the link to the Introducing the Writing Center video. The Writing Center appointments get filled quickly. Make sure to plan in advance.

English Language Help

If you are in the process of learning English, here are some English Language Learning resources (in addition to the Writing Center):

- ESL Resources for Students — Hunter College
- CUNY Adult Literacy/HSE/ESL Program – The City University of New York
- Free English Classes for Adults | The New York Public Library

Tech Help

Hunter Information Technology Services are located here: IT Services — Hunter College
Brightspace Help: Student – The City University of New York
Hunter offers a **laptop loan program for students,** which you can find out about here:
Equipment | Hunter College

Hunter Counseling Services

Hunter's Office of Counseling and Wellness provides mental health counseling, health promotion, and education programs aimed at enhancing your quality of life and maximizing your personal and academic growth and development.
Counseling Services | Hunter College
Counseling Resources | Hunter College

Emergency Help

Emergency Support and Resources | Hunter College (includes food assistance, emergency funding, long-term laptop loan program for students, subsidized internet service, immigration assistance)

Additional Important and Helpful Hunter College Links

- Academic Calendar | Hunter College
- 68th Street Campus Map | Hunter College
- Hunter College Libraries
- Career Center | Hunter College
- Hunter Learning Centers and Tutoring (Language, Math, Writing, Science)
- Hunter Drop-In Peer Advising @ The Sylvia E. Fishman Student Center (HW 417)
- Hunter Student Guide for Transfers
- Hunter Immigrant Student Success Center
- Hunter Student Clubs
- Education Abroad | Hunter College
- Office of the Arts | Hunter College
- Resource Share and Care for Students (with further descriptions of services as well as more information for learning centers in different disciplines and study spaces)

Hunter College Policies

Hunter College Academic Accommodation Statement

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/or Learning) consult the Office of ACCESSability located in Room 1124 East to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212-772-4857) /TTY (212-650-3230).

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College:

- Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
- All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.
- CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct

Emotional Wellbeing

While college can – and should - be an intellectually challenging and rigorous experience, you deserve not to suffer emotional pain and distress. Hunter College offers mental health services for any student who needs help for any reason. Please don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Simply not coming to class is not an ideal solution. Please reach out to me if you have having difficulties. Hunter College also offers excellent mental health services that I encourage you to utilize. Here is the link for Hunter's Counseling

Services: https://hunter.cuny.edu/students/health-wellness/counseling-and-wellness-services/counseling-services/

Class Schedule

(*Subject to change at instructor's discretion*)

Note: Readings must be completed and homework must be done on the day it is listed in this schedule. Please make sure to always bring the readings for the day with you and be prepared to take notes. You will need a dedicated notebook (or section of a notebook) as well as a folder and pens/pencils for notetaking in our class. In order to respond to your needs in this course, I may make adjustments to this schedule. I will notify you of any changes, and will update the course Brightspace site. There may be some additional short readings, which I will provide via Brightspace and/or online.

Section One: Drama

Monday, January 26th: Introductions; What is the purpose of literature? The importance of writing; Shakespeare – the basics

Wednesday, January 28th: Introduction to reading Shakespeare (please bring your copy of the play if you can. If not, I will be projecting the text for everyone to follow along, but just for today. You must have your text in class starting next class.)

Monday, February 2nd: Shakespeare, Act I

Wednesday, February 4th: Shakespeare, Act II, Presentations

Monday, February 9th: Shakespeare, Act III, Presentations

Wednesday, February 11th: Shakespeare, Act IV, Presentations

Monday, February 16th: **NO CLASSES**

Wednesday, February 18th: Shakespeare, Act V, Presentations

Monday, February 23rd: Workshop of essays with focus on introductions and thesis statements
First Draft Due – make sure to bring two hard copies of your paper to class ready to share and discuss

Wednesday, February 25th: Clips from film versions of *Mabeth*
Paper #1 Due by End of the Day via Brightspace

Section Two: Prose Fiction (The Short Story)

Monday, March 2nd: Forster, "The Machine Stops"; Presentations

Wednesday, March 4th: Borges, "The Library of Babel"; Presentations

Monday, March 9th: Kafka, "A Country Doctor," and "A Hunger Artist"; Presentations

Wednesday, March 11th: Kafka, "In the Penal Colony", Presentations

Monday, March 16th: Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu"; Presentations

Wednesday, March 18th: Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas"; Presentations

Monday, March 23rd: Butler, "Speech Sounds"; Presentations

Wednesday, March 25th: Delany, "Aye, and Gomorrah"; Presentations

Monday, March 30th: Dick, "The Minority Report"; Presentations

Wednesday, April 1st: **NO CLASSES**

Monday, April 6th: **NO CLASSES**

Wednesday, April 8th: **NO CLASSES**

Monday, April 13th: Liu, "The Perfect Match"; Presentations

Wednesday, April 15th: **In-class Midterm** (Remember to bring a copy of your selected short story to class.)

Section 3: Lyric Poetry

Monday, April 20th: Emily Dickinson; Presentations

Wednesday, April 22nd: Emily Dickinson; Presentations

Monday, April 27th: Emily Dickinson; Presentations

Wednesday, April 29th: Robert Browning; Presentations
Annotated Bibliography Due – submit via Brightspace

Monday, May 4th: William Butler Yeats; Presentations

Wednesday, May 6th: Elizabeth Bishop; Presentations

Monday, May 11th: Articles on Stories, TBD; sample papers

Wednesday, May 13th: Discussion of editing and proofreading; Peer-review workshop of drafts
First Drafts of Final Paper Due – have two copies of your paper ready for class

Monday, May 19th: **FINAL EXAMS – NO CLASSES**

Wednesday, May 22nd: **FINAL EXAMS – NO CLASSES**
Final Paper Due by End of the Day via Blackboard