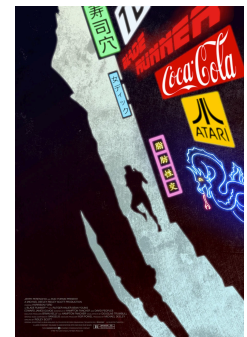
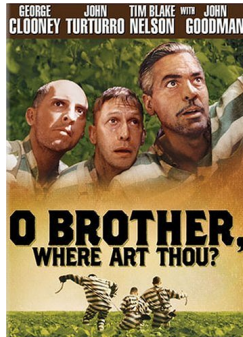
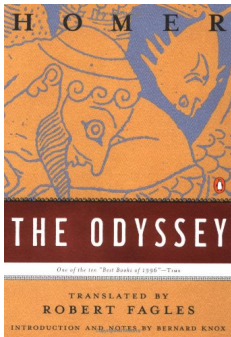


# ENGL 230: GREAT NARRATIVE WORKS

## FALL 2015 COURSE SYLLABUS



Instructor: Adrian McClure  
Office Hours: Monday 2:30-4:00 PM and by appointment, Heavilon G47  
Class meeting time and location: MWF 1:30-2:20 in Room # Building  
Email: [ajmclclur@purdue.edu](mailto:ajmclclur@purdue.edu)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will investigate how great narrative works both reflect and respond to particular sociocultural contexts and speak to readers across time and space with powerful immediacy. Over the course of the semester, you will get actively involved in reading and interpreting narrative works across a broad range of genres and contexts, from time-honored classics like Homer's *Odyssey* to the Coen brothers' zany but thought-provoking 2000 film adaptation, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* A recurrent focus of the course will be "myth-busting": I want to challenge preconceptions students often have about "the boring classics" and to highlight the captivating commonalities that link the great narrative literature of the past and present.

Literary interpretation is a dynamic process that demands engagement. Through a wide range of class activities, from regular small-group discussions to impromptu role playing to classroom debates, you will learn that interpreting texts becomes much more satisfying when you avoid pre-packaged approaches to the material (like Spark Notes) and view them with fresh eyes and from unfamiliar angles.

Class requirements include regular class attendance and participation, three 750-word papers, and a take-home final. There will be two evening screenings of movies in place of daytime class meetings.

### LEARNING GOALS

- To promote overall engagement with literature
- To expose students to a wide variety of narrative genres from different cultures and periods
- To enable students to recognize recurring themes in literature, and to analyze literary texts both orally and in written form with increasing skill and confidence
- To investigate what makes a narrative work "great"
- To have some fun along the way

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Most of our course readings are either available online or can be downloaded from scanned copies posted on Blackboard. Here are the texts you will be required to actually purchase:

1. Homer, *The Odyssey*, transl. Richard Fagles, Penguin Classics, ISBN-10: 0140268863  
NOTE: You *MUST* use the Fagles translation; this edition is only \$10 on Amazon
2. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*, ed. by Mark Hussey, Harcourt (annotated edition), ISBN  
10: 0156031515

**COURSE SCHEDULE: UNIT READINGS and ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES**

Readings (and movie viewings) are divided into three thematically linked units designed to get you thinking about how great narrative works are both a product of their time and speak to readers across the ages. We will finish up with Virginia Woolf's time-traveling *Orlando*, a playful exploration of how literary, gender, and cultural narratives periodically mutate across the ages from the Elizabethan to the modern era.

NOTE: A more detailed weekly course schedule is available on Blackboard.

**Unit 1. EPIC ROAD TRIPS**

*In this unit, we will be keeping company with "Wily Odysseus" as he wends his way homeward from the Trojan War to Ithaca, and then compare this epic "road trip" to that of an escaped convict's struggle to return home to his straying wife in the Coen brother's 2001 film O Brother, Where Art Thou?, which gives Homer top billing in the screenwriting credits. Putting these two texts into conversation should thoroughly debunk the "myth" that ancient narratives are all about living up to rigid norms and that scrappy, seat-of-the-pants antiheroes are a purely modern invention. We will also begin to investigate a set of key concerns that will occupy us throughout the semester: deciding what makes narrative works "great," exploring how texts are shaped by their context, interrogating ideas of "authorship," and thinking about how texts portray gender identity.*

**WEEK 1 (Aug. 24-28)**

- **Introduction to Course** M
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 1-3 W
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 4-6 F

**WEEK 2 (Aug. 30-Sept. 4)**

- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 7-9 M
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 10-12 W
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 13-15 F

**WEEK 3 (Sept. 7-12)**

- **NO CLASS LABOR DAY** M
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 16-18 W
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 19-21 F

**WEEK 4 (Sept. 14-18)**

- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books 23-24 M
- Class debate: Was Odysseus worth the wait? W
- ABC's of Academic Writing F
  - **First paper assigned**

WEEK 5 (Sept. 21-25)

- EVENING MOVIE: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (no daytime class session) M
- Movie discussion W
- What bad narratives can teach us: *Ulysses 31*, Episode 24 (shown in class) F

**Unit 2. TRANSFORMATIONS: WEREWOLF STORIES**

*This set of readings is designed to upset the widespread myth that medieval literature is drab, dull, and repressively orthodox. In fact, as Marie de France’s playful werewolf story, “Bisclavret,” amply demonstrates, bizarre blends of fantasy and reality and playful mixing of the high and the low were a staple of medieval narratives. Then, jumping across the centuries, we will compare Marie’s appropriation of folktales for a twelfth-century courtly audience to two modern short stories that also draw on folktales and involve werewolf transformation—Angela Carter’s “The “Werewolf,” and “Wolf Alice”—and we’ll wrap things up with Ursula K. Le Guin’s thought-provoking twist on werewolf narratives, “The Wife’s Story.” In this unit, we will delve further into changing approaches to authorship and expand our investigation into how texts reflect, respond to, and may seek to challenge gender norms.*

WEEK 6 (Sept. 27-Oct. 2)

- Marie de France, “Bisclavret,” first half of lai M
- Marie de France, “Bisclavret,” second half of lai W
- Classroom Court: Should Bisclavret’s wife be awarded damages for her bitten-off nose? F

WEEK 7 (Oct. 5-9)

- Angela Carter, “The Werewolf” M
- Angela Carter, “Wolf-Alice” W
- Ursula K. LeGuin, “The Wife’s Story” F
  - **First paper due**

WEEK 8 (Oct. 12-16)

- NO CLASS OCT. BREAK M
- Medieval Werewolf Coda: Gerald of Wales’s story of the priest and the werewolf couple from *Historia Topographia*; also consult British Library illuminated manuscript link on Blackboard W
- Class Performance Activity: Werewolf Mash-up F
  - **Second paper assigned**

**Unit 3. TALES OF SCIENCE**

*Our next encounter with great narrative works begins by focusing on texts from the Romantic Era. In part, this unit is designed to show science, math, and engineering majors that (contrary to popular belief) literature has been deeply engaged with the STEM disciplines since the dawn of the scientific revolution and has important things to say to them.. Once again, gender and authorship will loom large, and issues of point-of-view and unreliable narrators assume special importance. The unit concludes with a viewing of a modern classic that explores the troubled interface between scientific progress and humanistic values, Ridley Scott’s 1982 film Blade Runner.*

WEEK 9 (Oct. 19-23)

- Introduction from Penguin Classics Edition (on Blackboard) M
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Author’s Preface to the 1831 edition; also read through Letter IV of 1818 edition (Romantic Circles online edition; link on Blackboard) W
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, finish Vol. I (Chaps. 1-7) F

WEEK 10 (Oct. 26-30)

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Vol. II, Chaps. 1-5 M

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Vol. II, Chaps. 6-9 W
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Vol. III, Chaps. 1-4 F
  - **Second paper due**

## WEEK 11 (Nov. 2-6)

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, rest of Vol. III (Chap. 5-Walton's Continuation) M
- Class Debate: Does the Creature Deserve a Mate? W
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" F

## WEEK 12 (Nov. 9-13)

- EVENING MOVIE: Ridley Scott's 1982 *Blade Runner* M
- Discussion of movie W
- Class Performance Activity: Marginal Mutants Unite! F
  - **Third paper assigned**

**Unit 4. A NARRATIVE ROMP THROUGH GENDER AND TIME**

*Our final unit focuses on a single work—Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel, Orlando: A Biography—that, if nothing else, decisively explodes the myth that modernist authors had no sense of humor! We will follow the novel's unflappable hero/heroine through three hundred years of mutating gender conventions, literary forms, and shifting zeitgeists, from the Elizabethan era through the roaring twenties, as we ponder what this wild ride means for the ideas about great narrative works we've been exploring all semester.*

## WEEK 13 (Nov. 16-20)

- *Orlando*, Introduction M
- *Orlando*, Chapter 1 W
- *Orlando*, Chapter 2 F

## WEEK 14 (Nov. 23-27)

- Class canceled to compensate for extended time of movie showings M
- NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK W
- NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK F

## WEEK 15 (Nov. 30-Dec. 4)

- *Orlando*, Chapter 3 M
- *Orlando*, Chapter 4 W
- *Orlando*, Chapter 5 F
  - **Third Paper Due**

## WEEK 16 (Dec. 7-11)

- *Orlando*, Chapter 6 M
- Class Performance Activity: Gallery of Contemporary and Future Orlandos W
- Semester Wrap-up F

## FINALS WEEK (Dec. 14-18)

- Final take-home exam available to download on Blackboard beginning Sunday, Dec. 12, 9am
- Submit completed exam on Blackboard by Thursday, Dec. 17 by 5pm

**Please note: This course schedule is highly condensed and may also require unforeseen changes. I expect you to check both your Purdue email and Blackboard regularly for details and updates!**

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:**

- **20% Discussion/Participation**
  - As noted above, class participation in class activities is a key component of this course. If, for whatever reason, you do not feel comfortable with this, see me to arrange an alternative form of assessment.
- **60% Three papers**
  - Each paper will be 750 words (approximately 3 pages); I will hand out a list of possible topics two weeks in advance.
  - There will be extensive discussion—and training—prior to the first paper in order to review the conventions of academic writing and set out my expectations.
  - I encourage every student to submit a preliminary draft for the first paper to me at least a week and a half before the final due date. (I've build in extra time for this.) Use of the Purdue Writing Lab is also encouraged.
- **20% Take-Home Final Exam**
  - This is an essay exam that will ask you to make connections among texts and synthesize key themes and concepts we have been discussing in class all semester.

**GRADING SCALE:**

I assign all grades using a +/- system; for example, 90-92% = A-, 93-96% = A, 97-100% = A+. You will be given rubrics for your papers that specify the exact grading criteria. Here's a general overview of what grading categories mean with regard to the written work in this course (adapted from ICaP guidelines):

- “A” work is work of distinction. You've turned in a paper that's a pleasure to read. You met or exceeded all the assignment requirements and exhibited originality and creativity in your ideas, in your rhetorical (persuasive) approach, and/or in your style.
- “B” work is work of high quality. “B” papers meet all the assignment requirements, and the writing is persuasive and skillful.
- “C” work shows competence. You did what the assignment asked, but there may be areas that are incompletely developed or need further revision. Style is straightforward but unremarkable.
- “D” work is work of low quality. You responded to the assignment and made some valid points, but there are stylistic problems and gaps in your writing that bring readers up short. Unclear sentence construction, editing mistakes, and/or weak or meandering organization may detract from or obscure your underlying argument.
- “F” work generally stems from failing to attend class, failing to turn in work, or failing to put any real effort into the writing process.

**COURSE POLICIES:**

*My first policy is that all policies have occasional exceptions, and you should always get in touch with me if you think you have a valid case for one.*

**ATTENDANCE:** Because participation and discussion are so important in this course, attendance will be taken. My policy is that you are allowed three “free passes”; after that, your final course grade will be lowered by approximately one-third of a grading level ( $3\frac{1}{3}$  percentage points) per unexcused absence, unless you provide me with documentation like a doctor's note or else make an arrangement in advance. Since the unexpected happens, this means you should probably hold on to those free passes for times you truly need them.

**GRIEF ABSENCE POLICY:** Absences associated with a death in the family are always excused, and I will find ways for you to make up any missed work. All you need to do in this situation is to contact the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS), and they will take care of notifying all your instructors.

**LATE ARRIVALS:** Since late arrivals are disruptive for the whole class, please be sure to arrive on time; multiple late arrivals will harm your participation grade.

**LATE WORK:** Late work is accepted without penalty ONLY when there are extenuating circumstances such as a genuine emergency; otherwise, your grade on the assignment is docked 20% for every day it is late. I am, however, willing to consider extensions on assignments when you contact me in advance by email and make a convincing case for why you need one.

**CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS:** As in any college classroom, you are expected to treat the views of others with respect. Using electronics (except for note-taking) and conversing during class are not permitted since they negatively impact the learning environment for all. (Habitual texting or chatting—except as part of assigned group work—will most definitely harm your participation grade, and in extreme cases, I may ask you to leave class.)

**ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:**

Plagiarism is the act of appropriating another person’s work, in whole or in part, and treating it as your own. Here is the Purdue English Department’s definition of plagiarism:

*When writers use material from other sources, they must acknowledge this source. Not doing so is called plagiarism, which means using without credit the ideas or expression of another. You are therefore cautioned: (1) against using, word for word, without acknowledgement, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. from the printed or manuscript material of others; (2) against using with only slight changes the materials of another; (3) against using the general plan, the main headings, or a rewritten form of someone else’s material. These cautions apply to the work of other students as well as to the published work of professional writers.*

We will be reviewing how to cite the work of others properly when the first paper is assigned. Note that if you plagiarize work in this course, you will receive an “F” on the assignment.

Finally, be aware that all Blackboard Learn assignments in this course are automatically submitted to plagiarism-checking software (Safeassign).

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

I have a strong personal commitment to working with students with disabilities. If you have a disability that requires academic accommodations (as documented by the Disability Resource Center at Purdue), please make an appointment to speak with me within the first three weeks of the semester—the sooner, the better!—so needed modifications can be implemented as quickly as possible.

**CAMPUS EMERGENCY:**

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are three ways to get information about changes in this course:

- 1) Check Blackboard.
- 2) Check your email--**You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.**
- 3) Email me at [ajmclur@purdue.edu](mailto:ajmclur@purdue.edu)

**For more information about Emergency Preparedness, see [http://www.purdue.edu/epps/emergency\\_preparedness/](http://www.purdue.edu/epps/emergency_preparedness/)**

**FINAL NOTE:** I care about my students as individuals. If at any point in the semester, you should find yourself feeling overwhelmed or struggling to cope, please get in touch with me.