

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY COURSE SYLLABUS SPRING 2012
ENGLISH 200: READING LITERATURE (ONLINE)

Contact:

Professor David Harrity | 502-410-9441 (call no later than 6 p.m. EST) | david.harrity@wku.edu

*“Do not think yourself better because you burn up
friends and enemies with long-range missiles without
ever seeing what you have done.”*

—Thomas Merton

YOUR CONTINUED ENROLLMENT IN THIS CLASS CONSTITUTES AN ACCEPTANCE OF ALL OUTLINED POLICIES
AND EFFECTIVELY MAKES THIS DOCUMENT A LEARNING CONTRACT.

GENERAL INFORMATION

DEPARTMENTAL MISSION STATEMENT AND PHILOSOPHY

Writing and critical reading are highly individualized and collaborative processes that can be improved with focused instruction and continued practice. Writing and critical reading cannot be taught by reduced, simplistic, and prescribed formulas, and teaching students to write and read at the college level is an on-going and complex activity that must be a function of the entire university and not just of the English faculty. Writing and reading pedagogy in general education courses should emphasize the acquisition of rhetorical and critical facility in thinking, writing, and reading and should encourage students to employ language, convention, and style in a manner that is appropriate to the various rhetorical situations they will encounter as students and as professionals.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 200 is an introductory study of fiction, poetry, and drama demonstrating techniques by which literary artists reflect human experience. Substantial student writing about literature will be required.

For our section of this class we will be examining literature about war. We will read two novels, one full book of poetry, and watch three films. Other readings such as poems, essays, and lectures will be required, but will be provided by the instructor. We will also do much writing about literature, both formal and informal. More details of assignments, activities, and methods are outlined in the following pages.

COURSE METHODOLOGY

By the end of this course, each student will develop skills in the following areas:

- Confidence in writing and the writing process.
- Comfort in collaborative assignments, using both their own texts and the texts of other students.
- Read college-level essays and literature in several genres and comment critically in writing and in class discussion on their meaning and structure.
- Use research strategies for specialized assignments.
- Exhibit confidence in reading, discussing, and writing about literature.

Students will develop and demonstrate these skills through various informal writing assignments including blogging, discussion boards and creative writing, presentations, and formal critical papers. Rubrics and guidelines will be provided for all formal assignments.

THE LEARNING CENTER (COPIED FROM CENTER WEBSITE)

Our mission is to promote student success, enhance student performance, and increase student retention. We help students become better learners. Please use this website to learn more about our services and to gain immediate access to great study techniques.

Currently enrolled WKU students should make appointments for one-on-one tutoring via our [online scheduling system](#) or call 270-745-6254 and we will make a tutoring appointment for you. In addition to tutoring course specific content, TLC offers assistance with academic skill areas such as note taking, time management, test taking skills, etc. TLC is also host to a number of other programs and services including: The Academic Advantage Series: Workshops for Success, Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS), a 32 machine Dell computer lab for academic projects only, and black & white printing.

DISABILITY SERVICES (COPIED FROM CENTER WEBSITE)

The goal of Student Disability Services is to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided access to all facets of the Western Kentucky University experience; to facilitate and coordinate support services and programs that enable students with disabilities to maximize their educational potential; and to increase awareness among all members of the University so that students with disabilities are able to achieve academic success based on their abilities, not their disabilities. Please contact this department by email [sds@wku.edu] or phone [(270) 745-5004] or visit the Ground floor of the Student Success Center, DUC A200.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Texts and Materials:

- Here, Bullet: Poems, by Brian Turner (ISBN 1882295552)
- The Road: A Novel, by Cormac McCarthy (ISBN 9780307387899)
- Tree of Smoke: A Novel, by Denis Johnson (ISBN 0312427743)
- *Films*: “Charlie Wilson’s War,” “The Hurt Locker,” and “The Messenger.” I suggest using a local video store or gaining membership with NetFlix—many films can be ‘watched instantly’. Also, you can always buy the movies and sell them back on Amazon.com or Ebay. PLEASE PREPARE NOW TO ACQUIRE THESE FILMS—DON’T WAIT TILL THE LAST MINUTE!
- Last, regarding these materials, please be aware that many of these resources contain graphic representations of violence, sex, and language. Please handle the content maturely. You must be willing to read/view each resource to be successful in this class. If you feel that you cannot/should not handle the graphic content of the course then you should drop immediately and seek to enroll in another class.

Miscellaneous: Be sure to dedicate folders (both digital and physical) specifically for work completed during the course of our semester. I also suggest getting a portable thumb drive. I will provide various other readings, critical essays, and/or handouts throughout the semester via Blackboard and the Internet. Please check Blackboard each MWF for updates.

Internet Access: Ensure that you have dependable Internet access at home, at the library, or at student computer labs.

CONTACTING YOUR PROFESSOR

Please email me with any issues after exhausting all avenues of thought trying to find the answer. I will not entertain questions that have already been answered in this syllabus, on Blackboard, or on announcements and/or assignment sheets. These emails will go unanswered—I will reply back with an email containing the words “LOOK HARDER!”

If you are going to call me, please do so between the hours of 8 am and 6 pm EST. I try to guard my time at home with my family, so please be respectful of my time. I will be more likely to be reached immediately if you call in the morning hours.

I will do my best to respond to your queries within 48 hours. If I do not respond within that time, please call again.

CLASS POLICIES

Format of Assignments

All formal assignments should adhere to MLA standards. I would like all papers handed-in in Times New Roman, 12 point font—I will not accept any other. Papers out of MLA format will automatically receive a 20% reduction. Please pay careful attention to spacing, font, and structure issues. All quotes and citations used during blogging and discussion boards must also regard MLA. Please familiarize yourself with [MLA](#) format here. Also, [The Purdue Owl](#) is a great site to aid you in all things composition (including emails, presentations, and research). I will post an MLA paper template on Blackboard for your use.

Extra Credit

There are no opportunities for extra credit in this course.

Incompletes

Typically, incompletes will not be granted for English 200. If you have extenuating circumstances—for example, if you are in the military and are deployed toward the end of the semester, or if you have a personal or medical crisis that comes up toward the end of the semester—discuss your situation with me if possible and I will consider an incomplete. I will only consider an incomplete for students who are in good standing in the course.

Feedback/Evaluation of Your Writing

I will respond to your work using the “Track Changes” function in Microsoft Word. Please familiarize yourself with this function in order to review your feedback.

Late Work

Online classes require that you recognize deadlines and adhere to them. ***Coursework is not accepted late for any reason.*** It is the student’s responsibility to keep up with class assignments. Students are encouraged to work ahead and submit their assignments early rather than late in order to earn the highest grade possible. We are reading some complicated texts this semester so be sure to give yourself plenty of time to read!

Incomplete Work

If a paper has a 900 word minimum requirement, that means that 900 words are the absolute *least* amount accepted. That means that an 850 word paper is incomplete. Grades for incomplete assignments will automatically be reduced by 30%, which means the highest grade possible (everything else being perfect) will be 70%.

Failure of Technology

Technological failure of any kind is no excuse for submitting work late. Work ahead and submit work early. Back up your work on a flash drive or e-mail files to yourself. See “Submission of Work” below for more.

Submission of Work

All assignments must be submitted by 7:59 am EST on the due date. Unless otherwise stated, all work will be submitted in Blackboard. Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) is the only acceptable file format for this course. **When submitting an assignment in Blackboard, students must click the “Submit” button, not the “Save” button at the bottom of the submission screen.** Clicking “Save” will allow the document to be retrieved by the student, but the instructor will NOT receive the document. Assignments that are late because the students clicked “Save” instead of “Submit” will not receive credit. **This is the most common reason an assignment fails to submit correctly.**

Participation

For this online course, participation will be defined as submitting assignments, including Discussion Board postings. As long as you submit your assignments on time and post to the discussion board as directed, you will be considered a “participating” student in the course. Students who stop “participating” for two weeks will be given a failing grade.

A warning for students who expect to be “out of town” or in some other way “unavailable” for more than a week or so during the 16 weeks of this course: You should drop the course unless you can continue to fully commit the necessary time and effort to the course while you’re “out of town” or “unavailable.” If you will not have a reliable internet connection and the tools necessary to complete coursework for any period of time longer than a day or so at any point in the term, you run the risk of falling behind and failing the course.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism/Academic Fraud occurs when a student knowingly or unknowingly submits another person’s published or unpublished (print or web) writing as his/her own, has another person dictate what should be written, or has another person write an assignment and submits that work as his/her own. Students must complete their own work in this class, and they should not ask for or receive inappropriate assistance on their work. Students who decide to violate this policy should understand that they may automatically fail this course. On the other hand, students who decide to do their own work will challenge themselves intellectually; these students decide to abide by ethical principles that illustrate they value the educational opportunities presented to them and that they believe the quality of their contributions should be given a fair evaluation.

In this course, we trust each other to adhere to the principles of academic integrity discussed in this section of the course syllabus. My assumption is that you will submit work that is your own because you wish to be evaluated on the quality of your own work rather than the quality of someone else’s and that you understand that doing otherwise is unethical. However, if I begin to question the integrity of your work, I will submit your work to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com), which will generate a report that will help me determine whether your work is original or not.

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty on any single assignment, including quizzes, exams, short papers, reflective assignments, and drafts, will result in a course penalty up to course failure. Length or nature of the assignment are not factors affecting the course penalty. In other words, plagiarism in a one-page paper might result in course failure just like plagiarism in a six-page paper might; or cheating on a daily quiz might result in course failure just like cheating on a final exam might.

Recycled Writing

All writing submitted for this class must be produced this semester. Students who submit writing submitted for other courses will receive zero points for the first instance and will be required to complete the assignment again. Students who continue after initial warning to submit writing from other courses may be dropped from the course for non-participation. In other words, students **MUST** produce **NEW** papers and write on **NEW** topics for each assignment in this course. Sections are watched very closely to ensure that students comply with this policy.

Research Requirements

Typically, research must be appropriate for academic writing. Only credible, appropriate websites, newspapers, magazines, and the like will be accepted. See each assignment prompt for specific requirements.

Respectful Behavior and General Civility

In my classes, I like to have free and open discussions of what we think and feel about the things we read and write. In order that we all feel comfortable expressing opinions freely, I ask that everyone be respectful of each other, even if we don’t agree about everything. We can disagree and still be respectful. If someone chooses to use hateful, bigoted, or inappropriate language, I will first consult with that student and, if the behavior

continues, I will remove that student from the course. Do your best to be gracious and preserve the dignity of your classmates.

Resolving Complaints about Grades

The first step in resolving a complaint about grades is ordinarily for the student to attempt to resolve the problem directly with the course instructor. If that attempt is unsuccessful, the student may bring the matter to the Department Head, and so on. See the [Student Handbook](#) for the full policy.

Discussion Boards

You will be participating in discussion boards each week for this class. I will be reading your discussion threads. I will also be participating where I am inclined to do so. You will be graded on discussions each Friday of the week that the discussion is assigned, so be sure to keep up and not wait till the last minute. I suggest checking in at least thrice per week with the discussion to add to the ongoing conversation. Be sure to DISCUSS, not simply state your opinion and move on—I want to see evidence of engagement with texts and others in the class.

Program Assessment Notice

As part of a university-wide accreditation study, a small sample of papers will be collected from randomly-selected individuals in all ENG 100, 200, and 300 classes this semester. The papers will be examined anonymously as part of a program assessment; results will have no bearing on student assessment or course grades.

GRADING

Loosely Defined Criteria

(Please read carefully and circle your desired grade.)

A | Outstanding

A student who earns an A has excelled in both skills and knowledge. In content, clarity, readability, and format, the student's work fully or almost fully meets my criteria. In short, the student has mastered the material and is likely to succeed in future challenges.

B | Above Average

A student who earns a B has demonstrated many of the same qualities shown by the student who earns an A, but is deficient a few minor areas. The student has generally mastered the material and is likely to succeed in future challenges.

C | Average

A student who earns a C has demonstrated some of the same qualities shown by the student who earns an A or a B. Although the work is adequate, it suffers from several minor deficiencies. Nevertheless, the work suggests that the student is competent and is ready to take on future challenges, though he or she may need to shore up some of these deficiencies to succeed.

D | Below Average

A student who earns a D is deficient in at least one major area or many minor areas, but has demonstrated adequate knowledge and skills to merit a passing grade. The student who earns a D probably will struggle when confronting future challenges.

F | Unacceptable

A student will earn an F for one of the following reasons:

- The student's work contains glaring and perpetual examples of plagiarism.
- The student's work does not meet the requirements of the assignment, such as number of sources or deadline.
- The student's work contains glaring deficiencies, indicating that the student is unprepared to meet future challenges.

(Written by Mark Canada, professor at UNCP, <http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/markport/lit/amlit1/fall2002/syllabus.htm>)

The following is a breakdown of points—each assignment's value for the semester—and the total points possible for the semester.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Total number</u>	<u>Points for each</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
Blogs	5	25	125 points
D.B.	8	10	70 points
Papers	2	100	200 points

Total Possible: 405 points

Please note:

- I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE WORK! NO EXCEPTIONS!
- All assignments must be submitted before 8 am EST on the due date unless otherwise marked. Assignments posted after 7:59 am EST will be late and will not be accepted. If you submit an assignment to Blackboard at 8:01 am EST, I will give you a zero for the assignment.
- All Discussion Boards will be graded on the Friday of the week they take place. Entries must be posted by 7:59 am EST to receive credit.

Scale:

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 76-79	D = 60-69
A = 94-96	B = 83-86	C = 70-75	F = 60 and below
A- = 90-93	B- = 80-82	C- = 74-70	

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The following is a detailed summary of the assignments that you must complete this semester. Please read it thoroughly and mark the due dates for your own discretion.

For a reading schedule,
see the Calendar.

Here's how it works:

You work at your own pace, for the most part.

The semester is broken into two parts. I will be checking assignments at the end of each part—the dates are marked below.

The above schedule is a suggested schedule for your reading. If you wish to get ahead you are welcome to do so. I suggest not falling behind, especially since you will need the reading for class assignments, like Discussion Boards. Also, the calendar marks important dates and other assignments.

Every other week (almost) you will be participating in graded class discussions on our Discussion Board. Please review Course Doc #2 for etiquette on DBs and how you will be graded. These are the only assignments we will do together as a class.

In the time between Discussions, you will be in charge of completing Blog Entries about the readings. You can complete these at your own pace, so long as you abide by the finish dates below. I suggest getting these assignments out of the way quickly so you can focus on achieving a good grade on your paper at the end of the semester.

You will have two papers—one due at the end of each part of the semester—which are worth large portions of your grade (see Grading).

PART 1:

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC, ASSIGNMENTS, & ACTIVITIES	Unit
------	------	----------------------------------	------

Introductions

- | | | |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1 | Jan 22-28 | <p>Reading: “Atomic War or Peace,” by Albert Einstein available on <i>The Atlantic</i> website & “The Good War” by Studs Terkel, from The American Idea, pages 338-343 (Use Google Books to retrieve this piece)</p> <p><i>Special Assignment (see Semester Work: Part 1)</i></p> |
| 2 | Jan 29-Feb 4 | <p><i>Discussion Board (see Semester Work: Part 1)</i></p> <p>JAN 30th—ADD/DROP!</p> |

Tree of Smoke

- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| 3 | Feb 5-11 | Reading: 1963-1965 (p. 1-116) |
| 4 | Feb 12-18 | <p>Reading: 1966 (p. 117-167)</p> <p><i>Discussion Board (see Semester Work: Part 1)</i></p> |
| 5 | Feb 19-25 | Reading: 1967 (p. 171-266) |
| 6 | Feb 26-Mar3 | <p>Reading: 1968 (p. 269-368)</p> <p><i>Discussion Board (see Semester Work: Part 1)</i></p> |
| 7 | Mar 4-10 | <p>Reading: 1969 (p. 371-504)</p> <p>SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS! (But you’ll still have to read, so get on it!)</p> |
| 8 | Mar 11-17 | <p>Reading: 1970 & 1983 (p. 507-614)</p> <p><u>Note: All Assignments for Semester Work Part 1 are due Friday, March 16th at 7:59 AM EST</u></p> |

Semester Work: Part 1

All work below must be completed by **Friday, March 16th at 7:59 AM EST.**
NO EXCEPTIONS!

Reading:

1. Complete : **“Atomic War and Peace,” by Albert Einstein** available on *The Atlantic* website
2. Complete **“The Good War” by Studs Terkel, from The American Idea**, pages 338-343 (Use Google Books to retrieve this piece)
3. Complete **Tree of Smoke**, by Denis Johnson (Please note that this book is VERY complicated and will take you a while to read—plan accordingly!)

Special Assignment:

The first week of class, please create a profile as your first Discussion Board post. Answer the following questions about yourself so that I (and the other students) might get to know you a bit. Copy and Paste this list directly into the message field:

Part 1...

Feel free to post a picture (size appropriate) of yourself so that we might have a face to go with your name!

Name:

Age:

Location:

Hobbies/Interests:

Future Goals/Plans:

Life Currently: (tell us anything interesting about yourself right now; give us your current situation)

Part 2...

Paste this question into the text field and answer it below.

What does it mean to be a citizen of a country engaged in fighting a war? What role does war play in your life? Why does war matter to an American living in the United States in 2011? (no more than 600 words)

Discussion Boards (D.B.):

Discussion should begin before 11:59 am EST on Monday of each week where a discussion is part of the activities. All discussion must be complete by 7:59 am EST on Friday of each week. Failure to participate between these times will result in a zero. Please be aware that your posts are for everyone to see and that you should treat your classmates and their opinions with dignity. Please see Course Document #2 for an example of a full-credit discussion board response.

Week 2: How are our opinions about war created and shaped? Is there any glory in war, or is war a complete abomination? Why or why not? What do you think Studs Terkel and Albert Einstein are trying to do to our concept of what war means?

Week 4: Discuss the relationships between men in the novel—Skip v. The Colonel and Bill v. James, etc.—what has war done to these men on the inside and out?

Week 6: Discuss the portrayals of non-combat violence in ToS. How does the violence of war manifest itself in the lives of the Huston brothers, Hoa, Kathy, Skip, and the Colonel?)

Blog Entries:

Blogs are meant to be informal and expressive—please be honest about your thoughts about the novel and subject at hand. I will be the only one able to read them. Blog entries must be between **600 and 1000 words** and require use of **at least two quotations** that DO NOT count toward your total word quota. All blog entries must be in MLA.

The following are options about which you can write for your blog entries. Please choose **TWO** out these five.

1. Analyze the behavior of Skip Sands. What is he doing in this novel? What are Skip's primary motivations? Why?
2. Is Johnson's complex Vietnam novel a success or failure? Why or why not?
3. What exactly is "Tree of Smoke" and what is its relationship to each of the characters in the novel?
4. Discuss the portrayal of sexuality in the novel. How has war shaped sexuality for the characters in Tree of Smoke?
5. Discuss **ONE** of the following events pertaining to the end of Tree of Smoke...
 - a. Storm's act of self-sacrifice and the meaning behind his poem "Vietnam"
 - b. Skip's admission to Kathy that he "wouldn't run"
 - c. Kathy's relationship with and feelings toward Skip in light of the final paragraph of the novel.

Paper #1:

Reflecting on Tree of Smoke, discuss the role of war in shaping human behavior, especially in light of non-combat violence and the decay of interpersonal relationships. 3-5 pages. Rubric to come.

PART 2:

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC, ASSIGNMENTS, & ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>Unit</u>
			<u>Here, Bullet</u>
9	Mar 18-24	Watch Film: Hurt Locker, Charlie Wilson’s War, or The Messenger <i>Discussion Board (see Semester Work: Part 2)</i> MARCH 16 th —LAST CHANCE TO WITHDRAW!	
10	Mar 25-31	Please read during this week, though you will have no “assignments” to complete on Blackboard. You will be responsible for the final three sections of the book when classes resume. SPRING BREAK	
11	Apr 1-7	Reading: HB, Parts 1-2 <i>Discussion Board (see Semester Work: Part 2)</i> APRIL 2 nd —FN DATE!	
12	Apr 8-14	Reading: HB, Parts 3-4	
			<u>The Road</u>
13	Apr 15-21	Reading: TR (1-72) <i>Discussion Board (see Semester Work: Part 2)</i>	
14	Apr 22-28	Reading: TR (72-234)	
15	Apr 29- May 5	Reading: TR (234-END) <i>Discussion Board (see Semester Work: Part 2)</i>	
16	May 6-11	<u>Note: All Assignments for Semester Work Part 2 are due Monday, May 7th at 7:59 AM EST</u>	

Semester Work: Part 2

All work below must be completed by **Monday, May 7th at 7:59 AM EST.**
NO EXCEPTIONS!

Reading and Viewing:

1. Complete Here, Bullet by Brian Turner
2. Complete The Road, by Cormac McCarthy
3. Complete the *War Poems Packet* by various writers
4. View **ONE** of the following films:
 - a. The Hurt Locker
 - b. Charlie Wilson's War
 - c. The Messenger

Discussion Boards (D.B.):

Discussion should begin before 11:59 am EST on Monday of each week where a discussion is part of the activities. All discussion must be complete by 7:59 am EST on Friday of each week. Failure to participate between these times will result in a zero. Please be aware that your posts are for everyone to see and that you should treat your classmates and their opinions with dignity. Please see Course Document #2 for an example of a full-credit discussion board response.

This half of the semester, each student will read poems about war and we will discuss them as a class.

Week 9: "Facing It," by Yusef Komunyakaa- Discuss what Komunyakaa—a Vietnam veteran—is hoping to gain by visiting the Vietnam National Monument in Washington, DC. Does he find it?

Week 11: "The Colonel," by Carolyn Forché- What role does violence play in this poem? Once again, there is a connection between language and violence—what is it?

Week 13: "The End of the Beginning," by Wislawa Szymborska- Is this poem a poem about peace or war? How can we define these two opposing forces? What does this poem say about each?

Week 15: "Traveling Through the Dark," by William Stafford- This poem has been called one of the greatest protest poems of all time—why? Why is it a poem about war? What question integral to a soldier's life does it ask?

Blog Entries:

Blogs are meant to be informal and expressive—please be honest about your thoughts about the novel and subject at hand. I will be the only one able to read them. Blog entries must be between **600 and 1000 words** and require use of **at least two quotations** that DO NOT count toward your total word quota. All blog entries must be in MLA.

The following are options about which you can write for your blog entries. You must write **THREE** blog entries in this half of the semester. **You must write about Blog Entries #1 and #2.** After that, please choose one of the film questions and answer it in your blog.

1. Discuss **ONE** of the following subjects pertaining to the The Road...
 - a. What is the significance of Ely? What does he represent and why is his presence in the novel significant?
 - b. The Road has been called a love letter from McCarthy to his son. What are some aspects that make this novel a 'love letter'? Discuss the relationship between The Man and The Boy.

- c. According to TR, which is more prominent: the human capacity toward violence or compassion? You may use pieces of evidence from outside TR to support your ideas.
2. Discuss **ONE** of the following subjects pertaining to the Here, Bullet...
 - a. Turner is making a connection between language and war—what is the nature of that connection? Examine one of the following poems in your blog: *A Soldier's Arabic* or *What Every Soldier Should Know*.
 - b. Choose one poem from this book and discuss it in detail. Be sure to cover multiple facets of the piece—theme, tone, diction, line, structure, imagery, etc.
3. Discuss the epigraph at the beginning of *Hurt Locker*—that war is a drug. How is this concept made manifest in the film. What content—plot, symbols and motifs—serve to contextualize this theme? What does this “drug” do to people?
4. *The Messenger* seems to be as much about what *is not said* as it is about what *is said*. How do the characters in this film understand their experience with war. Discuss how war comes home and what it does to civilians, families, and soldiers.
5. How does the viewing of *Charlie Wilson's War* change or affirm your thoughts and opinions about the US's military occupations in the Middle East? Discuss your views on America's war efforts in the Middle East, especially since 2001.

Paper #2:

What does war do to human connectedness? How does it buildup and breakdown connectivity between people. Use at least four examples from any of our class materials to prove your thesis. 3-5 pages. Rubric to come.