

# Engl 160: The Literary Imagination

## MYSTERIES

Dr. Kate Nesbit

### Learning Outcomes

- Develop an understanding of the critical concepts, vocabulary, and methods of literary study through an exploration of the mystery genre.
- Articulate and support arguments about literature that demonstrate critical thinking and substantive engagement with course texts.
- Develop skills in critical thinking, close reading, and analysis.

### WRT Outcomes

- RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE: Write four interpretive essays that require critical consideration of the purpose and audience of literary analysis.
- CRITICAL THINKING: Apply various strategies in close reading and analysis to gain new insights into texts.
- PROCESS: Workshop writing with instructor and peers.
- CONVENTIONS: Produce writing that is reader-friendly, clear and concise, and professional.

## Course Description

What makes a mystery a mystery? How and why do they make us want to keep reading?

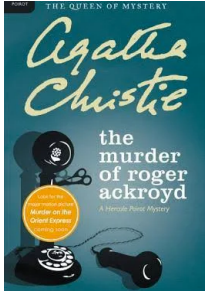
This course offers an introduction to literary studies and literary analysis through a consideration of what is arguably the oldest and most popular narrative form: the mystery. While readers often associate the rise of mystery writing with the advent of detective fiction in the nineteenth century, we will begin our inquiry much earlier. As we read excerpts from Genesis and experiment with the “mystery plays” performed in medieval Britain, we will ask how mystery undergirds our world’s longest-lasting myths and narratives.

As we move through the evolution of mystery writing in English, we will consider how the conventions and structure of the genre changed alongside changing social, cultural, and political landscapes. Both reading and writing mysteries, we will learn, involves the art of playing with a reader’s expectations and with the genre’s rules. We will catalogue the unofficial “rules” of mystery writing and ask why these rules might help a story work—and why a writer might choose to break them.

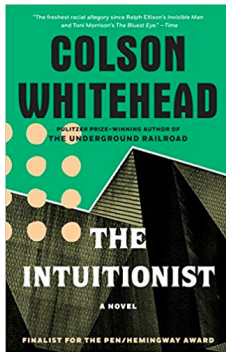
The course is intended as an introduction to the concepts and vocabulary of literary studies, as well as an examination of “mystery” as a concept and as a literary genre. More than that, though, this is a course about why we read, what keeps us reading, and how reading—and the curiosity that so often motivates it—shapes our world and ourselves.

## Course Texts

Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*  
(ISBN: 9780062073563)



Colson Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*  
(ISBN: 9780385493000)



There is also a required course pack that contains the course's supplementary readings.

## Assignments & Grading

You will complete four major writing assignments for this class. These build in complexity and difficulty over the course of the semester. With each essay, we will add a new facet of literary analysis: we start with essays that substantiate another critic's interpretive argument and close with essays that articulate unique interpretive arguments that synthesize multiple texts and incorporate theoretical perspectives.

For each of the major assignments, the rubric will include a process grade.

**PROCESS GRADES** are determined by how thoroughly and carefully one completes the different steps of an assignment by their corresponding deadlines. "Process steps" might include Thesis/Pre-Writing Worksheets, Rough Drafts, and Midterm and End-of-Semester Office Hour Meetings. Also, missing in-class peer review workshops can lower your process grade for an assignment.

These process grades will be factored into your grade for each assignment.

The final portion of your final grade is dedicated to Reading Invitations. Reading invitations are brief, daily journals in which you respond to 2-3 questions about the day's reading. They are intended as an alternative to reading quizzes and are meant to help guide you through difficult material and help you prepare for class discussion. These will be graded twice per semester: once at midterm and once at the end of the semester.

All assignments are graded out of 100 points, then factored into the weighting scheme on the following page. You must complete all major assignments to pass this class.

Percentage of Grade	Assignment
20%	Reading Invitations
15%	Essay #1 – Supporting an Argument
20%	Essay #2 – Crafting an Argument
20%	Essay #3 – Incorporating Theory
25%	Essay #4 – Synthesizing Texts

## Course Policies and Expectations

### *Attendance Policy:*

You need to be in class and on time every day. Absences cause you to miss out on instruction, learning time, and thinking opportunities. Assignments, directions, homework, and due dates will be updated in class and posted to Blackboard. It is your responsibility to know what these are, even if you miss a class. You are responsible for knowing the material and preparing any assigned work.

You can miss two classes over the course of the semester without a serious impact to your final grade. I do not “excuse” absences (other than the exceptions listed below), so use these absences wisely. Save them for when you are sick or have an out-of-town obligation.

**Your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for every class you miss above 3 absences.**

Exceptions can be made for extenuating circumstances (athletics, injuries, extended illness), but these exceptions must be discussed with me and arranged ahead of time.

### *Late Work Policy*

Unless other arrangements are made before the assignment due date, **late work must be turned in within 4 days of the due date to receive any partial credit.** When turned in after the due date and time but within 24 hours, the assignment will receive a grade reduced by a third of a letter grade. **The assignment grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional day it is late until turned in.** If the assignment is still not turned after four days past the due date and time, the assignment will receive a o.

### *24/7 Policy for Discussing Graded Work*

With regard to any assignment at any point in the semester, I am happy to speak with you about what you did well, how you could improve, and what you can work on for future assignments. In order to keep

conversations relevant, constructive, and useful to you, please discuss graded assignments with me no sooner than 24 hours after the assignment is returned and no later than 7 days after return. I will gladly email with you to set aside office hour time or set up an appointment to talk in person.

### *Communication with Me*

I strongly encourage students to make an appointment or stop by my office hours to ask for clarification on assignments, raise concerns or discomforts, request help on papers and speeches, or discuss any issue relevant (or irrelevant!) to this class. Attending my office hours shows commitment to this course and demonstrates accountability for your learning.

Outside of office hours, the best way to contact me is through email. I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours during the weekdays and 48 hours during the weekends. **If I do not respond within these parameters, please resend the email.**

### *Technology in the Classroom*

As a general rule, I expect that you will turn off/silence and put away all of your electronic devices (cell phones, iPads, etc.) before class begins. This includes laptops and e-readers unless otherwise specified. There are, of course, many reasonable exceptions to this general rule. If you do, for any reason, have a particular need for iPads, cell phones, or laptops during class time, please come talk to me during office hours. There will also be class periods, activities, and peer-review sessions for which I allow and often encourage technology use. I will notify you of these moments as they arise.

### *Content Warning*

In this course, we will read literary texts that depict or discuss violence, including sexual violence and racial violence. If you have suffered trauma and are concerned about engaging with these topics, please email me or see me in my office so that we can discuss accommodations.

### *Course Calendar*

The course calendar is available on Blackboard, both in an electronic form that will be updated regularly and in a .pdf that you can download and print off. The electronic version will be the most up-to-date and will include links to additional readings, assignment descriptions, and other relevant class materials.

## Central College Policies & Statements

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### *Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

Central College abides by interpretations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that stipulates no student shall be denied the benefits of an education "solely by reason of a handicap." Disabilities covered by law include, but are not limited to, learning disabilities, hearing, sight, or mobility impairments, and other health related impairments. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class for which you may require accommodations, please contact your Instructor and Nancy Kroese, Director of Student Support Services and Disabilities Services Coordinator (x5247), during the first two weeks of the semester so that such accommodations may be arranged.

### *Plagiarism and Other Academic Dishonesty*

Plagiarism, cheating, and unauthorized collaboration in any form are violations of academic integrity and may result in course penalties ranging from a lowered grade on the assignment to a failed grade for the course. In the case of serious or repeated instances, students may also be suspended or dismissed from the college. A copy of Central's Academic Integrity policy can be found in the Student Handbook, the Course Catalog, and on MyCentral. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the contents of that policy before submitting work to be graded. Questions regarding the policies and enforcement of the policies may be asked during class or during office hours.

### *Notification of Participation in College-Sanctioned Events*

Students who must miss a class to take part in a college-sanctioned event (such as Mock Trial, choir tours, athletic events) are expected to notify instructors well in advance and to complete assignments or exams prior to the absence.

ENGL 160-A: The Literary Imagination | *Mysteries*  
SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS  
*Subject to Change*

<b>Week One: Monday, January 20 – Friday January 24th</b>
<u>T: 1/21</u> Course Introduction
<u>Th: 1/23</u> <b>Read:</b> Janet Gardener, “The Role of Good Reading” and Cain and Abel, <i>Genesis</i> 4: 1-16 (Blackboard) <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<b>Week Two: Monday, January 27 – Friday, January 31</b>
<u>T: 1/28</u> <b>Read:</b> Edgar Allan Poe, “Murders in the Rue Morgue” <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 1/30</u> <b>Read:</b> Edgar Allan Poe, “Murders in the Rue Morgue” <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation <b>Assign:</b> Literary Analysis Essay #1—Supporting an Interpretive Argument
<b>Week Three: Monday, February 3 – Friday, February 7</b>
<u>T: 2/4</u> <b>Read:</b> “Writing about Literature” Readings (Blackboard) <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 2/6</u> <b>Due:</b> Power Paragraph
<b>Week Four: Monday, February 10 – Friday, February 14</b>
<u>T: 2/11</u> <b>Read:</b> “Revising and Editing” (Blackboard) <b>Due:</b> Essay #1 Rough Draft
<u>Th: 2/13</u> <b>Due:</b> Essay #1 Final Draft (at 8:30 pm on Blackboard)
<b>Week Five: Monday, February 17 – Friday, February 21</b>
<u>T: 2/18</u> <b>Read:</b> Chapters 1-6 of Conan Doyle, <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation <b>Assign:</b> Literary Analysis Essay #2—Crafting an Interpretive Argument
<u>Th: 2/20</u> <b>Read:</b> Chapters 7-9 of Conan Doyle, <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i>

<b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<b>Week Six: February 24 – Friday, February 28</b>
<u>T: 2/25</u> <b>Read:</b> Chapters 10-14 of Conan Doyle, <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 2/27</u> <b>No Class—Midterm Meetings</b> <b>Due at Meeting:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-Midterm Reading Invitations</li> <li>• Midterm Writing Reflection</li> <li>• Thesis &amp; Prewriting Worksheet</li> </ul>
<b>Week Seven: Monday, March 2 – Friday, March 6</b>
<u>T: 3/3</u> <b>In-Class Screening:</b> BBC Sherlock’s “The Hound of Baskervilles” <b>Due:</b> Essay #2 Rough Draft
<u>Th: 3/5</u> <b>In-Class Screening:</b> BBC Sherlock’s “The Hound of Baskervilles” <b>Due:</b> Essay #2 Final Draft (8:30 pm on Blackboard)
<b>Week Eight: Monday, March 9 – Friday, March 13 [Midterm]</b>
<u>T: 3/10</u> <b>Read:</b> Literary Theory Readings (TBA) <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 3/12</u> <b>Read:</b> Literary Theory Readings (TBA) <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<b>Week Nine: Monday, March 16 – Friday, March 21</b>
<b>Spring Break: No Classes Held</b>
<b>Week Ten: Monday, March 23 – Friday, March 27</b>
<u>T: 3/24</u> <b>Read:</b> Chapters 1-5, Agatha Christie, <i>The Murder of Roger Ackroyd</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation <b>Assign:</b> Literary Analysis Essay #3—Incorporating a Critical Source
<u>Th: 3/26</u> <b>Read:</b> Chapters 6-11, <i>The Murder of Roger Ackroyd</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation

<b>Week Eleven: Monday, March 30 – Friday, April 3</b>
<u>T: 3/31</u> <b>Read:</b> Chapters 12-19, <i>The Murder of Roger Ackroyd</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 4/2</u> <b>Read:</b> Chapters 20-End, <i>The Murder of Roger Ackroyd</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation <b>Due:</b> Thesis & Prewriting Activity
<b>Week Twelve: Monday, April 6 – Friday, April 10</b>
<u>T: 4/7</u> <b>Read:</b> Manuel Ramos, “The Skull of Pancho Villa” <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 4/9</u> <b>Due:</b> Essay #3 Rough Draft
<b>Week Thirteen: Monday, April 13 – Friday, April 17</b>
<u>T: 4/14</u> <b>Read:</b> Van Dine’s Rules of a Mystery (Blackboard) <b>Due:</b> Essay #3 Final Draft (at 8:30 pm on Blackboard) <b>Assign:</b> Literary Analysis #4--Synthesize
<u>Th: 4/16</u> <b>Read:</b> pp. 1-65, Colson Whitehead, <i>The Intuitionist</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<b>Week Fourteen: Monday, April 20 – Friday, April 24</b>
<u>T: 4/21</u> <b>Read:</b> pp. 69-127, Whitehead, <i>The Intuitionist</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 4/23</u> <b>Read:</b> pp. 127-167 Whitehead, <i>The Intuitionist</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<b>Week Fifteen: Monday, April 27 – May 1</b>
<u>T: 4/28</u> <b>Read:</b> pp. 167-204, Whitehead, <i>The Intuitionist</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation
<u>Th: 4/30</u> <b>Read:</b> pp. 204-End, Whitehead, <i>The Intuitionist</i> <b>Complete:</b> Reading Invitation



**Week Sixteen: Monday, May 4 – Friday, May 8**

T: 5/5

No Class—End-of-Semester Meetings

**Due at Meeting**

- Post-Midterm Reading Invitations
- End-of-Semester Writing Reflection
- Rough Draft of Essay #4

Th: 5/7

Mystery Day

**Final Exam Period: Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 8 AM**

Literary Analysis Essay #4—Due at 8 AM