



ENGLISH 374: STUDIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE: *Lit Out Loud*

DR. KATE NESBIT
Sample Syllabus

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to nineteenth-century British literature by engaging with books the way many nineteenth-century Britons engaged with books: by listening and reading aloud.

How do we engage with and interpret literature differently when we read the words out loud? Eighteenth-century acting and speaking coach Thomas Sheridan thought that oral delivery trained readers to sympathize with others' emotions. Early twentieth-century schoolbook readers claimed that memorizing and reciting poetry imprinted wise and beautiful words on the mind and thus nourished the soul each day. So how *does* oral reading change our relation to literature?

Reading texts aloud—whether poetry, plays, fiction, or the Bible—was a common practice in nineteenth-century schoolrooms, concert halls, pubs, parlors, and city squares. In this course, we will read nineteenth-century literature with our ears tuned in to the influences of these oral reading practices. We will analyze texts about oral delivery (Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*), texts famously performed out loud (Felicia Hemans's "Casabianca" and Dickens's *Oliver Twist*) or poems advertised as "for the ear" (Tennyson and Gerard Manley Hopkins). More importantly, we will use oral reading practices as an entry point for thinking through the major historical, cultural and political trends of the period—considering, for example, class conflict through Lancashire dialect poetry, "The Woman Question" through Shaw's treatment of the voice in *Candida*, empire and race through a study of colonial broadcasting and radio.

Throughout the course's readings, assignments, and activities you will be asked to participate in voice, body, and mind as much (and as enthusiastically) as you are able. The course will encourage us all to seriously (and, at the same time, lightheartedly) experiment with how reading aloud changes one's relation to and interpretation of a text.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ❖ Familiarize ourselves with the history, politics, culture, and literature of nineteenth-century Britain.
- ❖ Demonstrate and apply knowledge of literary terms and concepts, especially as they apply to the themes and formal characteristics of writing from the nineteenth century.
- ❖ Employ close reading strategies as a means to gain new insights into texts, as well as to compare and contrast different texts in both content and form.
- ❖ Research and reflect on how literary texts respond to and reflect broader historical and cultural contexts.
- ❖ Articulate and support original, complex, and significant arguments about nineteenth literature that converse with existing critical texts and literary scholarship.
- ❖ Develop mastery of mechanics and style, employing writing that demonstrates a high degree of craftsmanship at the level of the sentence, paragraph, and essay.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS



Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (ISBN: 9780199535538)

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (ISBN: 9780199536269)

Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (ISBN: 9780393979268)

George Bernard Shaw, *Candida* (ISBN: 9780143039785)

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

GRADING

Assignment	Percentage of Final Grade
<p><i>Quizzes and Invitations</i></p> <p>Occasional reading and content quizzes will be planned and announced. Daily reading invitations (meant to guide you through the day's reading and help you prepare for class discussion) will be collected at the beginning of each class period.</p>	25%
<p><i>"Pick a Lens" Paper</i></p>	20%

In this essay, we will practice employing a selected critical methodology to develop and substantiate an interpretive argument about a literary text.	
<i>Close Reading + Research Paper</i> In this essay, we will practice employing close reading to support an interpretive argument that is placed in conversation with other scholarship on a selected literary text.	20%
<i>The Recitation Triptych</i> For this project, you will be tasked with selecting and performing a poem or a prose passage to memorize and recite at our course's final salon. This project is called a "triptych" because it has three parts: 1) the recitation, 2) a 2-4 page research paper that considers the historical context of its original publication, and 3) a 2-4 page reflection paper on how the process of recitation has changed your interpretation of the text, as well as how the passage gains new meanings when performed by you and now, in our historical context and geographical location.	25%
<i>Attendance</i>	10%

All assignments are graded out of 100 points, then factored into the weighting scheme above. You must complete all major assignments to pass this class. In assigning final grades, I will follow the standard grade cut-offs listed in the chart below.

A+	98-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	< 60
A	93-97	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66		
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62		

Important Reminder: Some assume that one starts with 100% for an assignment (or for the course) and then they lose points for doing things wrong. On the contrary, in my courses, you work toward your grade. I consider a grade of C to be competent work that meets all of the requirements of the assignment and the class. Grades above a C indicate work that exceeds basic expectations.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Defining "Engaged and Respectful Participation"

To be an engaged participant in our classroom requires you to be present, on time and engaged in the fullest sense. This may include listening actively and respectfully; asking questions; and making helpful, substantive contributions to in-class workshops, activities, and discussions. The best participants listen to their classmates, respond incisively to others' comments in the room, and reflect or build upon classmates' ideas.

There are no "off-limits" topics or opinions in this class. This means that we all bear the responsibility of maintaining a congenial classroom environment where every student feels comfortable voicing his or her ideas, convictions, insights, and contributions. Respectful communication in the classroom, then, necessitates particular attention to language, tone, and attitude.

Participation can take a number of forms. The most common form is verbal participation. However, I am aware that cultural and power differences may empower some students to speak more comfortably and more often than others. I try to incorporate opportunities for participation other than just verbal participation: journals, in-class activities, etc. Please contact me if there are other ways that I can help you become a successful and active participant in our classroom.

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.

I take attendance daily. Any more than 3 unexcused absences (i.e., 4+) will lead to a failing grade in the course. Illness, university team responsibilities, and other excused absences are permitted, but should be kept to an absolute minimum.

In the case of an excused absence, provide documentation of the absence and notify me, if at all possible, *before* the absence. You will not be able to make up a quiz or any other graded in-class activity (including paper workshops) if your absence is unexcused or if you fail to provide documentation.

COURSE POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

Late Work

Unless other arrangements are made (this includes excused absences) **late work must be turned in within 3 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 will 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 in three days after the due date and time, the assignment will receive a 0.

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

As the instructor of this course, I look forward to fostering and participating in an environment of respectful and thoughtful idea exchange. I also hope to be a resource for each of you as you develop your critical writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills, both in class and during one-on-one appointments during my office hours (or a pre-arranged meeting outside of my office hours, if necessary).

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.

If, for any reason, you find it necessary to email me (regarding absences, time-sensitive questions, etc.), 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, 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.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Subject to Change

Week One: Wednesday, August 28th – Friday, August 30th
Th 8/29: Course Introduction
Week Two: Monday, September 2 – Friday, September 6
T 9/3 Read: “The Romantic Period” [Blackboard]

David Perkins, "How the Romantics Recited Poetry" [course pack] William Wordsworth, "On the Power of Sound" [Blackboard]
Th 9/5 <i>Read:</i> Chapters 1-7, Jane Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i>
Week Three: Monday, September 9th – Friday, September 13th
T 9/10 <i>Read:</i> Chapters 8-18, Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i>
Th 9/12 <i>Read:</i> Chapters 19-28, Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i>
Week Four: Monday, September 16 – Friday, September 20
T 9/17 <i>Read:</i> Chapters 29 – 40, Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i>
Th 9/19 <i>Read:</i> Chapters 41- End, Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i>
Week Five: Monday, September 23 – Friday, September 27
T 9/24 <i>Read:</i> Said, "Jane Austen and Empire" Excerpts from Mary Prince, <i>The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave</i> [Blackboard]]
Th 9/26 <i>Read:</i> Coleridge, Part One of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"
Week Six: Monday, September 30 – Friday, September 4th
T 10/1 <i>Read:</i> Part Two of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" Excerpts from the preface to <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>
Th 10/3 <i>Read:</i> Egbert Martin, "With the Poets" and "The Negro Village"
Week Seven: Monday, October 7th – Friday, October 11th
T 10/7 <i>Read:</i> Felicia Hemans, "Casabianca" Due: Essay #1
Th 10/9 <i>Read:</i> Catherine Robson, "Standing on the Burning Deck: Poetry, Performance, History"
Week Eight: Monday, October 14th – Friday, October 18th
T 10/15 Fall Break: No Class

<p>W 10/16 Read: Tennyson, <i>In Memoriam</i>, “Prologue” “The Victorian Age at a Glance” [Blackboard]</p>
<p>Week Nine: Monday, October 21st – Friday, October 25th</p>
<p>T 10/22 Read: pp. 5-50 (to Poem LXXII), Tennyson, <i>In Memoriam</i> Bradley, “The Structure and Effect of <i>In Memoriam</i>”</p>
<p>Th 10/24 Read: pp. 50-101, Tennyson, <i>In Memoriam</i></p>
<p>Week Ten: Monday, October 28th – Friday, November 1st</p>
<p>T 10/29 Read: Poet Packet & Selection [Blackboard]</p>
<p>Th 10/31 Read: Chapters 1-10, Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i></p>
<p>Week Eleven: Monday, November 4th – Friday, November 8th</p>
<p>T 11/5 Read: Chapters 11-25, Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i></p>
<p>Th 11/7 Read: Chapters 26-36, Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i></p>
<p>Week Twelve: Monday, November 11th - Friday, November 15th</p>
<p>T 11/12 Read: Chapters 37-44, Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i></p>
<p>Th 11/14 Read: Chapters 45-End, Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i></p>
<p>Week Thirteen: Monday, November 18th – Friday, November 22nd</p>
<p>T 11/19 Dickens’s “Sikes and Nancy” Public Reading [Blackboard]</p>
<p>Th 11/21 Read: Poems as Sound Recordings Lancashire dialect poems [course pack] Gerard Manley Hopkins, “I hear a voice of waters,” “As Kingfishers Catch Fire” [Blackboard]</p>
<p>Week Fourteen: Monday, November 25th – Friday, November 29th</p>
<p>T 11/26 Read: The First Recorded Poems</p>

<p>Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," Browning, "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," Rudyard Kipling, "Boots" [Blackboard] Due: Essay #2</p>
<p>Th 11/28 No Class: Thanksgiving Break</p>
<p>Week Fifteen: Monday, December 2nd – Friday, December 6th</p>
<p>T 12/3 <i>Read: Act I, Bernard Shaw, Candida</i></p>
<p>Th 12/5 <i>Read: Act II, Bernard Shaw, Candida</i></p>
<p>Week Sixteen: Monday, December 9th – Friday, December 13th</p>
<p>T 12/10 <i>Read: Act III, Bernard Shaw, Candida</i></p>
<p>W 12/11 Class Wrap-Up Elocution & Delsarte in the Midwest</p>
<p>Final Exam Period: Tuesday, December 17th at 1 pm Our Central Salon Due: Essay #3 Recitations and Final Paper Turn-In (There is no final exam for this course)</p>