

English 112: Composition & Literature

Understanding Texts & Their Contexts

T/Th 8:30-9:50 Bachelor 254 | T/Th 10-11:20 Bachelor 055

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Office hours: W 8:30-10, Th 11:30-1, & by appointment

 @BridgetGelms

 #miami112

Welcome to English 112! This semester, we will read and write critically about texts and their contexts. More specifically, we will explore how contexts shape the way a text is received, and what we as individual readers bring to a text. “Texts” can be broadly defined-- for the purposes of this course, we will work primarily with film. By the end of the semester, you will have improved skills in: textual analysis, rhetorical knowledge, inquiry, invention, research, composing process, organization, style, revision, and reflection.

**A note on the theme**: while English 112 is officially titled “Composition and Literature,” each section is different in that a theme is utilized as a way to reach the course goals/learning outcomes through a specific lens or common text. I’ve titled our theme “Understanding Texts and their Contexts” because that is the ultimate goal here—we will be talking mostly about film. Particularly, we will be talking about Best Picture nominees and winners as a way into a conversation about what constitutes “good” and “bad” texts and thinking about who it is that decides what deserves merit and what does not. For two of the four projects, you will be encouraged to work with a current or past Best Picture nominee or winner because these films work well for these projects. Therefore, if you aren’t interested in film and think you might struggle in this section as a result, you are encouraged to switch to a new section. I am a major proponent of students writing on topics that meet their unique interests as individuals. While our projects for this class will be centered around a common theme, you’re welcome to propose an alternate assignment if you feel the guidelines don’t facilitate your interests and/or learning.

Required Materials

* *College Composition at Miami* (Volume 66). 2014. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil (available at campus bookstores)
* Film(s) of your choosing, although Best Picture nominees/winners work particularly well for the projects-- it’s imperative you have continuous access to the film you choose. Renting is an option (either through Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, iTunes, or the library, etc.), but buying a used copy on Amazon is a good way to go too.
* Access to GoogleDrive and a blogging platform of your choice
* A laptop computer with wireless access — bring to class, fully charged every class period. If you don’t own a laptop, please see Jason Palmeri, the director of the Writing Program, Bachelor Hall room 356 to see about switching to a computer lab section.
* A positive attitude and willingness to contribute to our class community :)

Major Projects & Grading

*Inquiry 1: Close Reading (10%)*

You will write paper on a close reading of a scene in a film, illuminating what your close reading reveals about the text as a whole regarding a component you find significant (a theme, central message, symbolism, etc.).

*Inquiry 2: Best Picture Research Project (25%)*

You will select a film that was nominated for or won the Best Picture Oscar and work towards understanding, through research and close reading of the film, how the historical/cultural context of the film influenced the way it was created and received.

*Inquiry 3: Personal Canon (20%)*

You will compile a list of texts you feel should be celebrated, but perhaps aren’t, working towards understanding why you perceive these texts as having value. You will informally present one of the texts from your list to the class. An accompanying reflective letter will explore how your personal experiences and the contexts you live in affect the way you perceive texts.

*Inquiry 4: Director’s Commentary Portfolio (15%)*

You will create a portfolio of writing you’ve completed in English 112, adding a “director’s commentary” throughout using the comment feature in Word. By close reading your own work and discussing the “behind the scenes” moments of your writing, you should come to some conclusion about what you learned this semester.

*Blogging/Informal Writing (15%)*

You will set up and maintain an individual blog where you will record any freewriting or informal response writing throughout the semester (this will also serve as a space for you to keep track of your research in inquiry 2). While blog posts are assigned with a prompt, please note that these are simply guides-- don’t let them limit you to what you want to write about. You’re welcome to use any blogging platform you prefer, but please toggle the settings so your blog is **public**, displays the **date and time of each post**, and **allows comments** from visitors to your blog. For each post, shoot for at least 150 words.

*Attendance & Participation (10%)*

Participation encompasses more than simply showing up-- consider how often you contribute verbally to our discussions and in-class activities, being on time and mentally present (paying attention, following directions, refraining from sleeping/Facebooking, etc.), your preparedness in completing the readings and homework on time, your contributions to peer response, and your general attitude in class. Students who show they care about engaging actively with the course material typically do well. **Please note that for every absence past 2, your attendance and participation grade will be reduced by 10 points.**

*Conferencing (5%)*

We will conference individually twice throughout the course of the semester—once for inquiry 2 and once for another inquiry of your choosing during my office hours. It’s your responsibility to sign up for a conference, show up on time and come prepared to discuss your writing in an engaged way.

Inquiry 1: Close Reading 10% | 100 pts.

Inquiry 2: Best Picture Context 25% | 250 pts.

Inquiry 3: Personal Canon 20% | 200 pts.

Inquiry 4: Final Reflection 15% | 150 pts.

Blog/Informal Writing 15% | 150 pts

Participation & Attendance 10% | 100 pts.

Conferencing 5% | 50 pts

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Total: 100% | 1000 pts.

*Grading Scale:*

100-93: A | 92-90: A- | 89-87: B+ | 86-83: B | 82-80: B- | 79-77: C+ | 76-73: C | 72-70: C- | 69-67: D+ | 66-63: D | 62-60: D- | 59 and below: F

Course Policies:

*Access/Accommodations*: If you have a documented disability, please share that information with me so I can provide any accommodations that have been best determined by you and the Office of Disability Resources (<http://www.units.muohio.edu/oeeo/odr/>; 513-529-2541). If there is any way I can adapt this course to better meet your needs, or if you have emergency medical information to share with me, let me know. I’m committed to creating a safe and accessible learning environment!

*Academic Integrity:* The assumption is that your work is original and was generated for English 112 during the Spring semester of 2014. There are many types of plagiarism—some more obvious than others, but there are more subtle forms of plagiarism you may not be aware of. A good rule of thumb to live by: if you're not sure you're violating these rules, talk to me about it. To familiarize yourself with the details of Miami’s Academic Integrity policy and examples of /penalties for instances of academic dishonesty, visit<http://www.muohio.edu/integrity/undergrads.cfm>.

*In-class conduct:* There will be many times this the semester that we engage in discussion, and I welcome disagreements because this is a great way to learn! It’s important to be respectful and open-minded of other opinions, viewpoints, and backgrounds. Disrespect will not be tolerated.

*What if I miss class?:* There’s no need to notify me unless your absence is related to an on-going medical issue I need to be made aware of. To figure out what you missed in class, 1.) check the announcements on the blog, 2.) check the class schedule, 3.) contact a friend from class. If these places don’t give you the answers you need, I’m happy to help you catch up. And just a general rule of thumb for contacting me and your other professors: that answer to “did I miss anything” is always YES!

*Turning in Work*: We will use GoogleDrive (drive.google.com) for sharing work and in-class activities. If you’re unable to access our various folders, let me know as soon as possible!

*Late Work:* As due dates are clearly marked for you on the schedule and reminders are given to you via the blog and in class, I will not accept late work. If assignments are not completed and turned in on time, you will receive a zero. Assume technology will fail you and plan ahead!

*Revision Policy*: You are in control of your own grade in this class, which means you’re welcome to revise any or all of the inquiries for a higher grade. To do so, you must first discuss your plans with me. Revised projects should be accompanied by a new writer’s reflection where you address the changes you made and why. Submitting an inquiry for revision where only minor grammatical/mechanical errors are corrected, one new paragraph is added, or a few sentences are switched around will not received a higher grade. **Revisions must be turned in within 2 weeks of receiving your graded draft back**.

*Extra credit*: The only way to receive extra credit in this class is to leave comments on your peers’ blog. Leaving comments is also a great way to ensure you receive a high participation grade, but if you’re looking for extra credit **you can receive up to 30 points for the effort you put into reading and responding to your peers’ blog posts**. Comments eligible for extra credit are ones that deeply engage with the post-- what does this post make you think of or how can you relate to what the author has said? Are there any questions it leaves you with? In what ways to you agree/disagree/relate to the post? Make sure to leave your first and last name at the end of the comments so the author and I know who left it! Comments that deeply engage with the post and are signed are worth up to 2 points a piece.

*Technology*: Please turn off or silence your phone at the start of class. I don’t mind the occasional text, but please don’t make it a habit or a distraction to me or others. And who wants to get a text from you this early in the morning anyway? I do, however, mind the occasional Facebook. Computer use should be limited to class related activities meaning Facebook or other distractions should not be open. Farmville will still be there when you get out of class :)

*Protect Your Writing!:* Please make sure to have a plan for backing up all of your digital work in multiple places in case of computer failure—consider investing in a flash drive or signing up for some sort of cloud storage system like Dropbox. It’s imperative you save all of the writing you complete for this class—every draft—as we will return to various pieces throughout the semester.

*Instructor Feedback*: You’ll be receiving feedback from me about your writing at various stages throughout the semester, but I’m always happy to provide you with even more. However, I will not give feedback to students who simply email me their paper and ask me to look at it and respond. My feedback will be much more beneficial to you if we can have a conversation about it together, so set up a time to meet with me. If meeting face-to-face is not an option, I’d be happy to meet online using GoogleDocs (there’s a chat feature), or whatever method you prefer. Plan ahead—it’s difficult for me to help you if you contact me the night before a project is due.

*Contacting me:* The fastest way to reach me is via email (gelmsbc@miamioh.edu) or through Twitter @BridgetGelms. I usually respond within 24 hours, unless it’s over a weekend in which case it may take me a little longer. I also hold office hours in Bachelor 284 on Wednesdays 8:30-10 and Thursdays 11:30-1, and can certainly make appointments at other times to accommodate your schedule. I encourage you to meet with me periodically throughout the semester to work on your writing. Or, just stop by to chat—you’re always welcome, and I’m here to help (I usually have candy too).

*Twitter:* I maintain a professional Twitter account solely for my students and colleagues: @BridgetGelms (don’t worry—I don’t follow my students back unless they ask me to). During the school year, I tweet about teaching, research, and materials related to class—stuff that will help you succeed, so consider this a resource for your learning! Tweets about class will be tagged with #miami112 and I encourage you to use this hashtag to tweet about class—questions, concerns, revelations as you read and write. Students who engage with class via Twitter (responses/questions to the readings/films) generally receive higher participation grades than those who don’t. My hope is that Twitter can be a way for us all to connect outside of the classroom.

\*By remaining enrolled in this course, you acknowledge that you've read and understand the policies outlined in this syllabus.