

San José State University: Department of English and Comparative Literature
ENGL 281: Big Books
Section 1, Fall Semester, 2019

Course and Contact Information

Course Code:	47688
Instructor:	Allison Johnson
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Office Hours:	T R 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM,
Class Days/Time:	T 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM
Classroom:	Boccardo Business 221

Course Format

Seminar.

Course Description

This class is for serious students seriously into exploring and examining the big books of the nineteenth century. We're in it for the long haul, so don't bother with SparkNotes or summaries. We will track the evolution of the novel on both sides of the Atlantic, paying close attention to the circulation of texts and ideas. Students will conduct original research into publication history and the history of printing, and become familiar with major trends and movements that shaped American and British literature between 1800 and 1900.

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (3 hours per unit per week) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities. Because this is a 4-unit course, students can expect to spend a minimum of twelve hours per week preparing for and attending classes and completing course assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes:

This course will engage four of the five learning outcomes for the MA program:

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.

SLO 2. Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.

SLO 3. Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.

SLO 4. Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints.

Required Texts/Readings (Required)

Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*
Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*
Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*
George Eliot, *Middlemarch*
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*
Henry James, *The American*
Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

All other readings are available on the course website (C)

Course Requirements and Assignments

Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography, 20% [SLO 2-4]

Research Paper (10-20 pages), 30% [SLO 1-4]

Paper presentation (10 minutes), 10% [SLO 1-4]

Critical article presentation and class discussion leadership, 20% [SLO 1-4]

Participation: 15% [SLO 1-4]

Weekly online responses (posted to Canvas before class): 5% [SLO 1-4]

See Appendix A: Grading Policy for further information

Paper Regulations: Write your papers in double-spaced 12pt. Times New Roman font, and format them according to MLA guidelines. The OWL site produced by Purdue (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>) provides good examples of MLA citations. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 letter grade per day (including weekends).

Participation: Every student will come to class prepared for a critical discussion. **Every student will read all of the assigned readings**, come to every class meeting, engage with the texts and participate in the discussion, offer interpretations, ask and answer questions, and be respectful to other students. Please email me if you are unable to attend. Detrimental and disruptive behavior (i.e., text-messaging, instant-messaging, snapchatting) will result in the loss of participation

credit.

Weekly Discussion Questions/Analyses: Each week, you will post questions about the reading, suggest possible passages for close readings, and/or suggest possible readings of specific passages.

Office Hours and Email Policies: I encourage you to meet with me in my office to receive further assistance on assignments and papers, and ask me questions. You can email me if you are unable to come to the office.

Plagiarism Policy:

If you plagiarize, you will receive an automatic 0 grade. Please make sure you cite your sources using proper MLA format! See Appendix B: Academic Honesty.

Week 1: 8/27

Introduction; sign-up for presentations

Week 2: 9/3

Austen, *Mansfield Park*

Week 3: 9/10

Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Week 4: 9/17

Melville, *Moby Dick* (chapters 1-50)

Week 5: 9/24

Melville, *Moby Dick* (chapters 51-100)

Week 6: 10/1

Melville, *Moby Dick* (finish)

Week 7: 10/8

Selections from Stowe, from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Brown, from *Clotel* (C)

Week 8: 10/15

Dickens, *Bleak House* (preface-chapter 34)

Week 9: 10/22

Dickens, *Bleak House* (finish)

Week 10: 10/29

Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*

Week 11: 11/5

Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Books 1-3)

Week 12: 11/12

Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Books 4-6)

Week 13: 11/19

Eliot, *Middlemarch* (finish)

Week 14: 11/26

James, *The American*

Week 15: 12/3

Paper presentations

Final paper due December 15

Appendix A: Grading Policy

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: *In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.*

In written assignments for English 60, this scale is based on the following criteria:

A [90-92=A-, 93-96=A, 97-100=A+] = Excellent: The "A" essay is articulate and well developed with fluid transitions and a clear and persuasive use of evidence, which is drawn from the literary text itself, lecture materials (when appropriate), and research materials. An "A" essay contains a fresh insight that teaches the reader something new about the subject matter.

B [80-82=B-, 83-86=B, 87-89=B+] Above average: The "B" essay demonstrates a good understanding of its subject, a clear and persuasive use of evidence, a certain level of ease of expression, and solid organization. However, it usually lacks the level of originality and creativity that characterizes the insight found in an "A" essay.

C [70-72=C-, 73-76=C, 77-79=C+] = Average: The "C" essay makes a good attempt at all the assignment's requirements. It has a reasonable understanding of its subject matter but its ideas are frequently simplistic or over-generalized. The writing style is also more bland and repetitive than the style shown by "A" and "B" essays and it often contains flaws in grammar, punctuation, spelling and/or word choice. It may also use textual evidence out of context.

D [60-62=D-, 63-66=D, 67-69=D+] = Below average: The "D" essay is poorly

organized and generally unclear. It has inappropriate or inadequate examples, is noticeably superficial or simplistic, and/or contains some serious mechanical and grammatical problems. A "D" essay may also reveal some misunderstanding of the assignment requirements.

F = Failure: An "F" essay has not addressed the requirements of the assignment and is unacceptable work in terms of both form and content.

Appendix B: Academic Honesty

“San José State University defines cheating as the act of obtaining credit, attempting to obtain credit, or assisting others to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means.”

“San José State University defines plagiarism as the act of representing the work of another as one’s own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements.”

For full definition, see <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-7.pdf>

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>