

Introduction to Textual Analysis

Hartwick College
ENGL 190-3
MWF 10:10–11:05 a.m., Clark 346
(3 Credits, WD, GEO 2)
Fall 2023

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Required Texts¹

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. Remastered full-color ed., Pantheon, 2000.
MLA Handbook. 9th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2021.

Additional texts to be covered can be found on the calendar below. These will be available on D2L under “Content” and then the “Readings” folder. See endnotes for bibliographic citations.

Required Software

Microsoft Office. Students are required to use Microsoft Word for this class. Go to <https://portal.office.com>, log in using your Hartwick credentials (email and password), and install the full version of MS Office. The program is free for Hartwick students.

Prerequisites

The successful completion of ENGL 110 College Writing is highly recommended.

Catalog Description

The course is designed to teach students ways to explore, interpret, and appreciate texts by reading closely, writing critical essays, and applying critical approaches deliberately. In addition to poetry, fiction, and drama, texts may include film, television, and digital media. Class discussions will familiarize students with critical terms relevant to each genre. English, Creative Writing majors and minors, as well as English with an Emphasis in Writing majors, must take this course within one semester of declaring their major, and thus have priority. Nonmajors are, however, welcome. (WD, GEO 2)

Course Description and Purpose

Digital technologies have given us unprecedented access to texts. With the textual proliferation of the twenty-first century, it has become more important than ever to develop rigorous critical abilities to navigate the complex cultural landscape of our world. This course will introduce students to the tools for beginning the work of critical reading by familiarizing them with literary criticism, asking them to closely and carefully read works of literature, and training them to write effective arguments interpreting those works. Though students may take this course to fulfill a

¹ As you will most likely want to take copious notes in *House of Leaves* (2000) during the course of the semester, and, if you are an English or creative writing major or minor, will most likely use the *MLA Handbook* (2021) throughout your college career, I would recommend buying rather than renting both of the texts for this course.

general education requirement, its primary role is to serve as an introduction to students studying English and creative writing in the Department of Literature, Media, and Writing. As such, this course begins from a fairly basic set of questions: What does it mean to read something critically? How do we go about the work of close reading? Why is it important to understand cultural artifacts in terms of their social, political, and historical contexts? Why *read* literature? To help us begin to answer these questions, we will spend a significant amount of time carefully reading works of literature; students will write short papers and essays about those works; and we will also read critical, theoretical, and philosophical texts. Our investigations are intended to not only introduce students to the practice of textual analysis but also to provide significant, substantial tools to look more closely at the world, to take a critical stance, and to make arguments about the cultural production that surrounds us.

Learning Outcomes

By semester's end, students in this course should be able to: 1) produce a persuasive interpretive argument grounded in the close reading of a literary text (GEO 2); 2) demonstrate familiarity with the conventions of specific genres and attendant literary or theoretical terminology; 3) situate texts within their cultural, political, social, and literary context; 4) draw upon the work of others to support their analyses.

Other Course Requirements and Assignments

Texts—Becoming a strong, careful reader is essential for doing the work of textual analysis, so students will be required to have read and be prepared to discuss the assigned texts for each class meeting. Students must also bring the texts to class: this includes bringing the assigned book and *printouts* of the PDFs from D2L. Additional readings for the course (see below) can be found under the “Content” then the “Readings” section of D2L and then under a folder corresponding to the date by which given texts should be read. This course asks students to read *quite* a bit and *very* carefully. Our meetings and discussions will depend upon the intelligent and frequent involvement of each member of this class and this involvement is simply not possible if students do not come to class prepared. All students *must* obtain the edition of the texts specified above. Unless a student makes an individual arrangement with me or has received academic accommodations, electronic versions of the texts are not permitted; students are required to *print out* all readings from D2L and bring those printouts to class. Students should expect to read 75–150 pages per week.

Quizzes—Students will often be given unannounced short quizzes on the assigned material. Students who have done the reading will, for the most part, find these quizzes quite manageable. Students who fail a quiz will lose two percentage points off their total final grade. (If you do the math, multiple failed quizzes could dramatically lower your grade.) Quizzes cannot be made up, though I will drop the lowest score. Unless otherwise informed, all quizzes are open book.

Papers—Students will be asked to write a midterm essay of 5–7 pages and a final paper of 7–10 pages during the course of the semester, along with seven short papers of around 2 pages each. These papers are designed to build upon one another in preparation for your final paper. Their percentage of your grade will reflect this process. All papers should be proofread and polished. They should be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins

and should accord to MLA guidelines for citation and format.² Students who do not follow directions or fail to meet the basic requirements of an assignment—e.g., not meeting the page requirement,³ failing to format a paper correctly, or failing to upload a paper to D2L—will automatically cost that student a *minimum* of 5% of their grade (so B+ to B-, B to C+/B-, et cetera). I will primarily assess papers on the *strength of their argument*, *the quality of their idea*, and *the rigor of their analysis*. Due dates for these papers are below. The assignments with rubrics will follow. All papers must be handed in as hard copies in class *and* submitted on D2L. There will be a link under “Assignments” to electronically upload your papers.

Participation—As we will be engaged with critically reading texts and exploring them together in class, student participation is crucial to our work. Though I will occasionally lecture, the class is a collective inquiry into the subject matter, and class time will primarily consist of discussions that privilege students’ thinking, reading, and writing. As such, the course requires the input of all its participants and your attendance is a necessity. *More than four absences will negatively affect your grade, in which case you may want to consider withdrawing from the course and taking it again under better circumstances. Students who are marked absent for more than eight total classes will automatically fail the course.*

That said, I understand that it is possible that a student may miss significant class time due to illness, a positive COVID-19 test, or other unforeseen circumstances. In such cases, it is each individual student’s responsibility to communicate with me regarding any issues they might have attending class sessions or doing the work of the course. If students communicate with me about legitimate issues that may cause them to miss class time, I will do my best to work with them to make sure that they are given the opportunity to succeed.

Grading

Participation: 15%

Short Papers 20% (Short Paper 1 is worth 2%; all the rest are worth 3%)

Midterm Essay: 25%

Final: 40%

² I urge students to consult their *MLA Handbook* when formatting their works cited pages, as EndNote, Microsoft Word, or other citation software is often incorrect. Students should also note that this syllabus correctly cites each course text in MLA format either above or below.

³ 5–7 pages means that the paper must be *at least 5 full pages* (i.e., not 4 ½ or 4 ¾ pages). Students will not be penalized for going over the page requirement (within reason).

Classroom Etiquette

To create a solid logistical foundation that will ensure a positive learning environment for each participant, students should adhere to the following guidelines for classroom etiquette. Failure to do so may result in being marked absent or in penalties applied to a student's participation grade.

Texts—Students who do not have their text in class will be marked absent (whether I draw attention to it or not). This includes having *printouts* of the PDFs from D2L.

Lateness—I give crucial information and reminders about the course at the beginning of class, so being late is not only disruptive but means that students may miss information that is important to their success. Students who are frequently more than five minutes late will be marked absent.

Notes—Students should take notes during class meetings and should have the materials to do so. During my twenty years of teaching in higher education, I have found that, unsurprisingly, students who take notes in class perform better than students who do not. (Remember too that 15% of your grade is based on participation; taking notes is clear evidence of engagement in the class discussion and thus evidence of participation as well.)

Laptops, Phones, Tablets—Anyone observed using their mobile phone or another digital device during class, whether I draw attention to it or not, will be marked absent for the day.⁴ Phones will not be tolerated in this class, and the use of laptops or tablets in this course will not be permitted unless individual arrangements are made with the instructor or if a student has received academic accommodations.

Leaving Class—Ideally, students will not have to leave class. But students should feel free to get up without my permission as long as they do so unobtrusively. If individual students make a habit of leaving, however, I will have a conversation about disrupting class. If a student continues leaving frequently after this conversation, they will be marked absent each time they leave, regardless of circumstance. If a student has any issue that would cause them to need to get up frequently, please talk with me in the first weeks of class or at any time during the semester.

Headphones—Please make sure to remove your headphones or earbuds in class. Failure to do so will result in being marked absent.

Participation—Students should be prepared to participate throughout the class. I frequently call on students even if they have not raised their hand. Please speak with me during the first week of class if this is an issue for you.

⁴ On how students more fully retain information if notes are taken by hand rather than on a computer, see Meyer, Robinson. "To Remember a Lecture Better, Take Notes by Hand." *Atlantic*, 1 May 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>.

FlightPath

Hartwick's FlightPath is a student-centered program that is flexible and adaptable to support your pathway to graduation and to prepare you for what lies ahead. By the time you graduate from Hartwick, you will have a suite of skills and experiences that tie together the breadth of your Hartwick education and highlight your accomplishments. This course supports the development of student educational outcomes in the following way(s): it fulfills FlightPath General Education Outcome 2 (GEO 2), fulfills the requirement for a 200-level Writing Designated class (WD), and fulfills a requirement for students studying English and creative writing; it also may fulfill a requirement in other majors and minors. This course also fulfills the Liberal Arts in Practice requirement for Experiential Learning (EL).

College COVID-19 Policy

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, circumstances may necessitate adjustments to instruction, such as shifts in mode of instruction (to remote or hybrid), classroom capacity limits, or indoor mask requirements. Updates will be provided on the College website (<https://www.hartwick.edu/about-us/covid-19-updates/>). Instructors will communicate with students about any specific adjustments that are being made to their courses, such as modality of instruction, expectations for participation, and any changes to assigned work; students should check their Hartwick email accounts frequently for information from their instructors.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. It will result in a zero for the assignment and a formal charge will be filed with the Office of Academic Affairs. Plagiarism could also result in more serious action, including a student failing the class and being suspended from the College. *Plagiarism includes: lack of proper citations when quoting from someone else's work; representing someone else's work as your own; and knowingly allowing one's work to be submitted by someone else. Plagiarism also includes: copy and pasting from online (or offline) sources without quotation or attribution; using online paraphrase tools (such as QuillBot) to change other people's words and then submitting them as your own; and using generative AI (such as ChatGPT) and submitting without attribution any portion of its output as your own, including any ideas or topics it may have generated.* In this class, students are prohibited from using generative AI in any way unless an assignment says otherwise, and any unattributed use of generative AI constitutes plagiarism.⁵ Finally, as each assignment in this class is designed to build upon the previous one, culminating in two major assignments, if there is evidence that a student has plagiarized a short paper—e.g., Short Paper 3 or 7—students will not only receive a zero for that assignment but also for the larger assignment that short paper is building toward—i.e., your Midterm Essay or Final Paper. Violations of Hartwick's Academic Honesty policy are not limited to plagiarism, so students should familiarize themselves with it at: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/academic-affairs/academic-policies/>.

Academic Adjustments and/or Modifications

Students must present me with an updated Academic Plan Letter for the fall 2023 semester in order to be eligible for academic adjustments. Hartwick College is committed to upholding and maintaining all aspects of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If a student with a disability wishes to request academic adjustments, they should contact Lara Sanford, Director of AccessAbility Services, at sanfordl@hartwick.edu or AccessAbilityServices@hartwick.edu. AccessAbility Services is located on the fifth floor of Yager Library in the Center for Student Success. Any information regarding a student's disability will remain confidential. Requests for academic adjustments should be made as early as possible. Please reach out to the instructor with any other concerns you might have about the course, including accessing course texts.

The Writing Center

Located in Clark Hall 230, the Writing Center offers free one-on-one writing support for any stage of writing, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revising. The Writing Center offers personalized feedback on short assignments, essays, senior theses, resumes, graduate school applications, scholarship applications, and other documents. Students can request in-person or [Zoom](#) support by scheduling thirty-minute or one-hour appointments through [Navigate](#). Asynchronous email support is also available by emailing your assignment prompt, assignment,

⁵ On attributing AI output in MLA style, see "Ask the MLA: How Do I Cite Generative AI in MLA Style?" *MLA Style Center*, 17 Mar. 2023, <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>. Which is also to say: even though students will not be using generative AI in this class, we *will* be covering how to appropriately cite the use of ChatGPT or other AI tools in your writing later in the semester.

and any questions to WritingCenter@Hartwick.edu. In some cases, I may send you to the Writing Center for help on a particular assignment or issue.

E-mail Communication Policy

Each student is issued a college email address (username@hartwick.edu) upon admittance. This email address may be used by the college for official communication with students. I will also communicate with students via their hartwick.edu address. Students are expected to regularly read email sent to this account. Failure to read and react to communications from either the College or from me in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. If email is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to communications sent to their Hartwick email address.

Health and Success

Success in this course depends heavily on your personal health and wellbeing. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your other instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in this course as soon as it occurs and before it becomes unmanageable. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you. Hartwick offers free counseling for students who are experiencing personal or emotional difficulties. The Counseling Center is located in the Perrella Health Center and offers psychological services and sexual assault services. Appointments can be made Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., by calling (607) 431-4420 or emailing counselingcenter@hartwick.edu.

Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Reporting

Hartwick College is committed to equal opportunity and providing a safe community free from all forms of sexual misconduct including sexual-/gender-based harassment, discrimination, dating or domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault. If you wish to make an official report to the College or have questions about the College policy and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, Michael Arno, at titleix@hartwick.edu or (607) 431-4293. Online reporting and policy information is available at <http://www.hartwick.edu/titleix>. If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact one of the following resources: Perrella Wellness Center, Health or Counseling: (607) 431-4120; or Opportunities for Otsego's Violence Intervention Program: (607) 432-4855. All other employees of the College are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator so that support and resources can be provided for all parties.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion, or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Calendar⁶

- 8.28 Syllabus
Introductions
- 8.30 In-Class Ice Breaker
Ezra Pound, “In a Station of the Metro”¹
- 9.1 Terry Eagleton, “What Is Literature?” and excerpt from “The Rise of English”²
- 9.4 No class, Labor Day
- 9.6 Plato, from *The Republic*³ (pp. 43–46, 58–74)
- 9.8 **Short Paper 1 Due**
Plato, from *The Republic* (pp. 75–89)
- 9.11 Aristotle, *Poetics*⁴
- 9.13 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. i–xxiii)
- 9.15 Excerpt from 8th ed. of the *MLA Handbook*⁵
Bradley J. Fest, “Formatting a Paper in MLA Style”⁶
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
Workshop Short Paper 1
- 9.18 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 1–23)
- 9.20 M. H. Abrams, “Orientation of Critical Theories”⁷
- 9.22 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 24–73)
- 9.25 **Short Paper 2 Due**
Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 74–106)
- 9.27 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 107–152)
- 9.29 Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
Workshop Short Paper 2
- 10.2 Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense”⁸
- 10.4 Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense” (continued)
- 10.6 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 153–245)
- 10.9 **Short Paper 3 Due**
Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 246–312)
- 10.11 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 313–352)
- 10.13 Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
Workshop Short Paper 3
- 10.16 No class, October Break
- 10.18 **Short Paper 4 Due**
Midterm Essay Workshop

⁶ Please note that additional readings or handouts may be assigned when appropriate and that the schedule is subject to change. For ease with citation, bibliographic endnotes to the readings available on D2L (anything with an endnote) have been provided below in MLA style.

- 10.20 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 353–407)
- 10.23 Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”⁹
- 10.25 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 408–528)
- 10.27 **Midterm Essay Due**
Bring to class: *House of Leaves*
- 10.30 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”¹⁰
- 11.1 Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?”¹¹
- 11.3 Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
Workshop Midterm Essay
- 11.6 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 529–583)
- 11.8 **Short Paper 5**
Library Day
- 11.10 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 584–644)
- 11.13 N. Katherine Hayles, “Inhabiting *House of Leaves*”¹²
Jessica Pressman, “*House of Leaves*: Reading the Networked Novel”¹³
- 11.15 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”¹⁴
- 11.17 **Short Paper 6 Due**
Re-read Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (continued)
- 11.20 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (pp. 645–709)
- 11.22 No class, Thanksgiving Break
- 11.24 No class, Thanksgiving Break
- 11.27 **Short Paper 7 Due**
Final Paper Workshop
- 11.29 N. Katherine Hayles, “How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine”¹⁵
- 12.1 Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History”¹⁶
Concluding Lecture
- 12.5 **Final Paper Due in Dr. Fest’s Mailbox on the 2nd Floor of Clark Hall and Uploaded to D2L by 5 p.m.**

Endnotes

- ¹ Pound, Ezra. "In a Station of the Metro." 1913. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, edited by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, 5th ed., W. W. Norton, 2005, p. 1297.
- ² Eagleton, Terry. "What Is Literature?" and "The Rise of English." *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 1983. 2nd ed., U of Minnesota P, 1996, pp. 1–14, 15–26.
- ³ Plato. From *The Republic*. Translated by Richard W. Sterling and William C. Scott. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch, 3rd ed., W. W. Norton, 2018, pp. 43–46, 58–89.
- ⁴ Aristotle. *Poetics*. Translated by James Hutton. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch, 3rd ed., W. W. Norton, 2018, pp. 95–127.
- ⁵ *MLA Handbook*. 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016, pp. vii–20.
- ⁶ Fest, Bradley J. "Formatting a Paper in MLA Style: Quoting Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde's Prose and Poetry." Handout for ENGL 247: Four Modern American Poets, fall 2021, Hartwick College.
- ⁷ Abrams, M. H. "Orientation of Critical Theories." *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford UP, 1953, pp. 3–29.
- ⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense." 1873. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, translated and edited by Ronald Speirs, edited by Raymond Geuss, Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 139–53.
- ⁹ Sontag, Susan. "Against Interpretation." 1964. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966, pp. 3–14.
- ¹⁰ Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." 1968. *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, Hill and Wang, 1977, pp. 142–48.
- ¹¹ Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" 1969. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited and translated by Donald F. Bouchard, translated by Sherry Simon, Cornell UP, 1977, pp. 113–38.
- ¹² Hayles, N. Katherine. "Inhabiting *House of Leaves*." *Writing Machines*. MIT P, 2002, 108–31.
- ¹³ Pressman, Jessica. "*House of Leaves*: Reading the Networked Novel." *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 34, no. 1, Spring 2006, pp. 107–28.
- ¹⁴ Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." 1939. Translated by Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott. *Selected Writings*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, vol. 4, Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006, pp. 251–83.
- ¹⁵ Hayles, N. Katherine. "How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine." *ADE Bulletin*, no. 150, 2010, pp. 62–78. MLA Academic Program Services, <https://doi.org/10.1632/ade.150.62>.
- ¹⁶ Benjamin, Walter. "On the Concept of History." 1950. Translated Harry Zohn. *Selected Writings*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, vol. 4, Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006, pp. 389–400.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Rochester Institute of Technology for their statement on health and success (<https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/syllabus-design/rit-policies>).