

Introduction to Textual Analysis

Hartwick College
ENGL 220-6
(3 Credits, WD)
Fall 2026

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Office: 226 Clark Hall, ext. 4921
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MWF 1:25 p.m.–2:20 p.m., Clark Hall 248

Office Hours: by appointment

Required Texts¹

DeLillo, Don. *White Noise: Text and Criticism*. 1985. Edited by Mark Osteen, Penguin, 1998.
MLA Handbook. 9th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2021.

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. Required texts will include poetry, fiction, and drama, and class discussions will familiarize students with critical terms relevant to each genre. English majors must take this course within one semester of declaring their major. (WD)

Course Description and Purpose

Considering the observable erosion over the past twenty-five years in the quality of education in the United States, along with the palpable damage smart phones and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has done to our attention and our capacities for reading, writing, and critical thinking, it has become more important than ever for young people to develop rigorous critical skills for navigating the complex cultural landscape of our world and to become capable of reading, writing, and thinking for themselves. This course aims to give students the tools for beginning this work by asking them to closely and carefully read a single work of literature over the course of the semester, training them to write effective arguments interpreting that work, and familiarizing them with literary theory and criticism. Though students may take this course to fulfill a general education requirement, its primary role is to serve as an introduction for 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? Why write about it? Our investigations of these and other questions are intended to not only

¹ As you will want to take copious notes in *White Noise* (1985) during the course of the semester, and, if you are an English or creative writing major or minor, will be using the *MLA Handbook* (2021) throughout your college career, I would recommend buying rather than renting both of the texts for this course. Students who have any difficulty obtaining any of the required texts for this course should contact me as early as possible in the semester.

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) close read passages in a literary text; 2) produce a persuasive interpretive argument grounded in that close reading; 3) situate texts within their cultural, political, social, and literary context; and 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, which includes bringing the assigned book, the *MLA Handbook*, or readings I hand out. (I will provide hard copies of all additional readings for the course [see below]; they can also be found under the “Content” then the “Readings” section of D2L.) This course asks students to read *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 should expect to read 30–90 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 either the lowest quiz score or the lowest annotation score (see immediately below). Unless otherwise informed, all quizzes are open book.

Annotation Checks—When doing the assigned readings for this course, students are expected to underline important passages, take marginal notes, and otherwise annotate and markup the text. Part of learning to become a good critical reader (and writer) is learning how to annotate a text effectively. As such, I will often collect readings at the beginning or end of class in order to see if students have been doing this work (annotating a text is, basically, proof that you have *read* the text). These checks will be graded the same way quizzes are: If you have taken annotations, great! You're fulfilling the minimum expectations of this class. If you have not annotated your text, you will lose two percentage points off your total final grade. Like quizzes, annotation checks cannot be made up, though I will ignore either one failed check or one failed quiz.

Short Papers and Essays: During the course of the semester, students will be asked to write a Midterm Essay and a Final Essay, along with six Short Papers. These assignments are designed to build upon one another in preparation for your Final Essay, and their percentage of your grade will reflect this process. All the graded assignments for this course will also be written in class with pen and paper, and students will not be allowed to have any digital devices out while writing (unless arrangements have been made with me or a student has received academic

accommodations). Unless otherwise informed, all writing assignments are open book and students can bring one page of handwritten notes for their Midterm and Final Essay. I will primarily assess a student's writing on the *strength of their argument, the quality of their idea, and the rigor of their analysis*. Short Papers cannot be made up, though I will drop the lowest grade.²

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' reading, writing, and thinking. 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 I mark 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 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 they have the opportunity to succeed.

Grading

Participation: 20%

Short Papers: 20% (4% each, lowest grade dropped)

Midterm Essay: 20%

Final Essay: 40%

² Students who know they will miss a second or third Short Paper and will *not have missed more than four classes* should contact me at least forty-eight hours in advance for an alternative assignment.

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 the handouts I pass out.

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 more than 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.³ Remember too that you can use a page of notes on your Midterm and Final Essays, and, as 20% of your grade is based on participation, taking notes is clear evidence of engagement in the discussion and thus evidence of participation as well.

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

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 and leave their phones on their desks (students should also leave their phones on their desks if they need to get up during an in-class writing assignment). 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.

³ 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." *The Atlantic*, 1 May 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course in any way. It will result in a zero for the assignment and a formal charge will be filed with the Office of Academic Affairs. More than one count of plagiarism in this course will be grounds for failure. Plagiarism could also result in more serious action, including a student being suspended or expelled 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: Copying online (or offline) sources without quotation or attribution; using online paraphrase tools (such as QuillBot) to change other people's words or your own and then submitting those tools' output as your own; using generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) or large-language models (LLMs such as ChatGPT) and submitting without attribution any portion of its output as your own, including any ideas or topics it may have generated; and turning in handwritten work that is not your own, original work.*

In this class, *students are prohibited from using generative AI in any way unless an assignment says otherwise*, and any unattributed use of GenAI constitutes plagiarism and will be considered a violation of Hartwick's Academic Integrity Policy. Further, as different writing software such as Grammarly is increasingly incorporating GenAI—indeed, Grammarly advertises itself as an “AI writing partner”—any writing software other than Google Docs, dictionaries, thesauruses, or similar resources are prohibited; prohibited software includes Grammarly, paraphrase tools (such as QuillBot), reference generators, and plagiarism checkers, and the use of any such software will be considered plagiarism in this class. Violations of Hartwick's Academic Integrity Policy are not limited to plagiarism, so students also should familiarize themselves with the College's policies 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 2026 semester in order to be eligible for academic adjustments. Hartwick College is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and welcomes students with disabilities into all the College's educational programs. The AccessAbility Services Office is responsible for the determination of appropriate modifications for students who encounter barriers due to a disability. If a student with a disability wishes to request academic accommodations, they should contact Lara Sanford, Director of AccessAbility Services and Academic Inclusivity, at sanfordl@hartwick.edu or AccessAbilityServices@Hartwick.edu. To serve you best, requests should be made as early as possible. Please let me know if you have questions or need assistance. I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive in its design. If you encounter barriers, please let me know immediately so that we can determine if there is a design adjustment that can be made or if an accommodation might be needed to overcome the limitations of the design. I am happy to consider creative solutions if they do not compromise the intent of the assessment or learning activity.

The Writing Center and Tutoring Services

The Charlotte Orr Hotaling Writing Center (Clark 230) 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, résumés, graduate school applications, scholarship applications, and other documents. Students can request in-person or online video support by scheduling thirty-minute or one-hour appointments. Asynchronous email support is also available by emailing your assignment prompt, assignment, and email any questions to WritingCenter@hartwick.edu. The Writing Center is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Drop-in visits are welcome. More information about the Writing Center can be found here: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/writing-center/>. Tutoring services are available here: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/center-for-student-success/css-services/tutoring-services/>.

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 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 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 also 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 available to help with these issues and may be reached by calling (607) 431-4420 or emailing counselingcenter@hartwick.edu. Counseling services are *free of charge* and confidential. HEART, a peer counseling service, is also available if you are more comfortable talking with a fellow student who has been trained to offer information and support in a safe, nonjudgmental atmosphere. To reach a HEART Peer Counselor, email heart@hartwick.edu.

Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Reporting

Hartwick College faculty are committed to creating a safe learning environment for all members of our community, free from gender and sex-based discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The Title IX Coordinator will reach out to provide resources, support, and options after receiving a report of violations of this policy, but recipients are not required to respond to such outreach. Please note that faculty members are considered nonconfidential employees. Under the College's Title IX, Discrimination and Harassment Policy, nonconfidential employees must report disclosures of sex or gender-based discrimination or violence to the Title IX Coordinator (Geoffrey Gabriel, gabrielg@hartwick.edu). If you or a student you know has experienced any sex or gender-based discrimination or violence and wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the following resources: Perrella Wellness Center, Health (607) 431-4120, the Counseling Center (also located in Perrella) (607) 431-4120, or Opportunities for Otsego's Violence Intervention Program (607) 432-4855.

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.

Calendar⁴

- 8.31 Syllabus
Introductions
- 9.2 Mark Osteen, "Introduction" and "Chronology," in *White Noise*, pp. vii–xix
- 9.4 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 1–8
Walker Percy, "The Loss of the Creature"¹
- 9.7 Labor Day, no class
- 9.9 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 9–53
- 9.11 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 54–84
- 9.14 **Short Paper 1**
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 9.16 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 85–129
- 9.18 Workshop In-Class Writing Assignment 1
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 9.21 **Short Paper 2**
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 9.23 Excerpt from 8th ed. of the *MLA Handbook*²
- 9.25 Bradley J. Fest, "Formatting a Paper in MLA Style"³
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 9.28 Dan Sinykin and Johanna, "Introduction," pp. 1–10⁴
Workshop Short Paper 2
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 9.30 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 129–63
- 10.2 **Short Paper 3**
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 10.5 Dan Sinykin and Johanna Winant, "Introduction," pp. 11–20
Workshop Short Paper 3
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 10.7 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 165–203
- 10.9 **Short Paper 4**
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 10.12 Workshop In-Class Writing Assignment 4
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 10.14 **Midterm Essay, day 1**
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 10.16 **Midterm Essay, day 2**

⁴ 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 I handed out to you and that are available on D2L (anything with an endnote) have been provided below in MLA style.

Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.

- 10.19 October Break, no class
10.21 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 204–36
10.23 Dan Sinykin and Johanna Winant, “Introduction,” pp. 21–36
Workshop Midterm Essay
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 10.26 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 237–71
10.28 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 272–303
10.30 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, pp. 304–26
- 11.2 Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” pp. 1–19⁵
11.4 Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” pp. 19–42
11.6 Fredric Jameson, “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” pp. 1–25⁶
- 11.9 Fredric Jameson, “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” pp. 26–54
11.11 Tom LeClair, “Closing the Loop: *White Noise*,” in *White Noise*, pp. 387–411
11.13 John N. Duvall, “The (Super)Marketplace of Images: Television as Unmediated Mediation in DeLillo’s *White Noise*,” in *White Noise*, pp. 432–55
- 11.16 **Short Paper 5**
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 11.18 Workshop Short Paper 5
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
Discussion of Final Essay Project and Library Tutorial
- 11.20 Library Day (meet in classroom)
- 11.23 Thanksgiving Break, no class
11.25 Thanksgiving Break, no class
11.27 Thanksgiving Break, no class
- 11.30 Make sure to read the sources you found on 11.20 prior to class and also make sure to also bring them to class.
- Short Paper 6**
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 12.2 Workshop Short Paper 6
Bring to class: *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.
- 12.4 Arne De Boever, “The Essay vs. AI”⁷
- 12.10 **Final Exam: Final Essay**
4:00–7:00 p.m.

Endnotes

¹ Percy, Walker. "The Loss of the Creature." 1954. *Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other*, Picador, 2000, pp. 46–63.

² *MLA Handbook*. 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016, pp. vii–20.

³ Fest, Bradley J. "Formatting a Paper in MLA Style: Quoting Adrienne Richa and Audre Lorde's Prose and Poetry." Handout for ENGL 247: Four Modern American Poets, Fall 2021, Hartwick College.

⁴ Sinykin, Dan, and Johanna Winant. "Introduction." *Close Reading for the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton UP, 2025, pp. 1–36.

⁵ Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra." *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, U of Michigan P, 1994, pp. 1–42.

⁶ Jameson, Fredric. "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke UP, 1991, pp. 1–54.

⁷ De Boever, Arne. "The Essay vs. AI: On the Literary Value of Criticism." *Exocriticism*, special issue of *b2o: an online journal*, edited by Arne De Boever and Frédéric Neyrat, vol. 8, no. 1, May 2026,

<https://www.boundary2.org/2026/05/arne-de-boever-the-essay-vs-ai-on-the-literary-value-of-criticism/>.