

King's University College

ENG2299 (570)

Critical Practice

Fall 2026

Instructor: C. Dowdell

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:00am-12:00pm via Zoom.

Course Prerequisites

At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1000-1999, or Writing 1020F/G or Writing 2101F/G or permission of the Department. There are no anti-requisites for this course.

Mode of Instruction

In-person.

Course Description

As a core course for English students, ENG2299 offers a solid foundation in existing methodologies, and in this regard maps out the assumptions of the discipline. To the extent that it fulfills this objective, this course aligns with *King's Strategic Plan* (2017-2024), in which the College commits itself to "ensur[ing] that students understand the body of knowledge specific to their discipline, and learn to think critically, communicate effectively, and gain an appreciation of the professional standards associated with each discipline" (1.1.1). We would be forgiven if we questioned the exact relationship between critical thinking and professional standards. Framed as such, any mapping of the professional standards associated with our discipline must also be a self-reflective accounting of literary studies, a taking measure of the disciplinary status quo, and a critical (re)evaluation of how methodological assumptions continue to suppress, silence, marginalize, and discourage non-European, non-white, non-male intellectual traditions, cognitive styles, and critical practices.

What exactly constitutes critical literary practice? Toril Moi argues that literary criticism is just another word for “reading.” Whether we apply a psychoanalytical, ecocritical, or postcolonial lens to a text, methodologically we do the same thing: we read. When we read, Moi argues, we “look and think in response to particular questions” (34). And yet, the questions that a text poses are far from given. As the so-called Method Wars of the early 2010s attest, *how* we read comes down to what questions we look for and think about, and what we choose to focus on depends, to a certain extent, “on different views of what we think is important in literature (and in life)” (Moi 35). When we privilege a Marxist, feminist or queer critical perspective, we make certain assumptions about what is important and what is marginal in a particular text, about what a text says and what a text doesn’t say, about what a text means historically versus contemporaneously. In short, we make assumptions about *how* to read.

It follows that the “doing” of literary study engages with crucial ethical decisions at every turn, decisions that become evident when we slow our reading to observe our own thinking processes and to critique their shortcomings. As Reuben Brower notes, “slowing down the process of reading...[permits us] ... to attend very closely to the words, their uses, and their meanings” (4). But reading slowly does not just mean reading *carefully*; it also means reading *self-critically*. In this view, reading offers opportunities for metacognition, a skill that (we might argue) distinguishes human readers from machine readers in an age of AI. Obviously, literature does not produce meaning in a vacuum. We must, therefore, also account for the unique set of interests, skills, and experiences that each of us brings to the text and which inflect its meaning.

This course offers an intensive examination of the major critical perspectives that inform the academic study of reading literature. To encourage the critical practice of slow reading, we will examine a single literary text, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), considered through a variety of critical lenses. Through weekly two-hour lectures, we will scrutinize the affordances and shortcomings of various critical approaches, underscoring the practical and ideological assumptions of each approach. Finally, we will consider the technical craft of literary analysis. How do prominent literary scholars use and abuse textual evidence to argue their points? How do citational genealogies work to canonize seminal authors and interpretations (viz. Ahmed 2017) while silencing diverse resistant voices and unique critical perspectives? Weekly one-hour tutorials will complement the lecture materials, providing students with an opportunity to apply their understanding of the critical methodologies to practical writing tasks.

Course-Level Learning Outcomes

1. To become fluent in the critical terms and primary concepts relevant to the study of literature (e.g., formalist, feminist, psychoanalytical, poststructuralist, critical race theory, queer/trans theory, postcolonial, ecological, new historicism, disability studies, etc.).
2. To recognize the chief conceptual and theoretical assumptions and/or limitations of each critical methodology; to question and critically reflect on the extent to which the foundational concepts of our discipline (and of the academy more generally) do not particularly align with a commitment to decolonial, anti-oppressive, and antiracist frameworks.

3. To create an infrastructure for actively dismantling racism, homo/transphobia, misogyny, gender-based discrimination/violence, linguicism, and ableism through the questions we ask, the answers we pose, and the work we do as scholars and academics.
4. Through close textual analysis of a single primary text, to attune ourselves to the historical, cultural, and ideological factors that influence both the publication, reception, and critical production of literary texts.
5. To further develop critical thinking and writing skills, gaining practical experience in essay writing relevant to the discipline of English. We will focus on (i) linking individual textual passages to larger themes and ideas; (ii) creating complex arguments or sustained claims; (iii) developing research skills and information literacy, with attention to AI and the politics of citation practices; (iv) forging an academic style; (v) and learning to revise and edit our work.

Required Books

Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein: the original 1818 text*. Edited by D. L. MacDonald and Kathleen Scherf. Third Edition. Broadview Press, 2012. Print: \$22.41; eBook: \$14.04

N.B. Additional sources are available via Brightspace. Please see Study Schedule for appropriate links.

Method of Evaluation

As a core English course designed to serve the needs of those declaring a Major in English, ENG2299 aims to provide students with the practical skills necessary for persuasive written communication. With this goal in mind, the assignments for this course will develop your facility with close reading and critical thinking, alongside practical writing, self-editing, and research skills. Evaluation will focus on (i) students' application of theoretical concepts discussed in lecture through practical writing exercises; and (ii) students' progression over the semester, as gauged by their facility with revising and resubmitting their work. Writing assignments are, therefore, cumulative in nature, moving from your initial reading memoir through to your statement of intended research. **Please Note:** There is no final examination.

A Note on Self-Plagiarism

Self-plagiarism refers to the practice of using material from one assignment you have written to write another. This practice is not permitted in most academic contexts. In this course, however, you are encouraged (and, indeed, required) to revise your own materials, integrating effectively written passages from class work or shorter assignments into your final assignment.

ASSIGNMENT	SCALE	WEIGHT	DUE DATES
Attendance & Participation (Lecture, Tutorial, Graduate Workshop)	3	15%	Ongoing, Weeks 2-12
Weekly Perusal Annotations x 8	3	15%	Ongoing, Weeks 2-12
Reading Memoir	100	10%	Sunday, September 20
Close Reading Assignment	100	10%	Wednesday, October 28
Thesis Structure Assignment	100	10%	Sunday, November 1
Annotated Bibliography	100	10%	Sunday, November 15
Peer Review Exercise	3	15%	Monday, November 30 (submission of draft to peer) Tuesday, December 1/Tuesday, December 7 (Workshop days)
Statement of Intended Research	100	15%	Sunday, December 13

Late Policy

- All assignments will be graded and returned electronically via OWL.
- Students will have seven (7) days from the scheduled due date to submit their assignments without penalty.
- No assignments will be accepted after the 7th day.
- All requests for accommodations, processed through either the ADO and/or Accessibility Services, will be accepted without question. Students who have received special accommodation must contact me to email me to discuss alternate deadlines and/or means of submission.
- Out of respect for my own schedule, I cannot guarantee that assignments after the due date will receive the same degree of substantive commentary. I will, however, do my best, and you are always free to discuss your assignments with me in person.

Expectations for Grammar, Typography, and Documentation Style

Effective proofreading is a crucial part of the writing process and contributes significantly to the overall quality of your assignments. Sloppy writing and careless errors distract your reader and undermine the credibility of your analysis. Students are expected to thoroughly proofread their assignments before submission.

Assignments with more than FIVE (5) typographical errors and/or grammatical errors, which impede the clarity of your thought, will automatically receive a grade of 1/3 on assignments graded out of 3, and a reduction of 10% on assignments graded out of 100.

Grammatical and documentation expectations will be clearly laid out during our writing tutorials. Students are expected to acquire basic grammatical literacy. Therefore, in addition to the materials covered in tutorial, you must adhere to the rules/conventions posted on Brightspace. I will NOT be covering these materials in class, but if you have any questions about these requirements, please do not hesitate to reach out.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this assessment.
- If instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs. (For example, if students need to submit X of Y assignments, this flexibility already provides consideration.)
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the “Special Examination” (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a multiple exam situation (i.e., you are scheduled to write more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

Western’s Mental Health Services site provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help:
<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Social Worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

7. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

8. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

9. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.