

**English 113 (3): Reading Narrative**  
University of Saskatchewan  
Class: T/TH 10:00-11:30 ARTS 109

**Dr. Justin Pfefferle**  
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Office: Health Science, A102  
Office Hours: Monday, 1:00-2:30

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“We tell ourselves stories in order to live”

--Joan Didion

**Course Description:**

In English 113, Reading Narrative, we will test the efficacy of Didion’s claim about storytelling by engaging with a variety of literary texts: essays, short fiction, novels, and theatre. As well as introducing students to the field of literary studies, this course will provide ample opportunities to hone critical thinking, reading, and writing practices. Students who take this course should be prepared for a challenging workload, including voluminous reading, writing, and re-writing. They should expect to complete the term with a sophisticated awareness of the development of narrative forms and techniques, and a heightened ability to craft persuasive analytical arguments about them.

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**Grading Breakdown:**

*Library Instruction Program Assignments:* Pass/Fail (Mandatory)

**Due: 30 October (Online)**

*Class Engagement:* 15%

Thoughtful and constructive engagement is crucial to any course in the humanities. Be prepared daily to contribute in meaningful ways to our intellectual community.

*Reading Quizzes:* 15%

Reading quizzes will happen randomly at the beginning of class. They will test your basic knowledge of readings that will have been assigned for that particular day.

*Short Essay:* 20%

The first essay (3-4 pages) will take the form of a close reading of a short passage from a literary text that we will have discussed in class. The paper will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of its writing and the sophistication of its analysis.

**Due: 6 October**

*Final Paper:* 25%

In the final paper (4-5 pages) for this course, you will make a persuasive analytical argument about any text (or texts) that appear on our syllabus. The paper should engage with the major ideas that will have emerged in our conversations over the course of the term

**Due: 17 Nov**

Final Exam: 25%

**Date: TBA**

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**Required Texts:**

Didion, Joan. *The White Album*

Fleming, Ian. *Casino Royale*

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* (1818 edition)

Strunk, William and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style* (Fourth Edition)

NB: Texts other than those listed above will be posted to the course Blackboard page. Students must have these **printed off** and with them in class, as electronic reading devices are prohibited.

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**Course Trajectory:**

**Week One (6 Sept): Introduction to English Literature**

Reading: Joan Didion, "Why I Write" and "On Keeping a Notebook"; George Orwell, "Why I Write"

**Week Two (13 Sept): Confessional Narrative**

James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son"

**Week Three (20 Sept): Stories to Live**

Joan Didion, *The White Album*

**Week Four (27 Sept): Bearing Witness**

Joan Didion, *The White Album* continued

**Week Six (4 Oct): Storytelling and Re-telling**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

**\*\*Short Essay – 6 Oct\*\***

**Week Seven (11 Oct): Narratives and Frame Narratives**

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

**Week Eight (18 Oct): Unreliable Narration**

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* continued

**Week Nine (25 Oct): Gothic Narrative**

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," and Elizabeth Bowen, "The Demon Lover"

**Due (30 Oct): Library Instruction Program Assignments**

**Week Ten (1 Nov): Pulp Fiction: Spies and Spy Stories**

Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale*

**Week Eleven (15 Nov): Narrative Across Media**

Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale* continued

**\*\*Final Paper – 17 Nov\*\***

**Week Twelve (22 Nov): Personal and Political Storytelling**

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

**Week Thirteen (6 Dec): Is Theatre 'Narrative'?**

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* continued

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**Online Library Instruction Program:**

The Online Library Instruction Program is a **required** element of every first-year English class. The aim of the program is to introduce students to the library website and research tools, to identify the difference between primary texts and secondary sources, and to become familiar with the Murray Library. Over the first two months of term, read the four modules, complete the four quizzes, and e-mail your professor the completed "Find a Book in the Library" exercise.

Deadline for completion: **Oct. 30.**

**Late Work:**

If you anticipate not being able to submit work on time, you must make a formal (written) request for an extension no later than **two weeks before the due date**. After that point, due dates are non-negotiable. Late work will result in your being docked 5%/day late.

**Mandatory Attendance Policy:**

Attendance for this class is mandatory. Failure to attend regularly will result in your being asked to drop the course.

**Technology Policy:**

A 2011 study at the University of Michigan found that 75% of students reported that "using a laptop during class increased the amount of time they spent on non-course work." 35% of students reported having spent "more than ten minutes per class using social media sites and email."

Although I am uploading readings to the web, I expect you to print them out and have them with you – ideally with voluminous marginal notes! – in class every day. Without exception, laptops, tablets, and cell phones must be stowed away in bags.

**Disability Services for Students:**

I encourage you to consult information pertaining to disability services (<https://students.usask.ca/health/centres/disability-services-for-students.php>) and to approach me if there is anything I can do to make our class more accessible to you.