

ENGL 23800-002: Introduction to Fiction



EXPLORATION



Course Information

This course is entitled “ENGL 23800-002: Introduction to Fiction” (CRN: 25346). This course will begin Monday, January 9, and end Friday, April 28, 2023, (that is, for the full Spring 2023 term) and will meet in person from 11:30 a.m.–12:20 p.m. in WALC 3148. You can access our course calendar, which includes readings and due dates for all assignments, at the end of this syllabus or [here](#) as a Google doc.

Instructor Information

Name: Alex Anderson

Email: ande1204@purdue.edu

Student Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:00 a.m. in HEAV 209 or by appointment

Course Description

This course will introduce you to a variety of narrative forms and styles as well as the basic tools necessary for understanding, analyzing, and writing about fiction. The particular focus of this course is on exploration, a word which is sure to conjure notions of journey, adventure, discovery, introspection, and analysis. These exploratory elements (as well as others like them) not only play important roles in many forms, styles, and genres of fiction, but they also mirror the exploratory nature of reading fiction. Put simply: Fiction encourages readers to explore different ideas, points of view, and worlds. When readers take the time and energy to invest in fiction, these texts can encourage readers to step outside of their own

experiences and explore the unknown. To navigate this expedition into fiction, we will consider questions like, “What kinds of exploration take place in fiction? What does exploration look like for people occupying a range of subject positions with differing gender identities, ages, class statuses, abilities, races, and sexual orientations? How do literary devices enable readers to explore pieces of fiction? Why might readerly exploration through fiction be important?”

To help us answer these questions, we will study the basic elements that make up works of fiction, including plot, setting, point of view, and more. We will examine how they produce cultural commentary and ultimately develop, through reading, writing, and discussion, a working definition of fiction: what it is, what it does, and the kinds of meanings it can generate.

Learning Outcomes

English 23800 is a three-credit course designed to teach students how to read fiction critically. It promotes understanding and appreciation of the range, values, techniques, and meanings of genres of fiction. By the end of the semester, you will be able to do the following:

- Define “fiction” along with other key literary terms and identify significant features of literary styles and genres
- Discuss significant social and cultural functions of fiction
- Draw on relevant cultural and historical information to situate texts within their proper contexts
- Adopt methods such as argumentation and analysis to interpret assigned texts and understand how those methods contribute to understanding the meaning of literary works
- Use logic and creativity to produce original projects and persuasive arguments

Required Texts & Materials

Texts

Below you will find a list of primary texts that you will need for this class (listed in the order in which you will need them). **You are welcome to use any edition of these novels that you would like so long as that edition has numbered pages and you can access it during class discussion.**

I understand that, for many students, acquiring books for classes requires financial planning (e.g. picking up extra shifts at work, budgeting, etc.). If you would rather

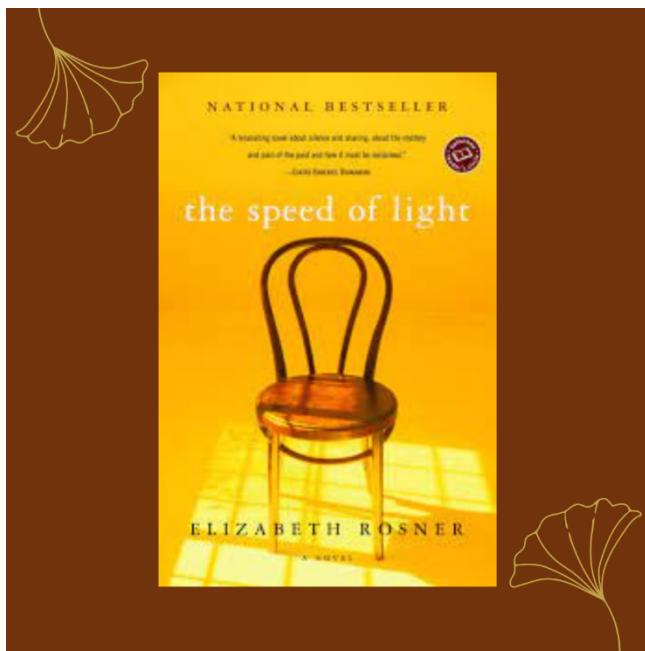
not purchase these novels, you may be able to borrow them through [Purdue Libraries](#) (either directly or through the [Interlibrary Loan](#) program) or through local libraries (such as [Tippecanoe County Public Library](#) or [West Lafayette Public Library](#)). Alternately, if you would like to purchase these novels, you are welcome to acquire used copies through a variety of in-person (such as the basement of [Von's](#) or [Main Street Books](#)) or online (including [AbeBooks](#) or [Amazon](#)) vendors. You may also be able to find new copies at [Second Flight Books](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), or other places that sell contemporary fiction. If you have any trouble obtaining any of these texts, please let me know.

Passing by Nella Larsen (1929)

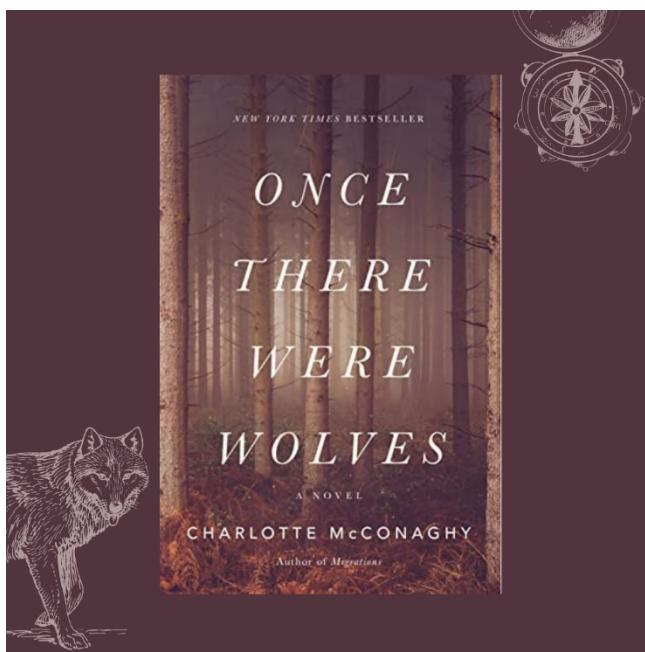
ISBN: 978-0142437278



The Speed of Light by Elizabeth Rosner (2003)
ISBN: 978-0345442253

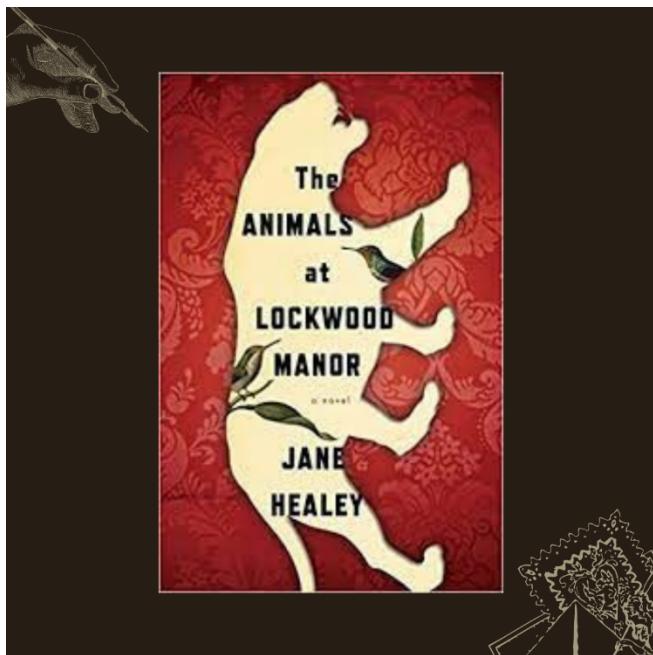


Once There Were Wolves by Charlotte McConaghy (2021)
ISBN: 978-1250244147



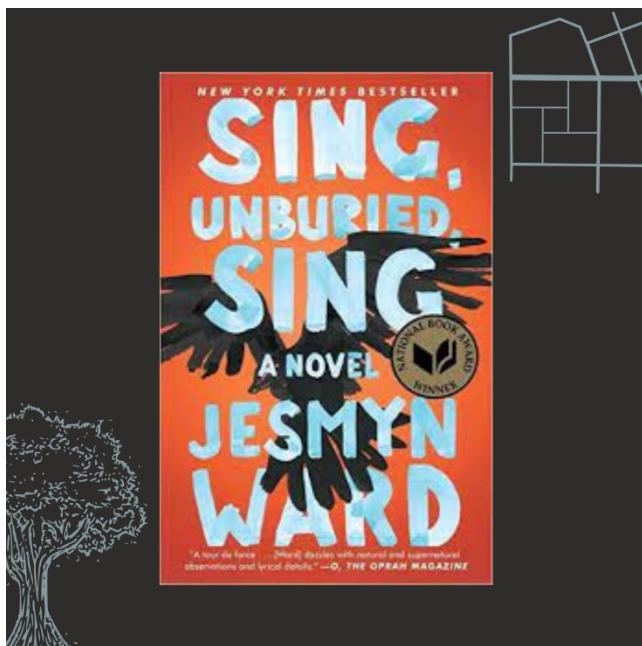
The Animals at Lockwood Manor by Jane Healey (2020)

ISBN: 978-0358106401



Sing, Unburied, Sing by Jesmyn Ward (2018)

ISBN: 978-1501126079



All other course readings will be available via the Brightspace course site.

A note about content warnings: Because fiction is often inspired by or intended to portray real or realistic people, places, and/or situations, these novels contain some themes, scenes, and/or ideas that may be upsetting to read. If you are concerned about the contents of these texts and would appreciate knowing about them before reading, feel free to seek content warnings through sites like [Does the Dog Die](#), [Trigger Warning Database](#), or [Goodreads](#). Of course, be advised that these websites may contain spoilers.

Materials

- A reliable internet connection
- A computer
- A program that can open PDFs such as Adobe Acrobat
- Word-processing software such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs

Course Expectations

Most of your communication with me and with your classmates will happen during class, via email, or in student hours. Throughout any of these situations, be sure to approach your peers with specificity, respect, and kindness. During class, I encourage polite academic debate, but remember to be civil and professional throughout our discussions. Do not insult, harm, or threaten to harm others; offensive language and hostility will not be tolerated. The first instance of inappropriate behavior/language will result in an email discussion with me; if the behavior persists, more serious action will be taken.

Finally, this course is intensive and fast-paced. We have a lot of material to cover. You will need to use your best time-management skills to stay on top of the reading and meet the deadlines for all of the assignments. I encourage you to ask questions or otherwise communicate with me as often as necessary and as soon as possible; this will help you to avoid falling behind and ensure that you engage with the course as much as you can.

Assignments & Grading

Note: More detailed guidelines (including assignment sheets and assessment information) for these assignments are available on the course website. If you have questions about or would like some feedback on any of these assignments, I encourage you to email me or stop by student hours well before their respective due dates. See the [course schedule](#) for each assignment's due date.

Attendance & Engagement (10%): Your regular attendance and participation in class discussions are required. Literature classes thrive on discussion and the creation of a strong classroom community, both of which rely on class attendance and meaningfully engaging with the readings. You can miss up to three classes (not including absences due to illness or quarantine) without penalty. Each subsequent absence will lower your participation grade by a letter grade. In the case of any absence, please inform me (via email) as soon as possible that you will not be attending class.

Exploration Presentation (15%): Once a semester, each student will be required to lead discussion on a primary text. Students will prepare 1-3 questions, post them to Brightspace before 11:59 p.m. the evening before their self-selected presentation day, and lead discussion for fifteen minutes at the beginning of class.

In-Class Close Reading Essay Exam (20%): Students will practice close reading skills through this in-class, open-book, and open-note exam. This exam will prompt students to conduct a clear, concise, and persuasive close reading of a provided passage. Students will submit their essays to Brightspace at the end of class.

Comparative Analysis Essay (25%): In 1,750-2,000 words (excluding the Works Cited page), students will compare how one literary device (setting, point of view, archetype, theme, etc.) functions across two of the texts read during weeks 1-9.

Final Project (cumulatively 30%): We are going to switch roles for your final project. Individually, students will read our final novel, Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*; then students will divide themselves into teams and team-teach the novel to the rest of the class in the last three weeks of class. This project has three components, each of which are discussed in more detail below.

- **Project Proposals (20% of Final Project):** Before the teaching presentations, each team will meet with me to brainstorm ideas regarding the content and style of their lesson plan. After receiving and integrating my feedback, each team will submit a project proposal to Brightspace outlining and justifying their lesson plan. Ideally, project proposals prompt each team to brainstorm the major ideas, pieces of textual evidence, and claims of significance they plan to emphasize in their presentation. To ensure that the workload for this project is spread equitably, the proposal should also include which team member is responsible for which components of the presentation's planning and delivery. Each team member will receive the same grade for this component of the final project.

- **Team Teaching Presentation (80% of final project):** Each team will have the whole class period for their presentation, so come prepared with a short lesson, an activity, discussion questions, etc. We will discuss these options in class. This portion of your project will be graded on how well you present your understanding of the novel's themes and how well you facilitate discussion among the class. All members of your group will receive the same grade and feedback.

Course Policies

You can find a thorough list of student resources [here](#). I encourage you to be aware of and to utilize these resources as you need. If you have questions regarding these resources or feel you have a need that is not being met by any of those available, feel free to reach out to me (or to your advisor). If I do not know the answer to your question(s), I will do my best to put you in contact with someone who does.

To ensure your success in this course, in particular, please keep the following policies in mind.

Statement on Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is unacceptable. "Dishonesty," here, is a capacious signifier for acts including but not limited to: submitting someone else's work as yours; using words, phrases, or sentences from the work of others; and using materials written by others after making slight changes (paraphrasing). Any amount of plagiarism, even a short phrase that you've copied from a webpage without attribution, will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and may be reported to the Dean of Students. Please note that a 0% is far more damaging than an honestly earned F (up to 60%). I am available for questions if you have concerns about academic honesty.

Statement on Disability

Purdue requires that students who are eligible for academic accommodations due to a disability must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) before any classroom accommodations may be provided. Please contact me ASAP if you are having trouble securing accommodations or if you have needs you would like to discuss.

Statement of Emergency Preparedness

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, assignments, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change due to circumstances

beyond the instructor's control. Should such an event occur, I'll be in touch with necessary changes.

Course Schedule

Below is an overview of how our course is organized. For a more detailed course schedule (including scaffolding assignments and their due dates), please see our [course calendar](#).

Unit 1: Family, Community, & Identity

Week 1

Monday, 1/9: Welcome to ENGL 23800-002: Introduction to Fiction

Wednesday, 1/11: What We Talk About When We Talk About Fiction

Friday, 1/13: Kate Chopin's ["Désirée's Baby"](#); Exploration Presentation Demonstration; sign up for Exploration Presentation

Week 2

Monday, 1/16: MLK Day (NO CLASS)

Wednesday, 1/18: Toni Morrison's ["Recitatif"](#); Exploration Presentations begin

Friday, 1/20: Nella Larsen's *Passing*, "Part 1: Encounter"

Week 3

Monday, 1/23: *Passing*, "Part 2: Re-Encounter"

Wednesday, 1/25: *Passing*, "Part 3: Finale"

Friday, 1/27: Savyon Liebrecht's ["What Am I Speaking Chinese?"](#) She Said to Him"

Week 4

Monday, 1/30: Elizabeth Rosner's *The Speed of Light* (Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-64)

Wednesday, 2/1: *The Speed of Light* (Chapters 4-5, pp. 65-117)

Friday, 2/3: *The Speed of Light* (Chapters 6-7, pp. 118-159)

Week 5

Monday, 2/6: *The Speed of Light* (Chapters 8-9, pp. 160-198)

Wednesday, 2/8: The Speed of Light (Chapters 10-12, pp. 199-241)

Friday, 2/10: In-class Close Reading Essay

Unit 2: Non/Human Animals & the Environment

Week 6

Monday, 2/13: Mark Twain's "[A Dog's Tale](#)"

Wednesday, 2/15: Nathaniel Rich's "[Hermie](#)"

Friday, 2/17: Once There Were Wolves (Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-41)

Week 7

Monday, 2/20: Once There Were Wolves (Chapters 5-10, pp. 42-97)

Wednesday, 2/22: Once There Were Wolves (Chapters 11-15, pp. 98-133)

Friday, 2/24: Once There Were Wolves (Chapters 16-18, pp. 134-162)

Week 8

Monday, 2/27: Once There Were Wolves (Chapters 19-23, pp. 163-210)

Wednesday, 3/1: Once There Were Wolves (Chapters 24-Epilogue, pp. 211-256)

Friday, 3/3: NO CLASS

Week 9

Monday, 3/6: Ted Chiang's [The Lifecycle of Software Objects](#) (Chapters 1-5, pp. 62-123, according to PDF)

Wednesday, 3/8: Chiang's [The Lifecycle of Software Objects](#) (Chapters 6-10, pp. 123-172, according to PDF)

Friday, 3/10: In-class Revision Workshop; Comparative Analysis Essay due by 11:59 p.m.

Week 10 (SPRING BREAK)

Unit 3: The (Super)Natural

Week 11

Monday, 3/20: *The Animals at Lockwood Manor* (Prologue-Chapter 9, pp. 1-82)

Wednesday, 3/22: *The Animals at Lockwood Manor* (Chapters 10-16, pp. 83-134)

Friday, 3/24: *The Animals at Lockwood Manor* (Chapters 17-22, pp. 134-175)

Week 12

Monday, 3/27: *The Animals at Lockwood Manor* (Chapters 23-31, pp. 176-239)

Wednesday, 3/29: *The Animals at Lockwood Manor* (Chapters 32-37, pp. 240-290)

Friday, 3/31: *The Animals at Lockwood Manor* (Chapters 38-46, pp. 291-338)

Week 13

Monday, 4/3: Teams 1-3 Conference with Alex

Wednesday, 4/5: Teams 4-6 Conference with Alex

Friday, 4/7: Independent Work Day (No Class); Team Teaching Proposals due by 11:59 p.m.

Week 14

Monday, 4/10: In-Class Team Teaching Workshop

Wednesday, 4/12: In-Class Team Teaching Workshop

Friday, 4/14: *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (Chapter 1, pp. 1-30); Team 1 Presentation

Week 15

Monday, 4/17: *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (Chapters 2-3, pp. 31-90); Team 2 Presentation

Wednesday, 4/19: *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (Chapters 4-5, pp. 91-132); Team 3 Presentation

Friday, 4/21: *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (Chapters 6-8, pp. 133-184); Team 4 Presentation

Week 16

Monday, 4/24: *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (Chapters 9-11, pp. 185-238); Team 5 Presentation

Wednesday, 4/26: *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (Chapters 12-15, pp. 239-285); Team 6 Presentation

Friday, 4/28: Battle Royale (Fiction Edition)