ENGL 170-04: The Practice of Criticism  
MWF 9:30-10:20 | Welles 216  
Fall 2005

Professor Alice Rutkowski  
Office: 230 Welles  
Office Hours: MWF 10:30-12:30, 1:30-2:30 and by appointment  
Office Phone: 245-5290  
Email: rutkowski@geneseo.edu (please note there’s no final “i")

(site has links to: syllabus, course reserves, class contact information, the course email list-serv and copies of all the assignments)

Course Description  (from the Undergraduate Bulletin)
Introduction to the interpretation and analysis of literature, as well as to the abstract principles and assumptions that underlie all efforts to represent the meaning, structure, and value of texts. In classroom discussions and short essay assignments, students undertake critical readings of texts from a variety of genres (poetry, novel, drama, etc.), while examining how critical controversy emerges from the different theoretical commitments and preconceptions of readers. This course is a prerequisite or co-requisite for any 300-level English literature course taken for the English major or concentration.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the semester, students will
- have knowledge of basic terminology and concepts as they apply to literature
- have the ability to perform close readings and interpretations of literary texts
- be conversant in basic terms of literary and cultural study (including a basic vocabulary for cinema studies)
- demonstrate facility with basic research techniques, traditional and electronic

Required texts:
All texts are available at the campus bookstore, Sundance.  
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. The Scarlet Letter.  
Hayward, Susan, ed. Cinema Studies: the Key Concepts  
Melville, Herman. Bartleby & Benito Cereno  
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Sixth Edition  
Williams, Tennessee. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

AND – Electronic Reserve Readings (ERes) class password is: englishmajor

Evaluation
participation 20%  
short responses/quizzes 10%  
two 1-2 page papers 20%  
one 5-7 page paper 20%  
Hawthorne criticism assignment 15%  
film analyses 15%

Overall class performance: Final grades in my courses are not meant to come as a surprise and the calculations I use to arrive at them should not be mysterious. If, at any point during the semester, you would like to know what grade you have earned up to that point in the course, let me know. The
procedure for inquiring about your current overall grade is as follows: 1) let me know you’d like to know your current grade (by email, in person, etc.) and then 2) schedule an office appointment with me. This will give me time to calculate your grade and then together we can discuss your performance in class.

**Reading Assignments:** Reading assignments must be completed by the date they appear on the syllabus. Often the reading assignments are somewhat complicated – that is to say, there are several readings from several different places, so pay close attention to the syllabus. Students are expected to bring the assigned text(s) to class; when the reading is from ERes, students are required to print a hard copy and bring it to class.

**Writing Assignments:** see course schedule for due dates

**Format:** Papers should reflect attention to the conventions of standard English, including appropriate documentation (MLA).

**Due dates:** papers are due in class on the day listed on the syllabus. Email attachments are unacceptable. Under extraordinary circumstances, extensions may be granted, provided you speak with me in advance.

**Late papers:** Late paper policy is as follows (except for summary assignments – see below): penalties begin to accrue at 5 PM on the day the paper is due; up to one day (24 hours) late, penalty is 1/3 letter grade (e.g. A becomes an A-); up to two days late, 2/3; three days, 1 full grade; four days, 1 1/3; five days, 1 2/3; six days, 2 full grades; seven days, 2 2/3; more than seven days late, not accepted for credit without excuse certified by the Dean of Students’ office (this includes Counseling center). Weekends count in calculating lateness – if you need to hand in a paper late, either have a secretary in Welles 226 initial, on the paper, the date/time it was finally handed in or send a duplicate copy to me by email (hard copy still should be handed in to Welles 226 box) to get credit for the time you turned it in. Documenting the time a paper was handed in is YOUR responsibility; given a lack of documentation, the penalty will be calculated based on when I receive the paper.

**Exams/quizzes:** This course will have no exams; instead students will be evaluated on multiple short writing assignments and several more formal papers. However, there will be regular, unannounced reading quizzes– these will never required complex analysis or, really, thought of any kind. They merely check to see if you’ve read the assigned readings.

**Summary assignments:** For certain reading assignments, I will ask you to write a brief summary and several questions for discussion. These must be typed and can ONLY be turned in at class on the day they are due, no exceptions. Each summary will graded on a √/√-√+ scale and will count as a quiz grade.

**Grading:** To receive an “A” on a paper or exam, you must do excellent work in all these areas: original thinking, organization, clear analysis, use of sufficient and specific evidence, and consistent and correct grammar and mechanics. I consider a grade of “B” a very good grade for work that is shy of excellent. Students who earn C’s and D’s fall short in these areas. In particular, they often fail to have a thesis, i.e. an arguable point, and they fill their essays with summary rather than analysis. Visit the Writing Center on the second floor of Welles for help in any of these areas.

***Please keep a back-up copy of papers when you hand them in (either hard copy or electronic). Should we disagree about whether or not you have turned in a paper, you will be able to produce a duplicate immediately.

**Participation:** Participation in class discussion is critical to the success of the course, and therefore will figure into the final grade. I will keep track of both the quantity and the quality of each student’s contributions; this factor can raise-- or lower -- the final grade significantly. For more details on the expectations and standards for participation, please see the attached sheet.
Boring MLA Fact of the Day: Throughout the semester, I will sometimes begin class by explaining/reviewing one or two rules on the mechanics of writing an English paper. Once we have covered a concept of this kind in class, you will then be responsible for knowing and demonstrating it in any written assignments that follow. This material is also fair game for reading quizzes. For example, if I explain how to use correct punctuation as part of parenthetical internal citations (see? already boring), and you do this incorrectly in your next paper, your grade will be affected. Details about every Boring Fact of the Day can be found in your MLA Guide.

Policies
Academic Honesty: It is expected that the work you submit belongs to you and you alone. Any act of plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade on the assignment and the notification of the Dean of Students. Plagiarism includes using anyone else’s ideas or words without giving him or her credit, whether the author is a fellow student, a published author, or a web page on the Internet. It doesn’t matter how much you change the words if you are basically paraphrasing someone else’s ideas. If you want to engage with or acknowledge someone else’s ideas, include a clear and thorough citation. If you have any questions about plagiarism, feel free to speak to me. You may also find this Geneseo website helpful: http://library.geneseo.edu/~Liles/plagiarism.htm

Accommodations: SUNY-Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for persons of documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. Students should notify the Director of the Office of Disability Services (Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin, tbuggieh@geneseo.edu) and their faculty of any needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester. Information on services and campus polices can be found at: http://www.geneseo.edu/~doc/otherareas/disability.shtml

Required Work: To pass this course, students must attempt all three papers, the research/criticism assignment, and at least 2/3 of the film analyses/portfolio. Incompletes will be granted ONLY if the following three conditions are met: documented extenuating circumstances (e.g. severe illness or family crisis); a specific request from the student; AND a plan of action to make up the missing work, including due dates.
COURSE CALENDAR

M Aug 29: introduction to course
W Aug 31: getting to know you & what we read. Janice Radway, Introduction to A Feeling For Books (ERes – you are required to print a copy)
Fri Sep 2: what we read & the canon: Jane Tompkins, “Masterpiece Theater” (ERes); summary due
M Sep 5: Labor Day – no class

Reading Poetry
W Sep 7: Stanley Fish, “How to Recognize a Poem When You See One” (ERes)
F Sep 9: bad poems
M Sep 12: In Bedford, read “free verse,” “metaphor,” “simile,” “diction” and “syntax. poems about the body, cummings, [i like my body when it is with your] and Whitman, “The Wound-Dresser.”
W Sep 21: sonnets. finish ERes sonnet reading; be sure to read short piece about Edna St. Vincent Millay (71-72). In addition, read “sibilence,” “assonance” and “alliteration” in Bedford and decide if you agree with the assessment of Millay’s sonnet.
F Sep 23: sonnets. Derek Walcott, “Tales of the Islands” (ERes); for help with French vocabulary, visit: http://www.wordreference.com/
M Sep 26: catch-up day (no new reading); paper #1 due

Reading Prose
W Sep 28: Bedford: “short story,” “narrator,” “point of view.” Also, Sarah Orne Jewett “The White Heron” (ERes)
F Sep 30: Jhumpa Lahiri “A Temporary Matter” (ERes)
M Oct 3: paper workshop; paper #2 assignment distributed
W Oct 5: Henry James “A Bundle of Letters” (ERes)
F Oct 7: David Foster Wallace “Always Overhead” (ERes)
M Oct 10: Fall Break
W Oct 12: Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1-34)
F Oct 14: finish Melville discussion. In Bedford read “ambiguity,” “allusion” and “authorial intention” and “foreshadowing.”
M Oct 17: paper #2 due; discuss long paper assignment

Reading Novels
W Oct 19: Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (preface to ch. 4, pp. 5-70);
F Oct 21: class cancelled – catch up on reading
M Oct 24: Hawthorne, cont’d (ch. 5-ch. 13, pp. 71-146)
W Oct 26: Hawthorne, cont’d (ch 14-end, pp. 147-228)
F Oct 28: library day – meet in Milne
M Oct 31: library day – meet in Milne; long paper due

Reading Criticism
F Nov 4: historical criticism: Larry J. Reynolds, “Revolutions Abroad” (1985) summary due

Reading Drama
F Nov 11: Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Act I (xi-47) and in Bedford, “drama,” “dramatis personae” and “play”
M Nov 14: Williams. finish play (48-123)
W Nov 16: Williams. read “note of explanation,” alternate final act (124-158) and “Person to Person” (vii-x)

**Reading Film**


M Nov 21: regular classroom, discuss film, **film response due**

W Nov 23: *Thanksgiving Break*

F Nov 25: *Thanksgiving Break*

M Nov 28: finish discussing film


F Dec 2: regular classroom, discuss film, **film response due**

M Dec 5: finish discussing film

W Dec 7: meet in Milne for film screening, *Teknolust* (2002). In *Cinema Studies*, read entries for “feminist film theory,” (this one is long and can be skimmed; pay particular attention to pp. 115-117) “voyeurism/fetishism,” “gender,” (this one is also long; pay particular attention to the ideas of “naturalizing gender” (160), the “stability” of gender identity (162) and the specific examples which end the entry (162-165)) “intertextuality,” “postmodernism,” and “soundtrack”

F Dec 9: regular classroom; discuss film, **film response due**

M Dec 12: finish discussion of film, last day of classes

**Our class will have no final exam; however, I will have office hours during our final exam period, Wednesday, December 14, 8-11 AM**